

“Still Darkness”

11:21 PM

Basir walked out of the apartment building, into the rainy darkness. He lit a cigarette and took a long drag while staring at his worn boots and saw the blood wash off into a puddle, but the stain never left him. He felt his eye twitch and the smoke burn his lungs as he slowly exhaled and let out a cough that broke the silent night. He pulled his cell phone from his coat pocket, and called his wife.

11:12 PM

His partner gave him a pat on the shoulder in an attempt to connect, or feign understanding. Then that familiar stranger walked to the door, put on his coat and hat, and left wordlessly. Perhaps he had been too afraid of offending that he would rather say nothing at all. Basir was alone now. He looked at the old woman's prayer mat and wondered how long it had been since he had used his. There were two drops of blood on the mat's fringes. He carefully folded the mat and took it with him to bury in his wife's garden.

10:53 PM

Basir looked at a photograph hung on the wall. The glass frame had shattered. Blood had sprayed across the picture of a young woman. She was the same one who lied next to him not an hour before. On the kitchen table he saw a half finished plate of kofta with rice and pide next to a bloody kitchen knife. A pot of tea had boiled over onto the stovetop, the old box-television was left on a soap opera, and fresh blankets had been set on the couch. Basir didn't wipe away his tears.

10:24 PM

He opened the door and saw a woman he might have seen a hundred times before. At a market or in the park, someone who likely shared many experiences with him. He examined the woman's body. Glass shards stuck in her cheeks. A broken nose from the man's fist. Another wound on the back of her head from when she had fallen down. Three bloody, yellow teeth that had fallen out. Five stab wounds that ruined her shawl. The blood pooled out of her wounds and onto the wooden floor. Her face was cut and beaten, but her eyes clung to a certain kindness. His partner had her bagged and taken out of the building while Basir gathered evidence. He found no next of kin. Just an un-updated emergency contact list which only had the name of her husband. He had died too, just four years earlier. They had no children and had moved to the States alone. Basir decided he would be the one to mourn her.

10:05 PM

Basir arrived at the apartment building, and his partner came soon after. Together, they reviewed the security camera footage. They saw a white male exiting his apartment, then walking to the victim's and knocking on the door. After a few moments, she answered and the two argued. He smacked her, and when she tried to retreat into her apartment, the man followed. Basir had seen this play out a dozen times now. Every local station would have an article out tomorrow morning, the

reporters would deliver whichever testimony sounded the most interesting, and everyone would forget about it before the week was over. Basir wished he could forget too.

09:56 PM

Dispatch woke Basir. Recently, he had started sleeping in his work pants. He grabbed his badge and gun belt. He gently kissed his wife on the shoulder before he left their bedroom. She didn't like to be woken up this late. He walked past their prayer mats. They had collected a layer of dust that he didn't notice. He walked out into the still darkness and thought that rain would have been comforting.