My relationship with my past is like, Jean Valjean and Inspector Javert
one fleeing for a lifetime without remembering what his crime was, while the other pursues him

COPPICE BLUE

FAAVIDEL

EPISODE 10
CHAPTER ONE: OBLIVION

Coppice Blue

Faavidel

Literature - Persian Fiction – Novel

Coppice Blue

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Chapter One
Oblivion

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The wall of forgetfulness has been broken

My tea had gone cold. Dad brought me tea again, placed it on the table, and sat down. Since I had arrived, he hadn't allowed me to serve myself; it was as if he missed being a host. Upon hearing that memory, a smile of nostalgia and longing appeared on his lips: "Ah, those were good days! I wish they hadn't ended like that!"

"I wish!"

As if I were sitting on a shore, I gazed at our families that floated before me like a sea. Alborz's family was a calm and blue sea, and its gentle waves caressed my bare feet, calling me to a deep tranquility with the resonance of its voice. My family, on the other hand, was the raging and colorless sea of stormy days, crashing against the breakwater with its terrifying waves, and its thundering roar sent tremors through my body like an explosion. It was enough for my foot to slip from the boulder to be swallowed by a whirlpool. I apologized to Dad for my thoughts about his relationship with Auntie. He accepted that they had made a mistake in how they communicated the issue to me. That day, it felt as if a thick wall had collapsed between my father and me; we sat for hours on its ruins and talked about the happy memories of the past. He asked me to visit him more often so we could talk about those days again; what we had never experienced together. It seemed that by recalling those moments, we were getting closer to each other. It was strange! I had gone to find a clue to solve my new issue through the shared pain with my mother or perhaps to

find a similarity between my father and Sam; but I encountered a twenty-year misunderstanding.

Why are we humans, despite all our intelligence and wisdom, so powerless and inarticulate in our relationships with each other? How easily do we withhold so many words and sentences from one another! Why does no one teach us in school how to communicate with our fellow beings? How to understand each other? How can we keep our children safe from real harms merely through open-armed conversations? Is the safety of our children really limited to protecting them against sexual assault, the advances of strangers, and their studies? Can the absence of mental health indicators—where effective communication and interaction outside the professional environment are paramount—be overlooked in the presence of a successful and powerful individual in society? I am sure that if learning these issues is not more important than mathematics, physics, and geography, it certainly holds equal value. Why should I spend a lifetime studying and spend a lot of money to learn the simplest strategies for interaction in life from modern specialists? What if my parents, each having studied for twenty-some years throughout their lives, had dedicated just one year to teaching these matters? Unfortunately, I was not the only victim of this system at home! We all suffered equally in that house, and perhaps we all caused harm equally as well. We simply have different interpretations of events and traumas due to variations in our capacities, shapes, and types of vessels.

I was reminded again of the previous night. I still didn't know what the best reaction was! I didn't want to start an incomplete and emotional conversation and then find myself unable to continue it. Based on what I had heard from Dad that day, I had to consider that the essence of what happened last night was something else. Years ago, I had also heard sentences with my own ears and seen scenes, and based on that, I had no doubt about my mother's perceptions. But that day—after nearly 20 years—I realized that I had been terribly

mistaken. Perhaps if someone had considered me one of the witnesses after the argument that night and had explained things to me a little, I wouldn't have remained in delusion for all those years. This time it was my turn to make the right decision as one of the main players and to act on it without question. Perhaps Sam thought these two lives had nothing to do with each other, and I should accept that as long as he hadn't openly disrespected me, I wouldn't bring up the matter! Although the law allowed him to do so in my country, I was not one to enter into such transactions with myself and my partner. Living this way did not align with any philosophy or religion I believed in. On the other hand—contrary to the views of current psychologists who consider infidelity in marriage as unforgivable—I thought that perhaps if he apologized, I might forgive him. But apologize for what? Had he made a confession to me acknowledging that he had made a mistake? It felt as though I was deceiving myself in order to cleanse Sam. I was just beginning to understand that the gap between my thought process and his was as vast as the distance from the earth to the sky. I needed to allow what I had seen and heard from him in recent days to settle in my mind so that I could make the best decision. If Sam had cheated, my sudden and aggressive reaction would increase the likelihood of his denial and, in contrast, of labeling me as delusional. Denial was the most appropriate reaction when faced with an accusation of infidelity. I needed to get to know both of us again in this situation.

I returned home and, without hesitation, set aside the unfinished book and opened a fresh page. After years, I felt I could write about myself. Aban was right; I had to write. When I was writing about bear cubs, I was studying bears to understand them better and get acquainted with their various species—how could I not write about myself, even though it was painful? How could I not delve into myself and how could I not know myself? I needed to rediscover and reconstruct the missing pieces. My past was like a LEGO box where the pieces were disorganized and haphazardly glued together. It

seemed I had to break it apart again and arrange it in a new way. I had no doubt that writing in detail about any issue would help in understanding it. So, I needed to become the subject of my new research. Perhaps seeing my past clearly would enrich my present moments! Maybe I had found a new way to escape what I had faced the night before. That day, I had minimal interaction with Sam. My conversations were limited to short sentences and essential matters. In the evening, after meditation and yoga exercises, he came to my room. Until that day, I had friends who were professional yogis, but unfortunately, their behavior was inconsistent with their yoga practices. Friends from college who, along with meditation and cleansing, suffocated their light-headedness with various smokes—to perhaps receive heavenly inspirations and enhance creativity—and Sam, whose nature was incompatible with smoke and preferred magic mushrooms. He had participated several times in Vipassana[1] retreats and now found himself entangled—according to my father—in toxic relationships. He stood at the threshold of the door while I kept my eyes on the screen, pretending not to notice his presence. He stood with his arms crossed, looking at me as if I were betraying him and he had caught me red-handed. Finally, I caught his gaze, and our eyes met. Honestly, at 41, he still looked great! His hair was still thick and black, slightly longer than the usual male cut, shiny and well-styled. His large, dark, piercing eyes were fixed on me from his angular, wrinkle-free face; he wore a black t-shirt and jeans that he used to wear in the studio back then. He was tall, with a flat stomach and no protrusions; with the same calm and untroubled demeanor he always had, composed and self-assured. Suddenly, questions rushed at me that hadn't crossed my mind until that moment. Who was the owner of that

1. Vipassana, in Sanskrit, means seeing things that are not apparent; it is one of the oldest non-religious meditation techniques in India and is practiced to purify the mind from impurities.

feminine voice? Did I know her? Of course, I knew her. I didn't need to hear her voice to recognize her. Her traces had been visible in our lives for a long time, and with that same white brush that wiped away the past, I had erased those signs as well. I was a master at ignoring impactful scenes. In any case, the answers to these questions no longer mattered to me at that moment. In fact, identifying the third point of this coordinate system, wouldn't change my situation with Sam. I didn't want to waste my time getting to know her better; whether I had fallen short somewhere or whether she was more beautiful, capable, wealthier than me or not. Undoubtedly, part of my deficiencies in my relationship with Sam ignited that hidden connection, but these were cliché reasons and distractions that attracted betrayed individuals. At that moment, other aspects of Sam in that relationship were still important to me. How far had he gone with her? What did he have more in that relationship? What had his hands, body, gaze, lips, and voice done for the owner of that voice? Sam was an attractive man, and if he wanted to, he could easily establish any kind of relationship; if he wanted! What did Sam want that led to what I heard? But how important were the answers to these questions? Undoubtedly, I was hurting, and above all else, I needed to free myself from further harm.

With a smile that was characteristic of his flirting times, he said, "If staring at me gives you ideas, go ahead! Take your time. If necessary, I can even take off my clothes for you!"

What a bold face he had! I remembered all the times he had stood in front of me and charmed me while his mind was wandering elsewhere. Without any change in my demeanor, I replied, "Yeah, go ahead!"

With a smirk, he took two steps forward, grabbed the hem of his t-shirt, and slowly pulled it off over his head. As the t-shirt hung from his index finger, he softly dropped it onto the couch. I had one hand under my chin and the other under my chest, watching him. He was staring at me with the same intensity while delicately reaching for his

pants. This was a body that no longer had its mind on me; his heart was beating elsewhere, warming up with someone else. With me, he was only fulfilling biological duties. As he looked at me, he unbuttoned his jeans one by one. He twirled his thumbs at the waistband and... chuckled. It was as if he was saying, "Stop it!" I had no doubt that if it were a year ago—just as I had performed this show for him many times in the studio—we would have gone all the way. He knew these games well; so well that he made me his co-player too. If he wanted, even at this age, he could easily charm anyone. He came towards me, leaned over the table, and aimed for my lips. I slowly pulled my face back. He didn't insist either. I said, "You didn't come here to give me a striptease! What's on your mind?"

He was still leaning over the table. He said, "Can't you read my mind just once?"

Each of his words irritated me. It felt as if his mind and soul were also becoming naked along with his body. I finally understood how he had managed me in my ignorance until then by choosing such words. Before anything could happen, I was already tired of these soap-opera-like glances; full of suspicion and unspoken words. I saw the house like a powder keg where Sam and I were guarding it with matches and lighters in our pockets. I wanted to make it easier for him; "Does it relate to the trip to Shiraz? Has it come up early? Or is it going to be prolonged?"

He seemed pleased; quickly buttoning his pants, he smiled and said, "See? I told you you'd hit the nail on the head! Yeah, it has come up early. I mean it might..." He paused. I was left wondering how he dared to think that I understood everything if he truly believed that. He was mistaken; I was so far removed from the situation and so sure of him that I didn't realize anything. He swung his t-shirt in the air and threw it over his shoulder; "It might be that on the day of our transfer operation, I won't be able to be in Tehran."

I brought a beautiful and fake smile to my face to mask my nervous laughter and cursed him in my heart. He was still considering a normal life with me. I really didn't know him. Without any doubt, I said, "Go! It's okay. Aban is here. Just like before, we'll manage something.

"Thanks! I'll make it up to you later."

Are you joking? Make it up? I asked, "Is the restaurant finished?" He scratched his bare side and yawned, "It'll be done tomorrow afternoon. I'm heading to Shiraz early next week."

"What about your university classes?"

"Only one or two sessions left; then they have exams. I'll wrap things up at the hotel. It's online anyway."

He had accounted for everything. I thought he hadn't wanted me to accompany him on this trip from the beginning. He said that just to ease his conscience. What did he want with me in Shiraz? I nodded my head in agreement. He let out a sigh of relief and left the room with a grateful smile. How easily I used "just like before." I remembered that in those six times I had to go to the operating room for IVF, Sam had only accompanied me twice. Had he really been unable to come due to work commitments? I remember one time he had an important appointment, but the other times... or even this last time? Two months ago! I often wondered why memories from that day rushed back to my mind. If I were to follow the signs in my life, what had I overlooked from those days? I know that the past returns because it was unresolved; because I hadn't learned from it and hadn't come to terms with it. Because I needed to confront it. But what was its connection to Sam? To the presence of my aunt and Alborz in the operating room in my dreams? They had always been the reason for my calmness, hadn't they? Had I unconsciously sought refuge in them? Did they have a message for me? What about Sam's drawing, where the first signs of his hidden connection emerged? The day I came back from the hospital was Alborz's birthday! Had my past come alive with the sparks of the disintegration of my shared life in the present? Sam's

drawing was the first tension of the triangular sides he designed for us. One of those clichéd triangles of treacherous people! The three of us only shared one scene together, and Sam immortalized it on the wall of the hotel. But what mattered in the drawing was not the presence of Sam and me, but rather the presence of Sam and her. That unexpected meeting might have become an excuse for future encounters. Now he could have hidden secrets on the city walls with her too; with that esteemed colleague! With that beautiful and perfect woman... No! I didn't want to compare myself with her. After all those years of ups and downs, I had understood well that like all human beings in the world, there were enough unique traits in me that I wouldn't fall into the trap of comparing myself with others. In any case, it was clear that those two didn't know what they wanted from life and had involved me in their irreversible mistakes. Did I know what I wanted from life? I was also caught up in the illusion of happiness in this very life. All my reactions in life with Sam stemmed from past turmoil; a pre-determined defensive mechanism to escape abandonment and loneliness! With someone with whom I hadn't even experienced love. From the very beginning of our relationship, I knew that my feelings for Sam had nothing to do with love. In fact, it was miles away from what I knew of love. Perhaps he felt the same way and sought it in others! He had said he started his life romantically with me; now I was sure it wasn't love. It was youthful whims that, as soon as heart rate increased, body temperature rose, pants tightened, and some other signs appeared, were mistaken for love.

Suddenly, I felt as if I had gained enough control over myself to take the first painful steps of this surgery. Perhaps if I had remained silent, Sam would have continued in the same way forever. I needed to tell him that I knew about his betrayal; that I was angry, sad, and very heartbroken. With my general understanding of him and my way of expressing myself, I doubted he would deny it. If I stepped forward, at least he would have to explain himself. I went to his studio. He was

wearing his T-shirt and bent over a large canvas on his swivel chair, his back to the door; he was fixing part of the painting with a knife. He turned and glanced at me but said nothing and went back to work. The painting seemed like a rain-soaked and fogged-up glass. Something incomprehensible was shining behind it. He asked, "Is it my turn?"

I replied, "If I were your source of inspiration, then yes!" He turned back and looked at me. I continued, "You don't want me to guess what you're painting anymore?"

He smirked and casually said, "This one is really hard!"

How painful it was to say what I wanted; "Because it doesn't involve me at all... It's a shared memory with someone else, right?"

I was sure I detected a disruption in his breathing. He turned back with narrowed eyes and a vague smile, as if waiting for the final blow; "Like what?"

That was enough. I didn't want to converse with him in a space filled with barbs and sarcasm. I wasn't the kind of person for those kinds of discussions. I looked directly into his eyes. Slowly but firmly, I said, "I know you're with someone. Don't tire yourself out!"

He wanted to say something, but I silenced him with a wave of my hand. He stood up and threw himself onto the comfortable sofa. He rested his head against the back of the couch and looked at the ceiling, burying his hands in his hair. I was calm; fortunately, that aggressive and tense trait of my mother during her anger never found its way into me. The more she yelled at me, the calmer I became. I was filled with rage, but I felt that what I wanted to say was clenched in my fist; "I don't know how long it's been, but I'm sure! There's no need for me to prove it or for you to deny it! I know that if you were to give me your phone right now, there's no way you would do it. Because there's too much evidence in there that would ruin my mood. Don't worry! I won't sneak around looking for it. I don't need to see more than this. Everything seems clear to me. There are many signs of another person

in both your life and mine; obvious and clear. I think I've even realized them quite late; you've been signaling for a long time! Right now, I wanted to come and say that I'm angry. I feel really terrible, and at least you owe me a detailed explanation of what you want to do with our lives! So far, I know what decision I'm making, but before that, you need to speak your mind!"

He sat there motionless. Fortunately, he didn't deny it; although I didn't expect him to pull any tricks or raise his voice like most people who cheat do. But I also didn't expect this sudden amount of destruction. He knew that I was certain about what I was saying; he was resigned. It seemed he also didn't have the patience for cliché solutions. Maybe he felt a bit relieved that I confronted him with something he had been avoiding facing. He asked sheepishly, "Since when... did you find out?"

"I had suspected a little, but I didn't want to give it wings. Last night, I came from the park towards the restaurant to surprise you. But... I ended up being surprised myself."

When I said these words, he leaned forward, resting his elbows on his knees and holding his face in his hands. Perhaps he was thinking about the behavior he had shown me last night, and the thought of me being there made him feel worse. Although I was only there for a few moments, he didn't know which minutes! He let out a deep, long breath. He held his head in his hands and shook it left and right; "I... I'm really sorry. I didn't want you to find out that way! It's embarrassing!"

Yes! So I was supposed to find out soon. Maybe in a different way and with some preparations. For instance, while eating a chocolate cake with hazelnuts and caramel at a café table with a candle lit on it; he sitting across from me while I held a cappuccino cup with a heart design on the milk froth. Or even more exciting! When I held the positive pregnancy test in my hand to give him the good news! It felt like I had ruined a fun plan he had prepared for me! I said nothing. He

continued, “I wanted to tell you, but I was really stuck. You had your transfer surgery coming up! What was I supposed to do?”

I let out a puff of laughter. What was he supposed to do? What a question! I said, “Are you okay? There’s no surgery. I’m canceling it.” It was as if I had given him terrifying news; he turned to me with wide, surprised eyes, and a little bit of guilt mixed into his gaze. I raised my eyebrows and waved my hands in the air as if to say “What?” He said, “But you wanted it so much…”

“Until last night, yes. I really wanted it badly, but with this situation…” A lump formed in my throat; I said louder, “When did I ever tell you that I want a baby at any cost?”

I was upset. It was too much for that moment. I had come down from my position of power and dominance. I couldn’t understand him. How many kinds of humanity are there in the world that our understanding of each other is so low? What did I say that he heard this way? I left his room and went to mine; he didn’t follow me. He threw something against the wall. All our discussions ended like this; with silence. I don’t know when we sold ourselves to that. Maybe for me, it had become a permanent and secret surrender to Sam. Perhaps it was due to escaping from an environment similar to what I experienced with my mom and her long silences; and for him, like with dad! We were cutting each other’s heads off with cotton. I suspected that in a few days, I would be in my room, and he would come to me full of words. After all, the shock of that moment and its embarrassment was beyond his imagination, and he needed time to prepare himself for a conversation. When I returned to my room, I saw Aban’s message. She suggested meeting in the park for the next day; “Didn’t anything new come to your mind? You haven’t told me a memory in a long time!”

“Why, actually! You're very behind! I will probably tell you everything by tomorrow” I answered.

“Should I bring tissues or sugar water?”

“Neither. Bring a knife! Because after that, I might want to kill someone.”

Then I sent her the location of several pleasant areas. I really wished I could turn my dream into reality in those surroundings. She wrote, “They usually don’t reveal these places to strangers. You need to have an acquaintance!”

“So what are your blogger friends good for?"

“It wouldn’t hurt if you put in a little effort too, my dear!”

“Right now, all I want is to leave where I am.”

I didn’t continue. I couldn’t believe that for the third time since last night, my life had been turned upside down, and not only had I done nothing for myself, but now I was searching for a place to nurture my dreams—dreams that Sam had crossed out from the beginning. In those moments, I felt like I didn’t know anything. All I knew was that I shouldn’t remain stagnant there any longer. It was time to move again; at the cost of losing a companion who wasn’t really with me. But... but I wanted to be a mother. If I missed this opportunity, perhaps I wouldn’t have the strength to repeat it, and as a result... Ugh! Damn you, Sam! A month ago, our argument was about having our child either behind the mountains or in California, while you were preoccupied with her. Why? What kind of game were you playing? Get up and come explain! No, don’t come! I’m not ready for it. Give me a little time to see what I can do!

The day after—before I woke up—Sam was gone. After lunch, Ms. Sima was still at home. I went to the park; I sat on a bench for a while and wrote. An hour later, I had run so much and exhausted myself that when Aban arrived, I had collapsed right under the metallic horse sculpture on the grass. Finally, I gathered the courage and after years, went up that hill. It was a strange feeling!

In the meantime, while waiting for her, I stumbled upon a video on Instagram featuring Julio Iglesias's song "One Day You Laugh and One Day You Cry";[1] one of his best live performances! The same one I used to listen to for hours in my teenage years. Once again, my ears were pinned down with a mix of sobs and anger. Why did all of this have to come before my eyes these days? Had they always been there, and I just hadn't seen them? I hadn't seen them! Ah! Even now, the self-imposed silence amid the words scratched at my soul; the part where he said "one day" and paused for a moment to let my spirit escape, then continued weakly and pleadingly, "you laugh and one day you cry!" Aban came and sat beside me. She didn't ask anything; she knew well that every sound that enchanted me was connected to something deep within my soul, and soon I would unveil it to her. I couldn't even turn towards her. Without looking at her, in a wet voice, I said, "Yesterday among my notes, I found a piece of paper from when we used to attend those classes together." She urged me to continue with her gaze; "I had written that it takes years to confront the consequences of some of our painful experiences and afterward, we endure many pains. I'm just beginning to understand its meaning!"

Aban said, "Well, at least you wrote it down! I don't remember hearing anything like that!"

"Now do you understand why every time you told me to write, I avoided it? I spent a lot of time justifying myself to accept that the events that happened to me weren't as bitter as they seemed and that I was making too much of it. Now seeing them feels like they're new occurrences; a mountain of sadness and pain has poured into me because for years I had been hiding from reality!"

"Yeah, I know. They call it repression of impactful memories; on the condition of survival! It seems the human mind is quite skilled at doing this. We all forget parts of memories we don't want, but some

1. Julio Iglesias, Un Jour To Ris Un Jour To Pleures.

of us forget more. Anyway, we didn't die, and we understood the meaning of a cliché life!"

Recently, I had encountered new data about myself. Years ago, events had occurred that were beyond my endurance; something that didn't even come to words. Therefore, I wasn't even aware of the nature of what I was experiencing. So it had no place in my awareness; slowly it disappeared and I became someone for whom those events seemed not to have happened at all. I ignored her words; "How far did I tell you?"

I recounted the story of my conversations with Dad. I spoke and cried, and she cried along with me. But I wanted to say more. All the images had come alive like the present moment. I was afraid that if I didn't say them out loud, if they didn't become words, they would fade from my memory again. So I continued…

End of chapter one

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FAAVIDEL, a multidisciplinary artist, has studied graphic design
and has worked in the fields of interior design management, architecture
and furniture and accessory design
Her collection of artworks includes both physical and digital paintings
and illustrations, accompanied by music she has composed
These works are showcased in short videos on digital art platforms
.each telling a brief story
To date, her works have been exhibited and sold in New York
Vancouver, Beijing, Istanbul, and Dubai
Previously, her book "The Lake Monster, Chopin, Barbequed Eggplant" was
.published in Iran