



A movie poster for "Shards of Terror: Reflections of a Nightmare". The central focus is a large, ornate, dark metal mirror frame. Inside the frame, the mirror glass is shattered, with a dark, swirling spiral pattern in the center. Numerous shards of the mirror are floating in the air around the frame, each reflecting a different horror-themed image: a screaming face, a hand reaching out, a house with a red light, a skull, and other macabre scenes. The background is dark and smoky. At the bottom, the title "SHARDS OF TERROR" is written in a large, stylized, metallic font, with "OF" in a smaller font between "SHARDS" and "TERROR". Below the title, the subtitle "REFLECTIONS OF A NIGHTMARE" is written in a smaller, simpler font.

SHARDS OF TERROR

REFLECTIONS OF A NIGHTMARE

**SHARDS OF TERROR
REFLECTIONS OF A
NIGHTMARE**

*Book Title: Shards of Terror:
Broken Mirrors of Nightmares
Author: A Collection of Authors
Number of Pages: 136
Cover Design & Layout: Najah Itani
“NAI”
Proofreading & Translation: Najah
Itani
Second edition
Year: 2026*



Preface

In this book, you won't just read stories... you'll peek through dark windows that reveal shattered souls, hear the whispers in the shadows, and see the faces that are meant to be remembered.

Here, each piece of text tells a bit of a spooky story, and all the mirrors of our fears are shattered, showing faces we're too scared to face.

These aren't just words... they're little cracks in the wall of safety.

Dedication

To everyone who sleeps with the light on... to those who sense someone is watching them when they're by themselves... to the hearts that understand that real fear doesn't need ghosts, just a memory that sticks with you.



THE CRIMSON BUTTERFLY

Mohammad Fateh Al-Halabi





While a lone cloud drifted, lost in the vastness of its sky, moving peacefully beneath the whims of the ever-changing wind, a butterfly suddenly appeared in a small garden.

No one noticed it.

Everyone was too busy laughing together, holding glasses of juice and soft drinks, eating, smiling, and engaging with one another.

From where I sat, I watched them, watching the warmth of affection they shared.

Then, suddenly, amid them all, the butterfly—with its unusual crimson wings—chose my shoulder.



As though it had come to comfort me, it seemed to whisper:

"Don't be sad, Sarah... Don't be sad, little girl. From now on, stop letting sorrow weigh upon your heart. Why should you sit there all alone on that wooden bench, wrapped in the cloak of darkness? You are not an orphan anymore. You are not alone. You are not unwanted... I am here with you, from this very moment... No, from this very second."

But the butterfly had no idea that I was such a fragile, easily frightened girl that I would leap to my feet in terror, stumble, and roll across the ground simply because of it. And to make matters even more insane, a yellow car nearly ran me over right in front of everyone!



I didn't die. Somehow, I survived. The driver managed to regain control of the car and bring it to a stop just in time. Now, he was getting out, visibly shaken, rushing toward me to see whether I was all right—or, more accurately, to see the sorry state I was in.

I never expected this to be such an extraordinary day for me. For once, I was the center of everyone's attention. Everyone was watching me—even the pet dogs and cats scattered here and there, and even that butterfly whose striking color had sent shivers down my spine.

But... this would all be over soon. The driver's hand reached out to help me up. I would stand, and everyone would simply return to their food, drinks, and conversations.

But that's not what happened!



Instead, most of them rose from their seats, mouths hanging open as they gasped in shock. I heard every sound clearly as the driver struck me and treated me harshly, screaming so loudly that even the birds perched in the trees were startled and fled into the distance.

“You could have caused me a catastrophe if I had run you over! My mother died just moments ago, and I was on my way to the hospital! Why did you have to appear now?! This is not your time, you little—”

He rushed back to his car and disappeared, leaving me to break down in tears all over again.

He rushed back to his car and disappeared, leaving me to break down in tears all over again.



Most of the onlookers returned to their seats, whispering among themselves beneath the rustling leaves, which seemed to carry the scent of unease. One of them came over to help me and calm me down, but I left her behind, running back to my little orphanage.

I sat on my bed, curling into myself in sorrow and despair.

Why does this always happen to me?!

Embarrassing situations... endless loneliness...

I'm miserable.

I'll sleep here, on my bed...

There's nothing I'm good at except sleeping—sinking into my dreams and hazy nightmares, painted in shades of black and haunted by ghostly faces...



But I couldn't sleep! What is happening today?! Why won't my eyes close?!

I tossed and turned from side to side, but to no avail...

Frustrated, I leapt out of bed and moved to a place I had always loved: the little chair beside the little window, where I would watch my dreams unfold among pink clouds and glittering stars.

I rested my chin in my hand and looked up once again at the blue sky. There was a single, lonely cloud drifting there, looking exactly like me—lost beneath its vast sky, moving peacefully at the mercy of the ever-changing winds.

Suddenly, the red butterfly appeared in my line of sight once again!



It seemed to mock me, reminding me of all the emotional and physical pain it had caused me!

I stood up, and the chain of my rosy dreams vanished.

Angrily, I threw open the window, reaching out with both hands, trying to seize the wings of that tiny red creature... and tear them apart.

And they shattered.

Everyone gathered around me after finding me sprawled like a corpse on the ground of the orphanage's main courtyard.

I had fallen from my room upstairs, all because I had been trying to destroy the very thing that had destroyed me...



Only to find that it was my own bones that ended up shattered.

Once again, I heard the girls gasp, their mouths hanging open in a moment that was equal parts madness and absurdity...

And then, suddenly, sleep came.

At last, it slipped into my body and settled over my wandering emotions, lost among the branches of the trees in that garden...

My sleep had finally come to an end.

I woke to the voice of a nurse, looking at me with pity.

“Are you all right? You’re in the hospital now, sweetheart. Don’t worry. We’re here to look after you and take care of you.”



But instead of asking where I was or what had happened to me, all I could do was writhe in pain and scream as I stared at my left shoulder. It was shattered and torn apart, like the petals of a rose that had tried to break free from the earth, only to be crushed beneath a passing foot before it could escape.

I clutched the nurse's arm and squeezed my eyes shut with all the strength I had, forcing them so tightly closed that it felt as though they might sink straight into my skull.

What I didn't know was that, by doing so, I had turned the entire hospital into a storm of endless moans and cries.



They gave me a painkiller, and I finally grew still, silently staring at the machines and wires surrounding me and my bed. They looked like the threads of a gigantic spiderweb, slowly wrapping themselves around me with every blink—or like cold, gray metal chains binding my burning limbs.

The nurses left, leaving me alone, staring at the pain in my shoulder as it seemed to stare back at me.

I quietly closed my eyes, even though I was still awake.

This time, there was no window for me to gaze through at the shapes of the clouds, the glow of the stars, their voices, their little plays, and their conversations with the planets.



But I opened my eyes again at once when I remembered that the butterfly had chosen my left shoulder when everything had happened in that little garden.

Or... was it not a coincidence?!

What if the red butterfly wasn't a butterfly at all, but a red demon?!

As I pondered this, drifting through a world of endless questions, a sudden knock on the door jolted me violently back to reality, sending a shiver of terror through my mind.

Would those nurses, devoid of any expression, never leave me alone?!

They looked like machines. Like robots. Moving slowly, their metallic bodies making faint knocking sounds with every step.



Why hasn't the nurse come in yet?

Is she waiting for me to say, "Come in"? I can barely speak, let alone invite her in... Hah! Am I in a hospital, or have I somehow wandered onto a stage?!

Four robots entered through the doorway, staring straight at me.

They were made of cheap, poorly assembled metal parts, yet there was something terrifying about them.

One of them was so unnaturally tall that it couldn't fit through the doorway. It swayed awkwardly, its body bending into something that looked like a ladder being carried upright.

As a result, several metal pieces fell from it—screws and the like—except they were stained with fresh, red blood. Exactly the same color as the butterfly!



The robots looked like children's toys that had somehow come to life and started walking on their own.

I screamed, desperately trying to sit up or move, but I couldn't.

Didn't I say it before?

I'm trapped.

Metal chains surrounded me, winding around my body like the threads of a gigantic spiderweb.

Suddenly, the head of one of the four robots fell off, and a gigantic black spider crawled out of it, as large as a wardrobe!

How could something that size possibly have been inside?!

Everything was completely out of the ordinary!



No one came, despite my screams.

Had every human being died?!

What had happened while I was unconscious?

Had I been asleep for years, only to wake up to the sound of the end of the world?!

The twenty-foot-tall spider suddenly leapt onto my left shoulder, while the robots bounced off the floor and then dropped back down, as though some enormous hand above them were making them jump.

With every bounce, pieces of metal flew from their bodies, splattered with strange, unidentified blood.

I screamed in terror—terrified by the creature, by its appearance, and by the unbearable pain shooting through me.



But the hospital walls, its furniture, windows, and rooms never heard that scream.

The spider silenced me after forcing one of its legs into me... into my mouth!

I felt the coarse bristles of its thick leg against my tongue, which seemed to have stopped breathing. Moments later, I watched in horror as another leg was forced into my mouth, which was beginning to go numb.

After what felt like an hour stretched across endless minutes and seconds, all of its legs had found their way into my mouth. My tongue had surrendered to death, my brain seemed to be overwhelmed by the stench of it, my heart had given in, and my eyes had bulged outward, stretched to their absolute limit...



It was over.

The spider suddenly withdrew from inside me, then disappeared back into the head of the fallen robot. As it did, its enormous body gradually shrank, smaller and smaller, until it was no larger than an eyeball.

And yet, despite everything, my soul was still alive.

At that moment, I felt like the warriors of ancient battles—those who were pierced through, then abandoned on the cold ground amid the stench of corpses, death, and blood, left to slowly bleed away their final moments.

But as I drifted through those thoughts, wandering from one question to another, my consciousness suddenly snapped back with a shudder of terror triggered by a knock at the door!



Even the robots were startled. They froze in place, their movements abruptly ceasing until they became nothing more than wax statues.

Now, who could possibly be coming to join this little horror show in my hospital room?

Could it be another monster like them?!

“Ah! Oh my God! What on earth am I looking at?! What happened here?! Oh God, help us!

Are you all right?! What are these machines?! What... You're bleeding!

There's blood all over the bed—and it's even spilled beyond it! And what happened to your mouth?!

It's... it's torn apart!

And your eyes... they look like they're almost bulging out of your face!



Are you even breathing?! What... Oh God!

I'm going to get the others! Please, stay here!

Help! Somebody help me! Haaaah!!”

Suddenly, the nurse noticed the severed head lying on the floor, swaying slightly.

She approached it, trembling.

I watched her through my eyes, which were bulging grotesquely from their sockets.

But my mouth wouldn't respond. I couldn't even swallow.

How could I tell her that there was a spider inside that head—one far larger than she was?

How could I tell her that, only moments ago, it had crawled into my body and begun weaving white threads through my insides?



How could I explain that my liver was now wrapped, inside and out, in thick, unbreakable strands?

How could I tell her that every organ inside me was tied to another, bound together by metal chains?

The twenty-foot-tall spider suddenly leapt onto her left foot, while the robots began bouncing off the floor and dropping back down, as though some enormous hand above them were controlling their every movement!

With every leap, pieces of metal broke away from the robots, splattered with traces of strange, unidentified blood. The nurse screamed in terror at the sight of it.



But the hospital walls, its furniture, windows, and rooms never heard her scream.

The four robots silenced her, surrounding her and pressing their metallic bodies against her head!

I watched as they muffled her screams, rendered her completely voiceless, and lifted her as effortlessly as a cat snatching a mouse from above.

Then they began smashing her against the window beside me, again and again, until the glass shattered into countless fragments, mingling with tears and blood.

It was a collective suicide unfolding before my eyes.

They all leapt through the window, plunging down toward the chaos and traffic below.



And then I was left alone in the room, with nothing but the severed metal head beside me.

The spider emerged from it once again, slowly returning to its enormous size.

I could hear it walking, its legs slowly tapping against the floor.

Terrified, I tried to close my eyes, but they had bulged so far out of their sockets that I could no longer shut them completely—not even by one percent!

I had reached a level of terror where I couldn't even manage the simple act of closing my eyes.

The sound of its footsteps stopped beneath my bed, only to be replaced by the faint noise of it climbing onto the gray blanket above me.



A full minute passed before I realized...

It was walking across my forehead.

Across my brain, my rib cage, and my vocal cords!

Then, suddenly, it stopped moving...

And died on top of me.

I glanced at it and found that it had transformed into a skeleton.

But not just any skeleton—a skeleton of a gigantic spider.

Its legs remained exactly as they were, except now they were white, gleaming...

Everything was.

Even its eyes... they were still there, but they had become bones as well!

Police officers entered the room, and the skeletal remains suddenly vanished, dissolving into a pool of sticky dust, with a sizable drop of crimson blood at its center.



The blood mingled with the rays of sunlight streaming through the shattered red window, its broken, torn edges bearing marks that seemed to speak of war and death.

One of the officers slowly lifted me, carrying me away to somewhere else... and toward new events, while the others approached the silent robot's head and the window, examining them with bewildered eyes.

I was relieved that the humans outside hadn't died after all. There they were—some of them had finally appeared, carrying me in their arms and taking me to another hospital.

In truth, they never told me that they were taking me to a hospital.

I simply assumed that's where we were headed.



And my guess turned out to be just a mirage! They took me to a place I didn't recognize at first, but the crows in the trees, the eerie silence, the dust, the flowers, the pickaxe, the gravedigger, and the coffin all revealed that it was the cemetery!

They had no idea I was still here!

And maybe they have a point...

Maybe that's not so odd after they saw someone like me who doesn't move, doesn't breathe, not even from his chest...

I can hear the tiny grains of dust chatting away, saying, "Look how ugly I am!" The dust seems to be pushing me away, saying, "No way! I won't let you get close! Just wait, you ghostly face!"



And I can also hear the soft sighs of the girls who were with me in my little orphanage. It's surprising! How sweet of them! They used to dislike me and wish they could be rid of someone as ugly as me!

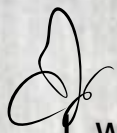
Yes, I feel unattractive. I came into this world with a nose that I don't like, and it makes me feel sad, like I'm struggling every moment.



My face looks so strange, even to people, and I can almost tell how much the robots and the spiders felt sorry for me after catching a glimpse of my really ugly face.

That's why people looked at me like that in the park when I jumped because of the butterfly. And that's also why that driver got so mad at me; he had just come across something really awful, on top of the sadness of losing his mom all in one day, and he wanted to let out his anger and hurt by taking it out on that ugly, rotten face. Maybe that's also why that butterfly came after me; maybe it was saying, "Go back home and shut the door. We don't want anything strange in our beautiful green gardens!"

The digging went really well, and I could feel my body being gently supported to make sure nothing would break off, keeping it all together as one piece. I watched the dirt flying away as far as it could, trying not to get near me. My mouth still felt frozen and super tired.



I was tossed from the ground down into the pit... to the grave... to a fresh start.

The tiny grains of dust were bouncing around, jumping at each other and making a ruckus! They were just like the ants. Before I knew it, the dust vanished as I tumbled down! I was falling super fast, being whisked away millions of kilometers from the earth! And I'm still falling, with nothing to land on and find some calm! The darkness is getting darker! I'm starting to feel a bit worn out from all this falling!

Is there really not a single spot of land that would welcome my body to rest and sleep on?! Am I so unappealing that every little detail in this big world turns me away?!

I admit that I felt a wave of fear wash over me, a sense of helplessness so strong that, as I was falling, I just wanted to catch a glimpse of something beautiful, nothing else, before I reached my final moment.



Even if it was that red butterfly that made me tumble from the orphanage window... and drop from the window of life (the grave). The butterfly, even with its bright red color, is still a butterfly! And butterflies are so lovely! And we, as humans, adore them...

"Thank you for your lovely words, sweet girl, that's so kind of you; you've really touched my heart," the red butterfly said to me as I fell.

She was tumbling down with me, chatting in that nice way, picking her words and meanings just right. She was blushing, but now I saw her as beautiful, like I was seeing her for the very first time. My feelings for her had shifted. I feel happy now, even though I'm falling, because a little friend fell with me and said that I am... a beautiful girl!

That's the most amazing thing that's ever happened to me in my little life! I won't wish for anything else! My dream has come true! I've finally heard those two words: "Beautiful girl!"



Haha! I'm the happiest person tumbling down right now!

In a burst of pure excitement and joy, with happy tears rolling down my cheeks, I opened my mouth to let out a joyful scream, even though it felt all torn and frozen. But the scream never escaped; the butterfly had already flown right in! It had entered deep inside me! My very core! My insides! My guts!

As I drift through the air, I can feel my insides shifting and swaying like they're having a little dance party! I've come to understand what it's like to be awake while having a big surgery.

I shut my eyes in fear, but I got to a point where they were so wide open that I couldn't close them all the way, just a tiny bit! I felt so scared that I couldn't even manage to close my eyes.



Out of nowhere, the dance within me came to a halt, and in a wild, magical instant, the butterfly burst forth from my mouth, gathering up with its body and tiny wings those white threads that were woven and tangled inside, around my organs, my stomach, and my liver! She wrapped her wings with threads, even though they were weak! This is crazy! I can see hope shining in her little eyes!

"Hope... what a lovely word, don't you think, beautiful girl?" "Look at me, small and not so pretty, with a dull color, but I hold onto my hope that I can create a wonderful life just the way I want. So, be like me!"

I've looked up to you from the start, lovely girl. I started to soar, hoping to grab your attention, wanting to fill your heart with happiness, and I gently landed on your shoulder. All I wanted was to bring you comfort and remind you not to be hard on yourself about how you look, because that's something we can't change.



What really counts is how we behave and treat one another. That way, you'll be the most stunningly unique girl, beautiful girl! Sound good?

Those words signaled the end of the dream that followed me ever since I tumbled from the orphanage window. It was a scary dream, but its conclusion was sweet and lovely.

Didn't I mention that I'm only good at sleeping and diving into my dreamy adventures and spooky nightmares, filled with dark shapes and ghostly faces?

And now... my nap is done.

I woke up to the sound of a nurse looking at me with sympathy, saying:

"Hey there! How are you feeling? You're in the hospital now, my dear. No need to worry, we're here for you and taking good care of you."

But instead of asking where I was or what had happened to me, I just flinched and yelled, glancing at my left shoulder...



It's broken, ripped apart like the petals of a rose trying to escape its home, but was stepped on by a foot that just kept moving.

I took hold of the nurse's arm, shut my eyes tight, and pushed them in as far as I could, feeling like they were almost reaching my skull!

But I had no idea that by doing that, I had transformed the hospital into a whirlwind of never-ending moans and wails.

I got a lozenge, and it made me feel calm.

I gaze quietly at the gadgets and wires surrounding me and my bed. They resemble the strands of a huge spider gradually enveloping me; each time I blink, it feels like gray metal chains are tying me down with my aching limbs.

It was a challenging time, and it was painful for me, but as time went on, the injuries to my shoulder and arm have healed up nicely.

I walked out of the hospital feeling happy, remembering the last bits of that scary dream.



As I happily strolled down the road, I passed by two older ladies who were quietly chatting to one another.

"How unfortunate this girl looks!"

I've finally made it to my destination: the perfect medical center!

How joyful I feel!

I walked into the place, and one of the ladies working there smiled at me and said:

"How can I assist you? I'm here to help!"

I smiled back at her and said in a graceful and friendly tone, picking my words and meanings with care:

"I just had a chat with the wonderful director of my orphanage; she's on her way to pay you a visit. So, could you please help me get ready to head into the operating room for a little face makeover? Isn't modern technology and medicine just amazing? He said, 'I'll turn into the most beautiful ugly girl!' No deep thoughts, no silly stuff... May God bless cosmetic surgery for us, that's all!"

The House That Sighs at Night

(They're back... but this time, they're here to stay.)



Haneen Mahmoud Rushdi

It was nearly eleven o'clock at night when the police car pulled up in front of an old, abandoned house on the edge of the village. This was a place that no one had dared to go near for thirty years, ever since the chilling screams of a woman echoed through the stillness, as if she were being pulled down to hell.

Ilyad stepped out of the car, looked around the area, and said softly:

"Is this the place where the last girl went missing?" asked the corporal who was with him. Sure thing! They mentioned seeing lights dancing behind the windows, even though the house has been shut for years.

Ilyad took a little break, then said:

Open the door, and let's discover the secrets this place has to offer.

The wind was howling, and the trees were groaning like they were sad, while the corporal crouched down to open the old, rusty iron door.

The ground was blanketed in thick dust, and the walls were falling apart. On one of the walls, there was some faded writing in a dark, blood-red hue:

"She isn't gone... she's just waiting."

The corporal said with a bit of hesitation:

Sir, maybe it would be a good idea to head back. This place... feels a bit strange.

Iyad responded in a chilly manner:

Everything seems normal except for your fear. Keep going with the inspection.

They walked ahead down the long hallway, each step making a sound like someone was following them.

Iyad suddenly halted and lifted the lamp towards the ceiling, uncovering an old rope with something that looked like tangled black hair dangling from it.

He reached out and gently tugged him down a bit, and out of nowhere, a doll covered in dirt tumbled down from above, its face all messed up, and its shiny eyes staring right at him.

The corporal said, clearly scared:
I promise you, sir, she is moving! I saw her hand
tremble!

lyad didn't say a word but kept walking toward
the last room at the end of the hallway. He
slowly opened the door, and a heavy, stuffy air
burst out, as if the room had been shut for ages.

The walls were adorned with images of women,
their faces layered one over the other, almost as
if someone had unkindly arranged them that
way. In the center of the room, there stood a
wooden chair with old, rusty shackles attached
to it.

lyad moved carefully, and when he pointed the
lamp at the ground, he noticed a big dark patch,
kind of like dried blood.

He spoke in a soft, worried voice:
This isn't just a story from a book... it's a place
where something bad happened.

Suddenly, the door banged shut right behind them!

The corporal hurried to the door, attempting to open it, but it was firmly shut, and footsteps started to echo in the room, as if someone was moving around them without being seen.

The corporal yelled:

Who's there?! Come on out!

Then, from the shadows, a woman's voice emerged, soft yet near:

At last... you're here again!

Iyad twirled around fast, holding the lamp high, but he found no one there!

However, the mark on the ground started to grow slowly, and dark mist began to rise from it.

The corporal yelled while stepping back:

Hey there, something's popping up from the ground!

But Iyad stayed strong, even as his sweat dripped gently down his forehead.

Who are you? What do you need?

The voice returned, sounding sad this time:
I am the one whose cries faded away in this house... I am the one who was never laid to rest!

Then the chair started to tremble all by itself, and with a loud creak, its iron chain snapped, making a metal chain tumble to the ground.

The corporal said, out of breath:
Hey there, let's head out right away!

But then, the door swung open all by itself, and a chilly breeze rushed out, as if the house had let out its final breath.

They dashed outside, with the sounds of quick footsteps trailing behind them to the edge of the road.

When Iyad turned around, he noticed the silhouette of a woman standing by the front door of the house. Her long hair fell over her face, and her eyes glowed with a red light, just like glowing embers.

The corporal spoke softly, his voice shaking:
Did you catch that?!

"Iyad," he said, gazing at the shadow without blinking.

Sure... but nobody will believe us.

Then a voice came from inside the house, like a thousand women were all screaming together:

"The case is still open..."

The earth shook for a brief moment, and then everything went back to being calm.

The following day, when the police came back to look into things, they discovered the two lamps lying on the floor, and the door was wide open...

But there was no sign of "Iyad" or *the Corporal."

All that was discovered on the wall was a phrase freshly written in black letters:

***"They're back... but this time, they're
here to stay."***



THE NIGHT'S WHISPERS

*You're
too
late*

Fatima Dawlah

At two o'clock in the morning, the night came knocking at his door, and once more, darkness had settled in.

Out of nowhere, the lights turned off, and a message appeared on the wall of the room: "You are very late."

The knocking gets louder, almost like a racing heartbeat. You glance around, sensing that something is out to get you.

You spin around and catch soft, chilly whispers in your ear: "Don't worry, I'm right here with you."

The roads resonate once more, and the sound comes back as if the walls are taking a breath.

Your breath turned to ice, and you sensed something unusual. You couldn't tell if it was just your imagination or if something real was stirring around you.

You blink your eyes open and realize that all of this was just a headache in your head, a headache brought on by those pesky dark thoughts that sneak into your mind during the late hours of the night.

The thought of loneliness, of being by yourself, isn't a terrible idea on its own, but the things that swirl around in your mind can be really tough.

As you take a moment to relax and breathe, you suddenly hear whispers that are closer than they've ever been.

She strolls around the area, looking in every nook and cranny... nothing, no one.

Then, out of nowhere, you spot a single word on the wall right in front of you: "I am behind you."

Your heart is pounding, and your mind keeps saying, "What if something's behind me?" You spin around fast, but there's no one there.

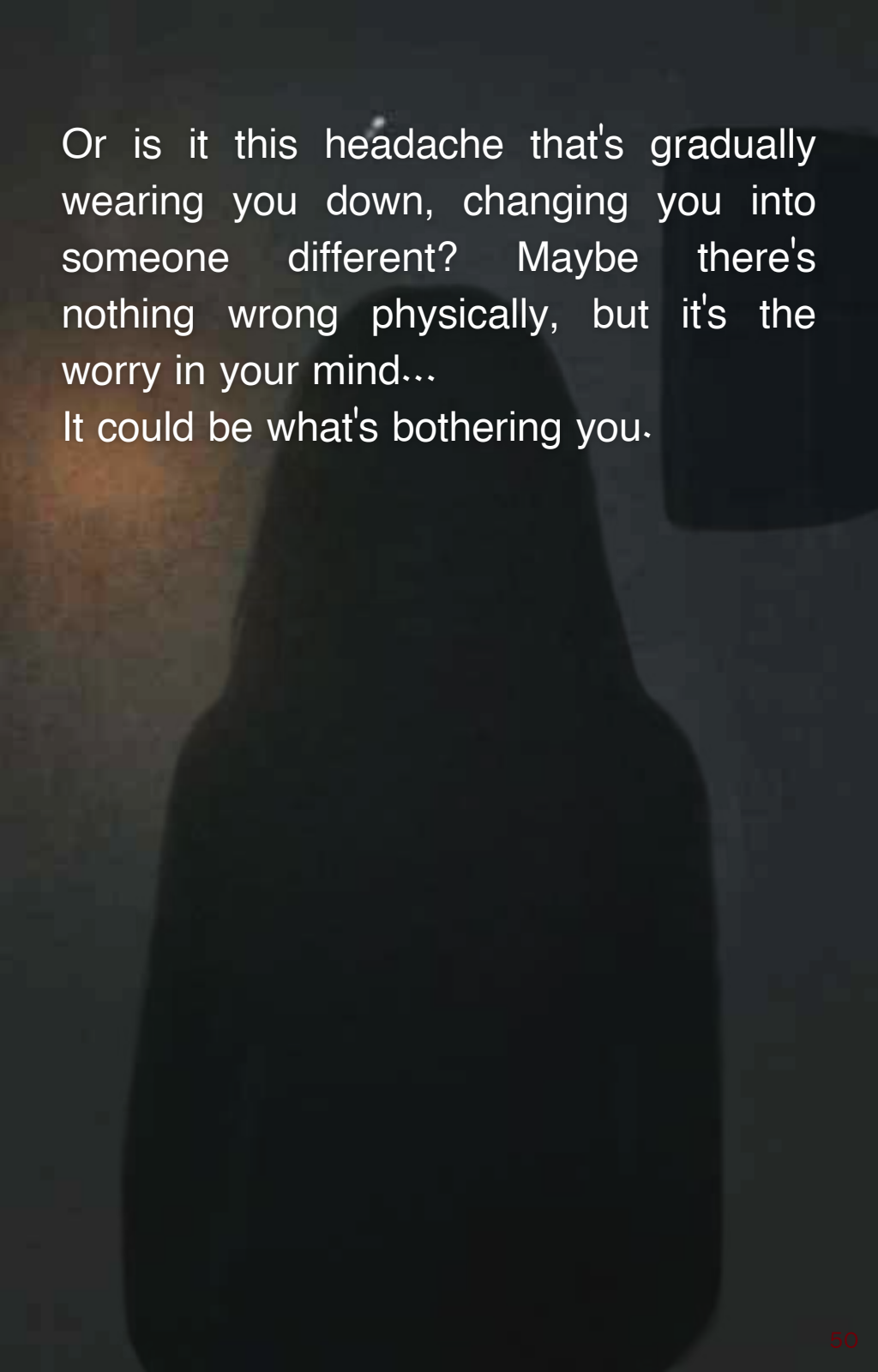
But in the mirror's reflection, you notice a shadow shifting behind you, something stirring in the emptiness.

Soft whispers, like your own thoughts coming closer, gently brushing against your neck and discovering your hands are chilly and shaking. Then a deep voice sneaks into your mind, almost like a whisper: "You're too late."

The air is getting thicker...

You're here, all by yourself...

But are you truly by yourself?



Or is it this headache that's gradually wearing you down, changing you into someone different? Maybe there's nothing wrong physically, but it's the worry in your mind...

It could be what's bothering you.

A Thread Hanging by the Truth

"I arrived...and discovered that I was already there."

SHAHED NIDAL DABOUR

In the heart of the dark night, beneath the heavy, rainy sky, where the cold nips at spirits before it reaches the body, Zaid sat in his home, feeling very alone, with only the soft flicker of a fading candle breaking the silence, slowly melting away just like his heart.

A gloomy tune wraps around him, while the wind wails against the windows, and the clock's hands break the quiet, almost as if trying to pull him from a dream he wants to keep enjoying.

Suddenly, a weird noise cuts through his thoughts, causing him to glance at the door, his eyes shining with worry and fear.
midnight...

Who could be knocking on the door at this time? The entire city is fast asleep, and only our thoughts are wide awake.

Zaid got up with a bit of a struggle, like the sand was trying to keep him from moving and making him go slow.

He walked up to the door, his hand shaking just like his heart, and softly whispered:

"Who could it be?" But all I got was silence in return.

He opened the door a bit nervously, and there in front of him was just darkness, holding out a small piece of paper that had this written on it:

"If you're looking for the truth, head over to the spot where it all started."

He stood still, his memories sparking to life... This night felt just like that night from five years back, the night his dear friend lost their life.

The scenes flashed by like an old movie reel, each frame filled with hurt.

Was he tricked? Did he overlook something? Could it be that the truth wasn't what he believed all these years?

After thinking it over, Zaid chose to go back to the theater of memories, to the spot where everything spilled out.

The wind is howling, and the night is darker than it's ever been. He strolls down a path he knows leads somewhere, but he has no idea what's waiting for him at the end.

Out of the deep darkness, a mysterious figure suddenly emerged.

He came over quietly, pulled a small flash drive from his pocket, and gently placed it in Zaid's shaking hand, like the hand of an elderly person saying goodbye to life.

Then he vanished.

Zaid came back home, his heart weighed down by overwhelming worry.

He flipped the flash drive over, his hands shaking, his eyes looking for the truth, even if it hurt.

As soon as the scene started, everything around it crumbled away.

His friend didn't lose his life at the hands of another; instead, he took his own life. He chose to end it quietly, leaving the truth behind.

The radio was still on, but Zaid's mind had gone completely blank.

"How?! That's not possible... I was right there!" he murmured to himself, his heart racing like a drum in battle.

He kept playing the clip again and again.

On the screen... his friend shows up peacefully, almost like he's speaking to his very heart:

"Zaid... if you come across this flash drive, just know that I'm not gone like you believed... the truth is way too complicated to explain... and too terrible to keep secret." His eyes were filled with tears, and his voice sounded tired.

"What you did to me, Zaid, was not easy."

"I'm sorry, I couldn't share everything back then... but now you really deserve to know." Zaid's tears felt like they were frozen, as if time had come to a standstill.

What mistake did he make? The memories rushed back like a wave:

The intense disagreement... the tough words... abandoning him at a time when he needed him the most.

They now realize... that the thread connecting his doorstep pulls him toward his heart, where the truth is tucked away.

Among the files on the flash drive, there's another audio file called:

"The other side of the story." He hit the play button... "Zaid... the truth that remains untold becomes a prison."

I struggled against my shadows, but you... walked away.

I didn't mean to point fingers at you, but you were the last person I wanted to say goodbye to.

"The place where the story started... is not just where you discovered the paper, but within you."

"Come to the old room... in our forgotten house, you'll discover everything there."

The following morning, Zaid took his pain with him and made his way to his childhood home. The house is in bad shape, with its walls crumbling just like the friendship between him and his buddy has crumbled, but everything else stays the same, except for that one room.

The room has been secured ever since the incident.

He reached out with his shaking hand, opened the door, and there in the middle was a small table with a leather notebook sitting on it.

He opened it, and his heart started to ache.

Pages filled with pain, disappointment, loneliness, sadness, betrayals, heartbreaks, and a last glimmer of hope that "Zaid" will someday come to understand.

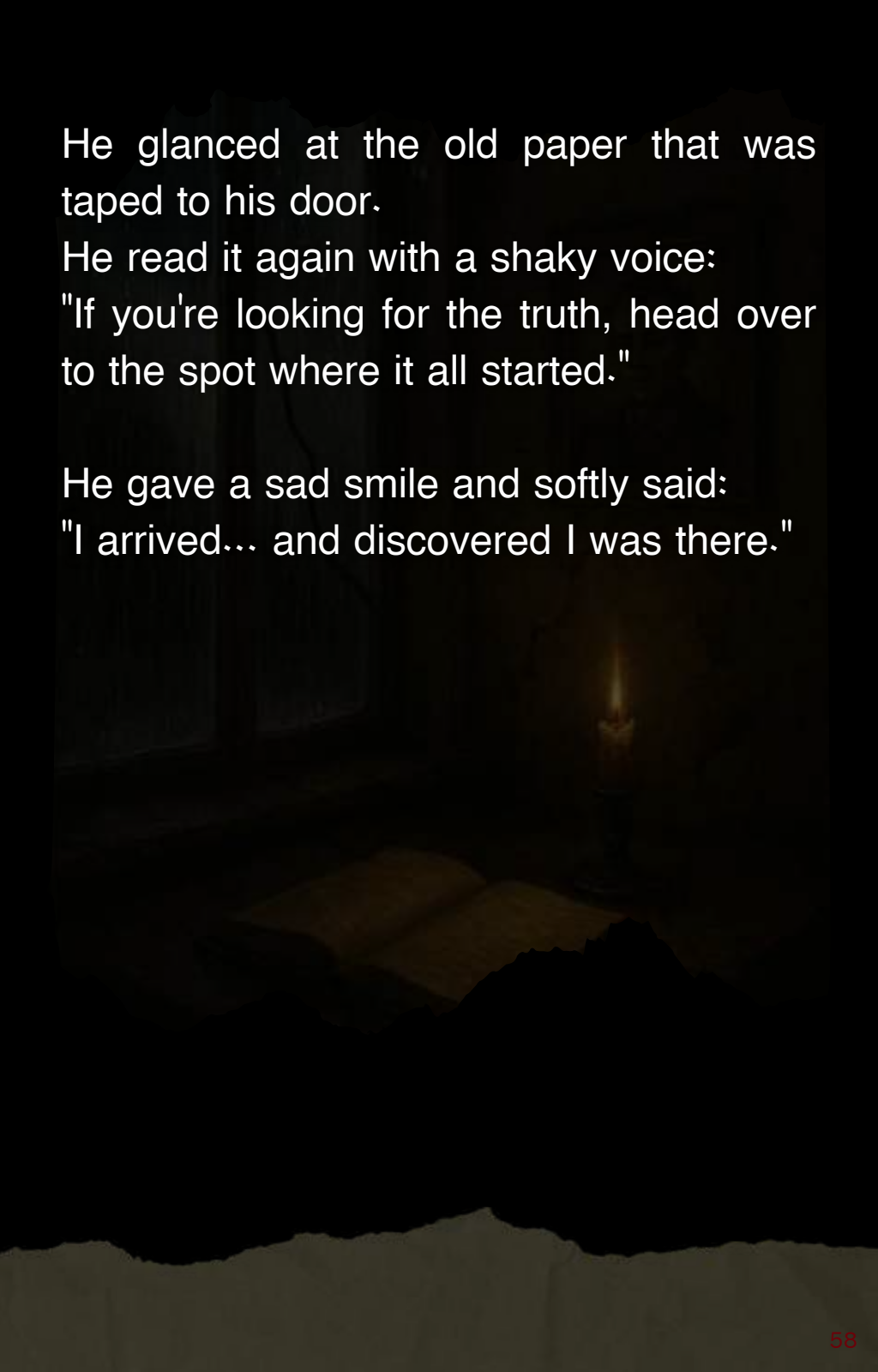
And at the bottom of the page, it said:

"I understand you didn't intend to hurt me, but you weren't around."

And if you're reading this right now... please, don't weigh yourself down with more guilt.

I picked the end... and I decided to share the truth with you, so you wouldn't be stuck in the illusion of murder... and believe that the world turned its back on me like you did." Zaid sat in the center of the room... and lit a candle, just like he had the night before. But this time, his tears were not just for regret... but for healing.

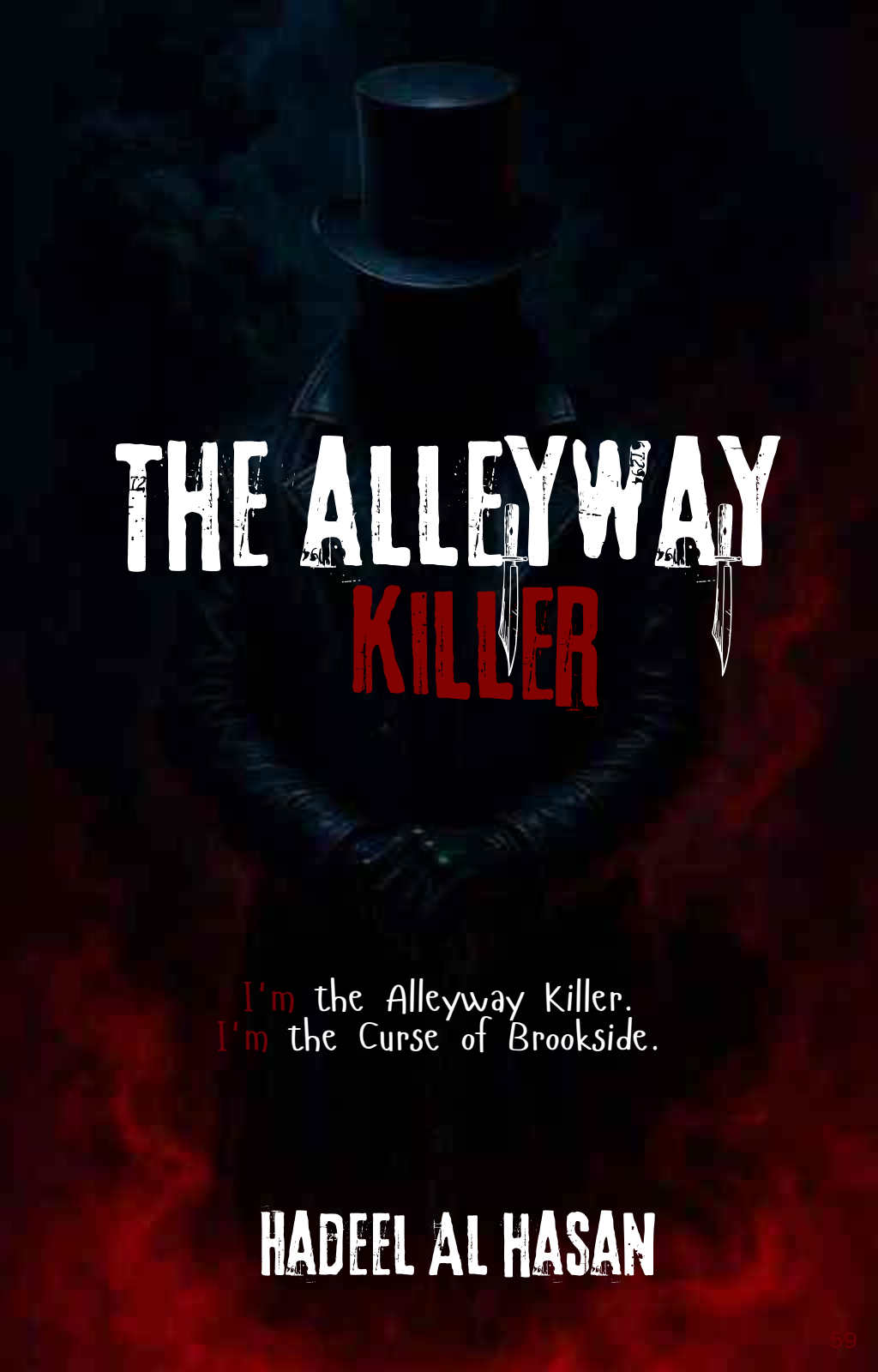
The truth can sting, sure... but it also sets you free.

A dark, atmospheric scene. In the center, a lit candle sits on a small stand, casting a warm, yellow glow. In front of the candle, an open book lies flat on a dark surface. The background is very dark, with some faint, indistinct shapes that could be parts of a room or furniture. The overall mood is mysterious and somber.

He glanced at the old paper that was
taped to his door.

He read it again with a shaky voice:
"If you're looking for the truth, head over
to the spot where it all started."

He gave a sad smile and softly said:
"I arrived... and discovered I was there."



THE ALLEYWAY KILLER

I'm the Alleyway Killer.
I'm the Curse of Brookside.

HADEEL AL HASAN

Legend has it that in the city of Buckside, crimes happen in the most terrifying and brutal ways, far beyond what anyone can understand. The criminal is a mysterious figure that wanders the alleys at night, choosing its victims with great care.

He always leaves a weird mask with red stains behind, showing that he was here. In Bookside, wandering around at night is not allowed because of that creature whose tale has reached every home.

But on a night when the chill grew stronger and the winds howled, the young man, Adel, came home late from work. The streets were totally deserted, except for a strange whisper that Adel sensed and the sound of heavy footsteps trailing behind him. He spun around quickly and found a young man standing before him, dressed in ragged clothes, with a thin frame, messy hair that covered half of his face, breathing heavily, and bowing his head as he panted. In one hand, he clutched a mask, and in the other, a sharp knife dripping with blood.

Adel stood completely still, sweat trickling down his forehead, his arms and legs felt heavy, and he couldn't move at all.

The young man lifted his head in an unusual manner and erupted into wild laughter, shouting, "I am your nightmare! I'm not crazy like you say. I just cherished my solitude, and you turned me away, tricking me with those masks of yours. Everyone in Bookside is going to meet a dreadful fate because I am the alley killer, the curse of Bookside!"

They say the Alley Killer is still out there, waiting for every liar who puts on a mask and pretends to be flawless. So, watch out! You might just find yourself standing right in front of the Alley Killer one day.

Some souls don't just wander the night...
they carry a silence that haunts the living.



IT WAS A NIGHTMARE



ZAINAB ALI

NOVEL

I was sprinting as fast as I could, my breath getting quicker as I escaped from a mysterious figure into an unknown future. I dashed to the first door I saw and shut it firmly, as if that door was my only refuge in all that madness.

The sound of his heavy footsteps got closer and closer. I hurried to the closet and squeezed inside, holding my breath the moment I heard the door slam. I shut my eyes tight, whispering to myself, "Please don't come any closer," but it didn't help! I could feel his footsteps getting nearer, and with every step, the heat grew stronger, like I was in an oven. The shadowy figure opened the closet door...

My eyes nearly popped out of my head and rolled right in front of me when I saw him... with that peeling face, his burnt skin, and his big build, he looked really gross and scary. He reached out and held my face. In that moment, I felt like it was all over, and I had no choice but to give in to whatever was about to happen.

He scooped me up by my leg and lifted me high into the air; my feet were up and my head was down, and my heart felt like it was about to stop. Fear, tension, anxiety, terror... and there were more steps ahead!

I shut my eyes, and out of nowhere, I thought of the one place I could turn to, yes, "God." I comforted myself, saying, "God is with us and won't leave us; we will get through this." I started whispering verses from the Quran in a soft, defeated tone. His hold on me relaxed, and he gazed at me with his yellowed eyes, confused, before letting me down to the ground. I couldn't keep my balance; I collapsed, my knees too weak to hold me up.

He was sitting right in front of me, resting his head on my lap, enjoying the recitation in a peaceful way. I felt stuck; the room was full of versions of him, and all I could do was keep reciting and praying quietly.

The figures started to come closer, so I squeezed my eyes shut, hoping and praying to God that this strange experience would be over soon. When I finally opened them again, I found myself back in my dimly lit room. I let out a sigh of relief and said, "Thank goodness, it was just a nightmare."

I turned on the light and glanced around the corners of the room, as though checking to make sure there was nothing there... no one.

Then my mother opened the door.

She looked at me and smiled. I was so frightened that I ran to her, sobbing like a child in her arms. I began telling her about the nightmare, then reproached her through my tears.

“You’re late...”

I murmured bitterly, “Why did you leave me alone?”

She held me tightly, and then... she fell silent for a moment.

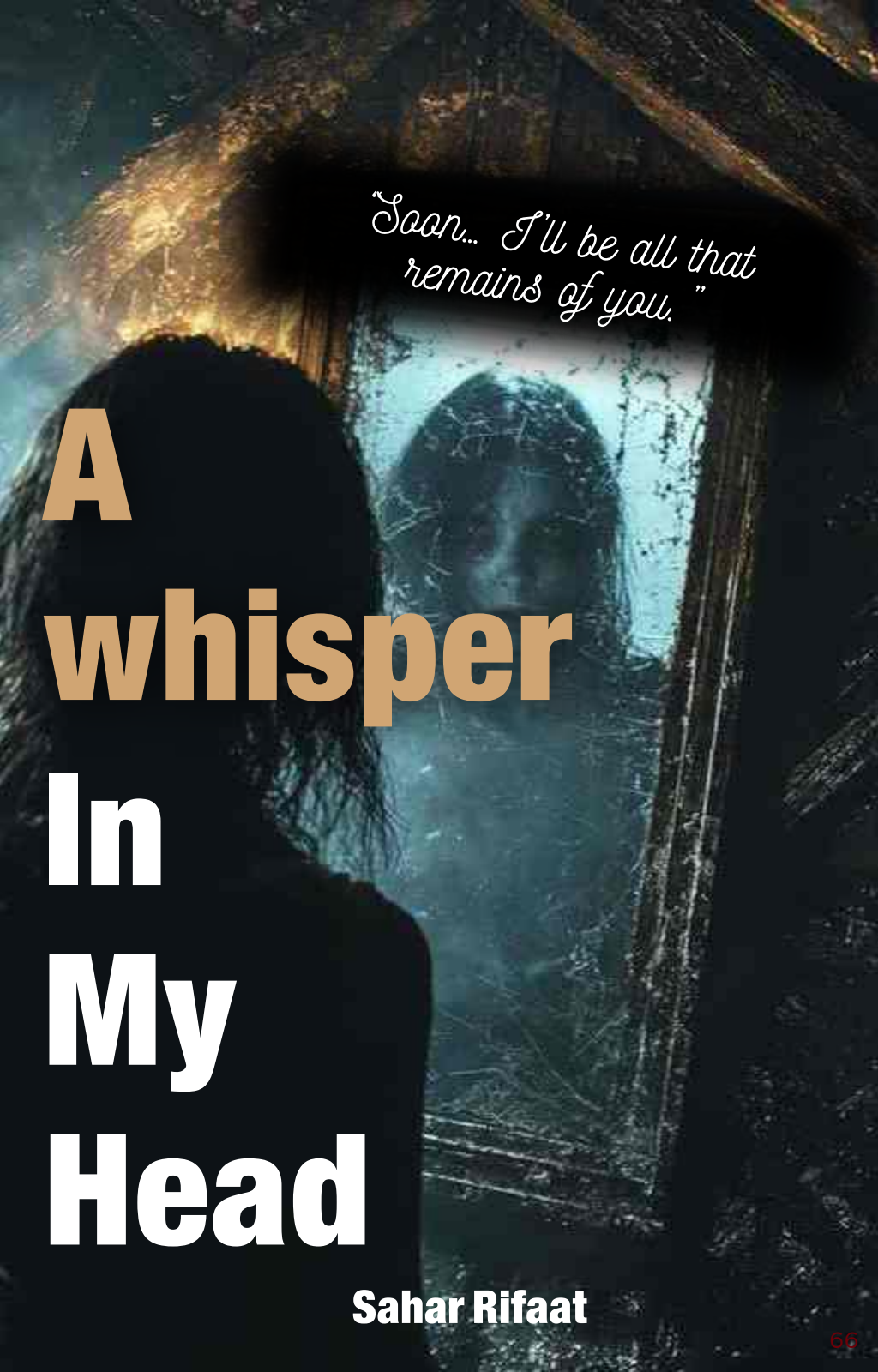
When it finally dawned on me...

My eyes widened, a sharp ache seized the left side of my chest.

Because I remembered, I had been alone in the house that day.

And the woman smiling at me, gently stroking my hair..., she wasn’t my mother, i swallowed hard and whispered, my voice trembling:

“Who are you?”



*"Soon... I'll be all that
remains of you."*

A whisper In My Head

Sahar Rifaat

Another night... and in the room, all I can hear are my shaky breaths and the voice in my head that feels so different from who I am. As the night becomes quiet, that whisper comes closer... as if it's tucked away inside me, waiting for the moment I shut my eyes, to remind me that I'm not by myself.

At first, I believed it was just my own thoughts... but it turned out it wasn't.

His voice sounds a bit like mine, but it's softer and a little rougher.

He shares with me every night:

"Don't think about running away... I'm yours more than you are even yours." I sense it when I rest my head on the pillow... it flows into my mind like water soaking into parched earth.

He holds my gaze, and that chilly smile that shows up on my face without me wanting it to.

I glance in the mirror and see a girl who resembles me... but she isn't me.

Her look is more intense, and her smile is a bit more mysterious.

"You believed your thoughts were your own... but they've actually been mine for quite a while."

My hand is shaking... My voice is softly sharing things I haven't figured out how to express.

The night has turned into a locked cage, and I find myself as the prisoner who must listen to a voice that emerged from deep inside me... and has taken root in every part of my soul.

Tonight... I'm feeling a bit lost about who I really am.

Who's talking? Is it me... or her? All I know is that she moved in closer... until I could feel her breath brushing against mine.

"Soon... I'll be all that remains of you."

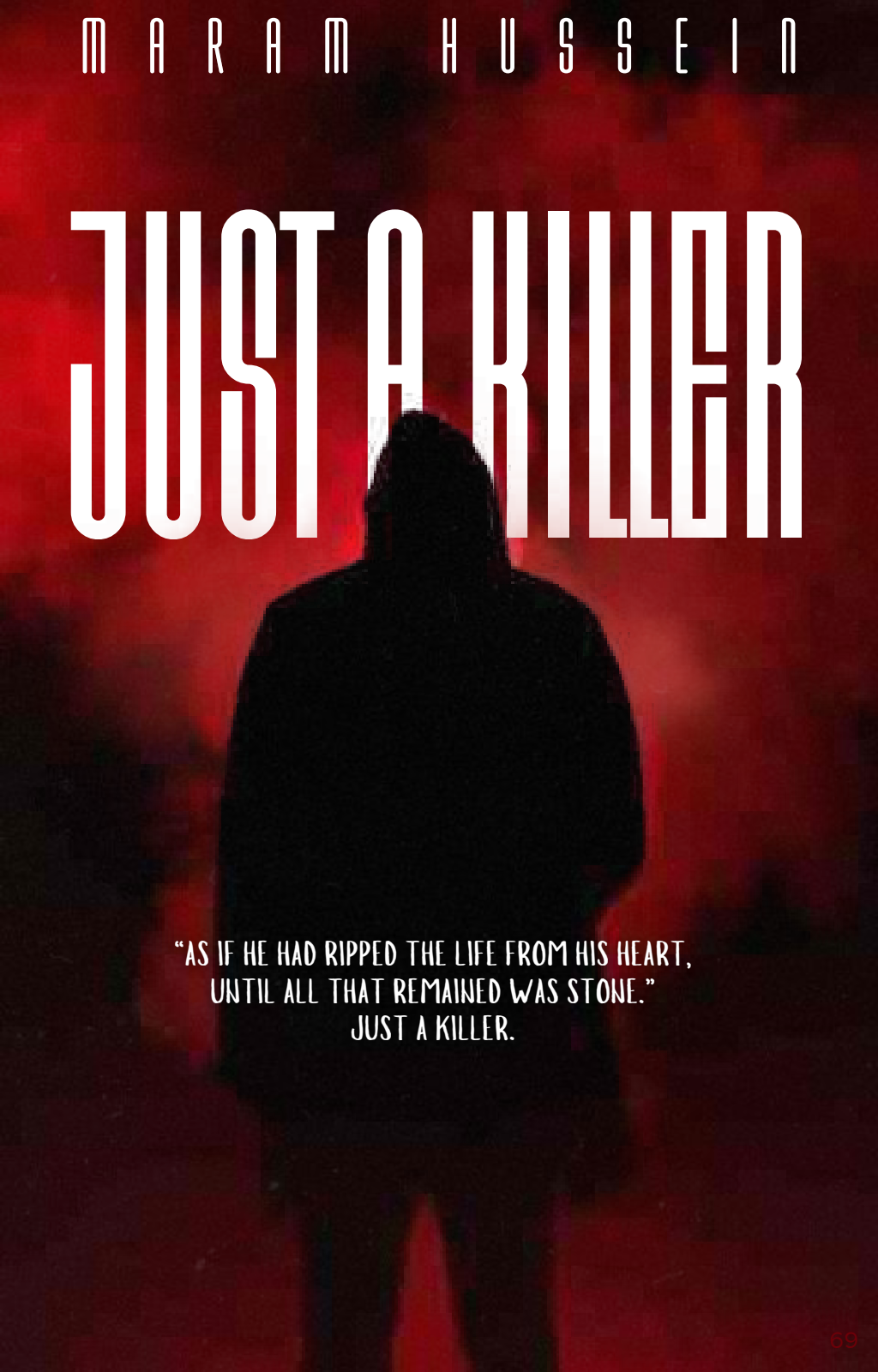
"Soon... I'll be all that remains of you."

"Soon... I'll be all that remains of you."

"Soon... I'll be all that remains of you."

M A R A M H U S S E I N

JUST A KILLER



"AS IF HE HAD RIPPED THE LIFE FROM HIS HEART,
UNTIL ALL THAT REMAINED WAS STONE."
JUST A KILLER.

The spot was super quiet, but everything around it was a whirlwind of chaos... Blood was splattered all over, the air felt chilly, the rain was coming down hard, and the rumble of thunder was shaking the very core of hearts.

He stood in front of the mirror, gazing at himself with a wicked grin, rolling his eyes and looking over his bloodied body after he had harmed his family.

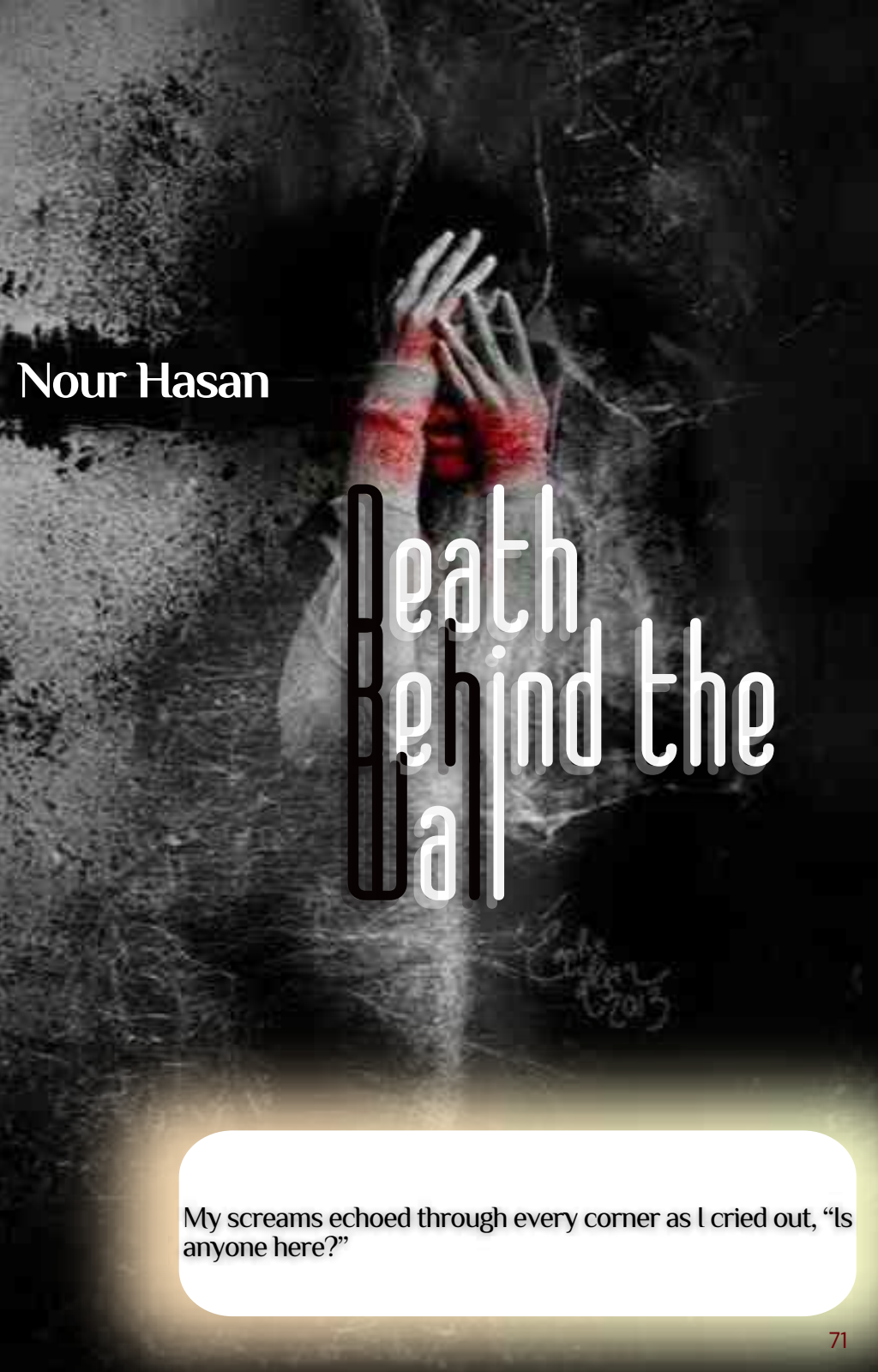
Even though it was chilly, he gazed at their bodies and smiled, as if he had taken the warmth from his heart and turned it into stone.

He noticed his little sister still twitching a bit, as if she were trying really hard to hold on. He walked over to her with a menacing stride and plunged a knife into her heart.

Blood splashed across his face... and she lay there, looking at him with desperate eyes! He lifted the blood-soaked knife that had ended their lives and brought it to his lips. He started to lick it, savoring the taste of blood as if he were a vampire... or a troubled soul who had lost his way.

He burst into laughter as he shouted:

"Yes... you really deserved that!"



Nour Hasan

Death Behind the Wall

My screams echoed through every corner as I cried out, “Is anyone here?”

During the night, I heard some really strange sounds, and my mind was racing all over the place. It felt like the area around me was haunted by jinn. I was at a loss for what to do. A chilling silence wrapped around me, and the sound kept getting closer and closer.

Sweat started to trickle down from my forehead all over my body; I was completely overwhelmed by fear. I wished I could run away to a distant place. The lights were shining bright, and then, out of nowhere, they went out with a powerful gust of wind.

A storm rolled in with a powerful wind, sending everything swirling away and vanishing in an instant.

The world I once saw is no longer the same; my cries echoed in every corner as I exclaimed:

"Is anyone around? Is anyone hearing me? Please help me!"

All of this was for nothing; I felt completely worn out, my throat was parched, and my tongue just wouldn't cooperate. My words stumbled out like a little one just starting to talk.

A weird feeling washed over me; the walls and ceilings were splattered with red, the ground looked like it was falling apart, and everything felt like it was about to end. My eyes widened, my spirit wanted to break free, and breathing was super tough... like a skeleton.

What's going on? One of the spirits says again, "Did you dream of living? No, we won't let you rest."

He began to come closer to me...

I gave in; I just couldn't fight back or protect myself. Their boisterous laughter echoed in my ears.

This is the first time I've felt this way, wondering if there are people who don't want the best for me and might have caused me harm...

Their wickedness has hit this point, curse them and send them away.

I was one of your guests tonight...but no one noticed me.

*the night
the guests
never left*

Waed Mohammad

I had some friends over at my place, right in the living room. We spent hours chatting and laughing, with soft music creating a cozy vibe. At four in the morning, everyone headed home, and a heavy silence settled over the house. I figured I should catch some sleep before dawn prayers, so I locked all the doors tight and went to my room. Just as I closed my eyes, I heard a strange noise... a soft thud, like something had dropped. I sat up in bed, listening closely. I thought it might be my cat, so I called out firmly, "Evie! Evie, it's not playtime!" But to my surprise... there she was at my feet, fast asleep, her eyes half-open, almost like she was trying to warn me. Suddenly, she looked at me, her eyes shining in the dark... then she sat up quickly, staring at the door as if she saw something! My heart dropped. I slipped out of the room quietly... my steps careful, the darkness making it hard to breathe. I made my way to the living room... I clearly remembered closing its door. But now? It was wide open. I stepped in slowly, as if something inside me was whispering: "Turn back... turn back right now." But I pressed on, fear wrapping around me like a blanket.

I spotted a shadow... not just sitting there, but gently moving in the corner. The vase on the table was shattered, like a little one had been playing with it... but there were no kids around. Suddenly, I remembered... those tales my grandmother used to share about the ghosts that roamed this house. Back then, I would chuckle and say, "That's just silly." But now... those silly stories were right in front of me, whispering, watching... alive. Out of nowhere, something shifted in the shadow. I froze until I heard a meow... then a tiny head popped out from under the table. It was the neighbor's cat. All this fright... for a cat? I couldn't help but laugh, even with my heart racing, and said, "Oh, you scared me more than all the Netflix thrillers put together, you little rascal!" I scooped it up and headed back to my room. I set it down next to me on the bed, but it stayed still. It kept staring at the door... the same look as before... a warning look. I pulled the covers up and tried to drift off to sleep. But something felt off. It suddenly got chilly, and the air in the room felt thick. Then... I heard the door creak open again. But I swear I locked it this time!

I sat up all of a sudden, glancing over at the door... it was half-open. And the cat? She wasn't on the bed. "Ivy?" No answer. I got up slowly, my legs feeling like jelly. I walked over to the door and peeked outside... but I couldn't see very well. Then, out of nowhere, I noticed something on the floor. A cat... but it wasn't her. Not my cat. Not the neighbor's. Her fur was as black as night, her eyes wide and red... she was staring at me without blinking, and then I heard a voice... it wasn't hers... it was a human voice. It said in a raspy whisper, "This isn't the first time I've scared you... but this time, you won't escape so easily." I took a step back, wanting to scream, but no sound came out. And just as I slammed the door shut... I felt someone right behind me... breathing in my ear. Then it whispered, "I was one of your guests tonight... but nobody noticed me."

*THE DIARY CLOSED. YOUR NAME WAS INSIDE... NOW, FINISH
THE STORY FROM WITHIN.*



The Story Within

BATOUL ABDULFATTAH

Sitting quietly after everyone has drifted off to dreamland... the lights are out, just how I enjoy it...

I started by lighting a candle and opened the notebook I had discovered that day in our garden... It was a diary... meant for more than one person... as if this notebook had been shared among many before it finally found its way to me.

I opened a blank page and wrote my name on it, just like those who came before me had done...

Suddenly, my room window swung open...

How odd! The wind isn't blowing hard outside!

I wasn't really focused on the topic and kept on writing... but then I saw something that made me stop in my tracks... on the wall right in front of me... I spotted two shadows... I shifted my body a little, and my shadow shifted too... but the other shadow stayed still...

My words shook inside me, and all that came out was a scared silence... but I mustered up the tiny bit of strength I had left and whispered with fear...

I called out, "Who's there?" Nobody replied, but the candle flickered and went out, as if someone had just blown it out...

I quickly lit it again, but the shadow was gone... The door stood wide open, even though I clearly remember shutting it... I approached it with shaky steps, and the air swirled around me as if it were keeping an eye on me.

And suddenly... I felt chilly fingers gripping my shoulder, and warm breaths whispering at my neck... as if something from nowhere had stirred behind me... then it leaned in close and said: "Give me back what you took... everything you believed was yours is mine now. Don't try to run away, and don't hide anything... because my shadow is watching you in every corner and with every breath. All your secrets, all your fears, every part of you, even the things you hide from yourself, belong to me. Surrender it, or I will come and take it by force, and you will be a prisoner of my darkness forever."

Then the shadow vanished, the candle flickered out once more, and right up until the very end, I could hear my breath blending with the breath of someone who wasn't there...

Before I could really understand what was going on, the pages turned rapidly, one after another, like someone was on a quest to find something hidden in the words.

I reached the last page... and discovered a blurry picture of my face. It was me, sitting in the dark, writing, with a shadow behind me grinning.

Before I could let out a scream, I noticed the notebook shutting all on its own, and then a whisper floated up from between its pages saying:

"The notebook is closed, and your name is written inside... now, it's your turn to finish the story from within."

**-TO BE
CONTINUED-**

THEN COMES THE SOUND... FAINT, AS THOUGH THE ROOM
ITSELF IS SIGHING.



Where the Missing
WHISPER
Hawraa Mohammad

In the tight hallway, where the smell of moisture and history hangs around, a soft creaking sounds as if the walls are gently breathing. Dust dances in the air like tiny bits of ash, and a chill spreads from the floor to the walls, wrapping itself in the quiet. The only sounds here are distant heartbeats, as if this place remembers the footsteps of those who came before.

In the corner, there's a lone lightbulb that flickers on and off, and with every flicker, something new dances in the shadows: a blurry shape, unfinished details, the outline of a creature that hasn't quite figured out if it's alive or just a memory.

Time stands still, yet it seems to press down on the space, almost like it's keeping an eye on things. The walls feel a bit tighter, the air grows thicker, and the humidity softly murmurs a name that hasn't been heard in ages.

Then you hear it... a soft sound, like the place is taking a deep breath. It doesn't come from anywhere, but it fills up all the empty space. With every tick of the clock, it gets closer, until it's right behind you, invisible, untouchable, but definitely present.

When you turn around to take a peek, all you see is the quiet hallway, the lamp that has finally stopped flickering, and the lingering sound of something that's still hanging around!

A MONSTROUS ENTITY

MOHAMMAD SWARI

She let out a hysterical laugh and whispered, "You came... You actually came."

While the kids were having fun in the room next to their parents, the lights suddenly went out. Seizing the moment in the dark, the kids started a game of hide-and-seek. As they played, a strong breeze swept through the window curtains, surprising the kids, who let out a loud scream.

Their big brother tried to calm them down, saying, "Don't worry, it's just the wind." But then something surprising happened; while he was explaining where the sound was coming from, he heard a weird voice whisper to him, "Be quiet and don't say a word, or I'll take your head off!"

The older brother stood still, feeling scared, and all sorts of thoughts zoomed through his head: "Who is this? Is it a genie? Or maybe a friend trying to give me a fright?"

But he acted tough in front of his brothers so they wouldn't feel sad.

Out of nowhere, everyone heard the soft sound of footsteps, and the brother, wanting to calm them down, said, "It's just your dad who's here, so there's no need to be scared."

But the voice answered back, "No... I am the ghost who will take your heads... I am the fairy Iblis!"

The fairy started to read some strange words and burst into laughter, exclaiming, "I have arrived... I have arrived!" She moved closer to the children and said, "I don't have any children; I'll take you with me to be my little ones!" Then she began to call for her genie friends:

The jinn named Iblis.

Genie Taco!

The magical genie Baku.

The genie "Mouse": who can turn anyone he wishes into a mouse.

Once the brothers came together, the fairy told the kids, "Keep quiet, or my brother Paco will turn you into little mice!"

The kids started pleading with her not to do that, so she said, "Come with me to your grandmother's grave. I'll lead the way, and if any of you fall behind, you'll instantly turn into a mouse!" The children followed her, shaking with fear, and when they got to the cemetery, they heard a door slam shut!

They were really surprised: "Where is this door? How can there be a door when we're right in the middle of the cemetery?"

Fear nearly took over their thoughts, so they started to shout and cry out for help.

"Be quiet or you'll turn into mice!" the fairy yelled at them. A spooky silence settled over the cemetery, and then they heard the fairy whisper, "My lord, I have brought you the offering."

The kids listened to the crackling of firewood and the bubbling of water in a big pot, while the fairy started tossing them into the pot one by one. So, the kids found themselves caught up in the shadows and having fun late at night.

Tip: Try not to play at night or in the dark, so the fairy "Iblisah" doesn't come and take you away.

"YOUR HEART IS YOURS ALONE. USE IT... SURVIVE... AND
GET OUT."

A dark, narrow hallway with a door at the end, illuminated by a greenish light. The walls are dark and textured, and the floor is also dark. The door is a light color, possibly white or light green, and has a dark handle. The overall atmosphere is mysterious and unsettling.

THE DARK ROOM

Reem Albadri

Daylight slipped away, and night wrapped around everything, leaving you all alone. In that shadowy room, you want to break free, but fear and dread sneak into your heart as you move closer. Your steps are shaky; one foot goes forward, while the other pulls back, curious about what those walls might hide. The nearer you get, the more a chill dances down your spine. You reach for the door, which is draped in creepy cobwebs, and then, all of a sudden!

The door swings open all on its own, and a wild storm bursts in, trying to shove you back, while at the same time, there's a secret force urging you to step inside.

Out of nowhere, you end up in a room filled with all sorts of spooky things; blood splashed on the walls, skeletons scattered on the floor. A skull rolls your way, and you faint from fright.

You make an effort to fight it off, but it's just not happening. You find yourself lying on the floor of that room you've steered clear of for years, and now you're surrounded by the very bodies you've been trying to escape.

You blink your eyes open and see that your body is covered in blood, with skulls all around you, and you're stuck in a spider's web. You struggle to break free, but it's no good. You huddle in a dark corner, your heart pounding with fear. It feels like your pulse could stop at any second, leaving you just like them. You attempt to escape, but no one is there to help you out.

A frightening creature sneaks up on you from behind, its body brushing against yours. Fear rushes through your veins, and it feels like your heart has stopped beating. You scream as loud as you can, but your cries bounce back to you, unheard by anyone else. It gets closer and closer until it's right in front of you as you scream, trying to rip out your heart. It thrusts its hand in with force while you squirm in pain and beg, "Please don't do this! Just leave me alone!" But your pleas go unheard. It pulls out your heart and holds it in its hands, saying, "I have taken what was most precious to you. Now try to live." You glance at your chest and see it closed, with no wound or mark to show that your heart was taken, while you watch it in its hands, laughing bitterly right in your face.

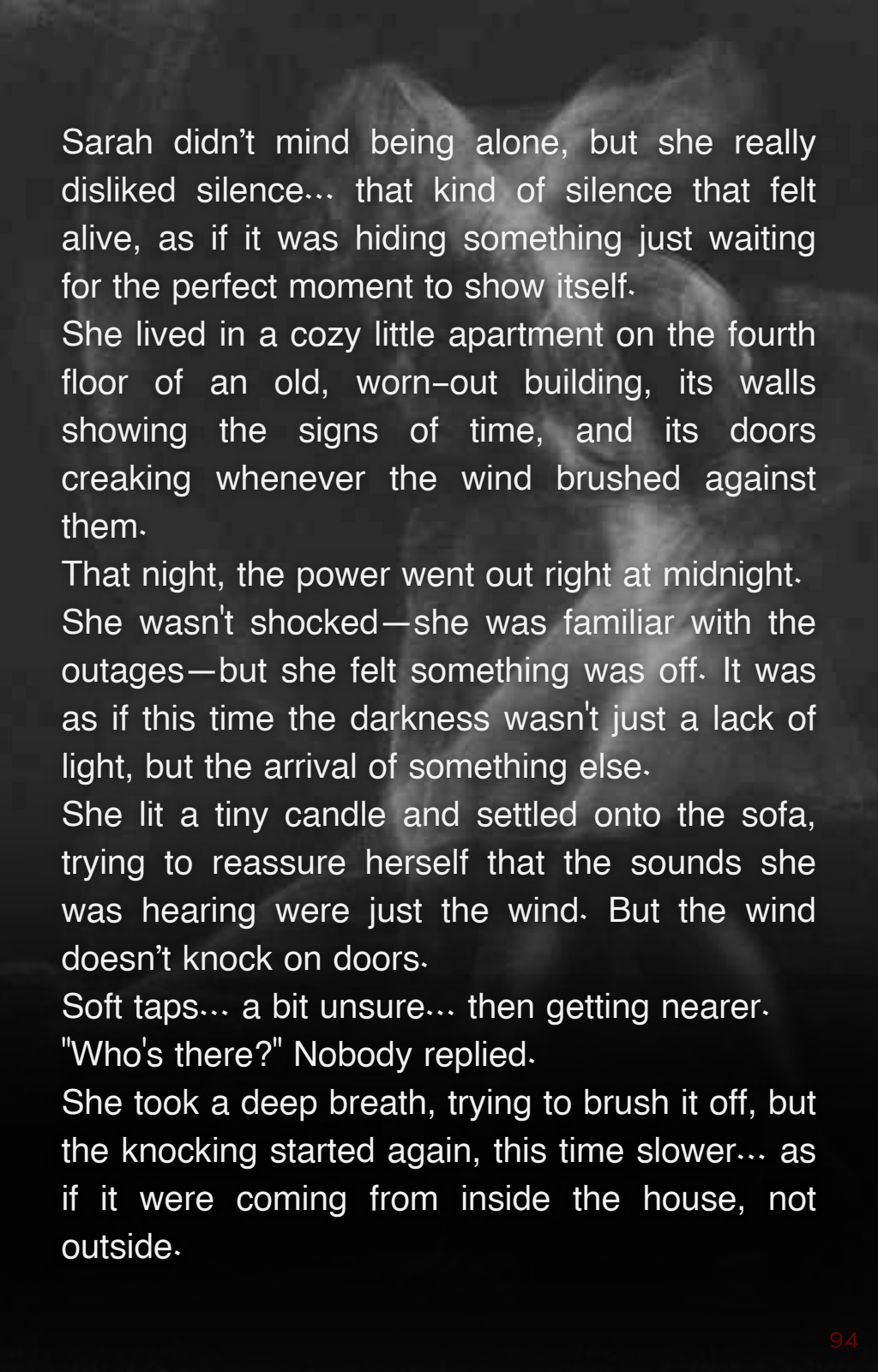
Your heart finds its way into his chest, and just like that, he turns to ashes carried away by the wind. Your heart is set free to go back to where it belongs, and the ashes softly say to you, "Your heart is meant for no one but you. You're the only one who knows how to cherish it, so keep going and find your way out."

You look around the room, feeling more scared than in a really bad dream, wanting to wake up but finding it impossible. The door is locked, and there are no windows anywhere; all you hear are loud moans and screams that break the silence, leaving you confused about what's going on. You think to yourself, "I wish I hadn't come in here. Being in the forest would have been way better than this." Suddenly, you notice figures coming toward you from every direction, and you step back as they get closer, their eyes dripping with blood...

Stare for five seconds... and a fourth face appears—yours, but never smiling.

MIDNIGHT SHADOWS

Marwa Ra'eni



Sarah didn't mind being alone, but she really disliked silence... that kind of silence that felt alive, as if it was hiding something just waiting for the perfect moment to show itself.

She lived in a cozy little apartment on the fourth floor of an old, worn-out building, its walls showing the signs of time, and its doors creaking whenever the wind brushed against them.

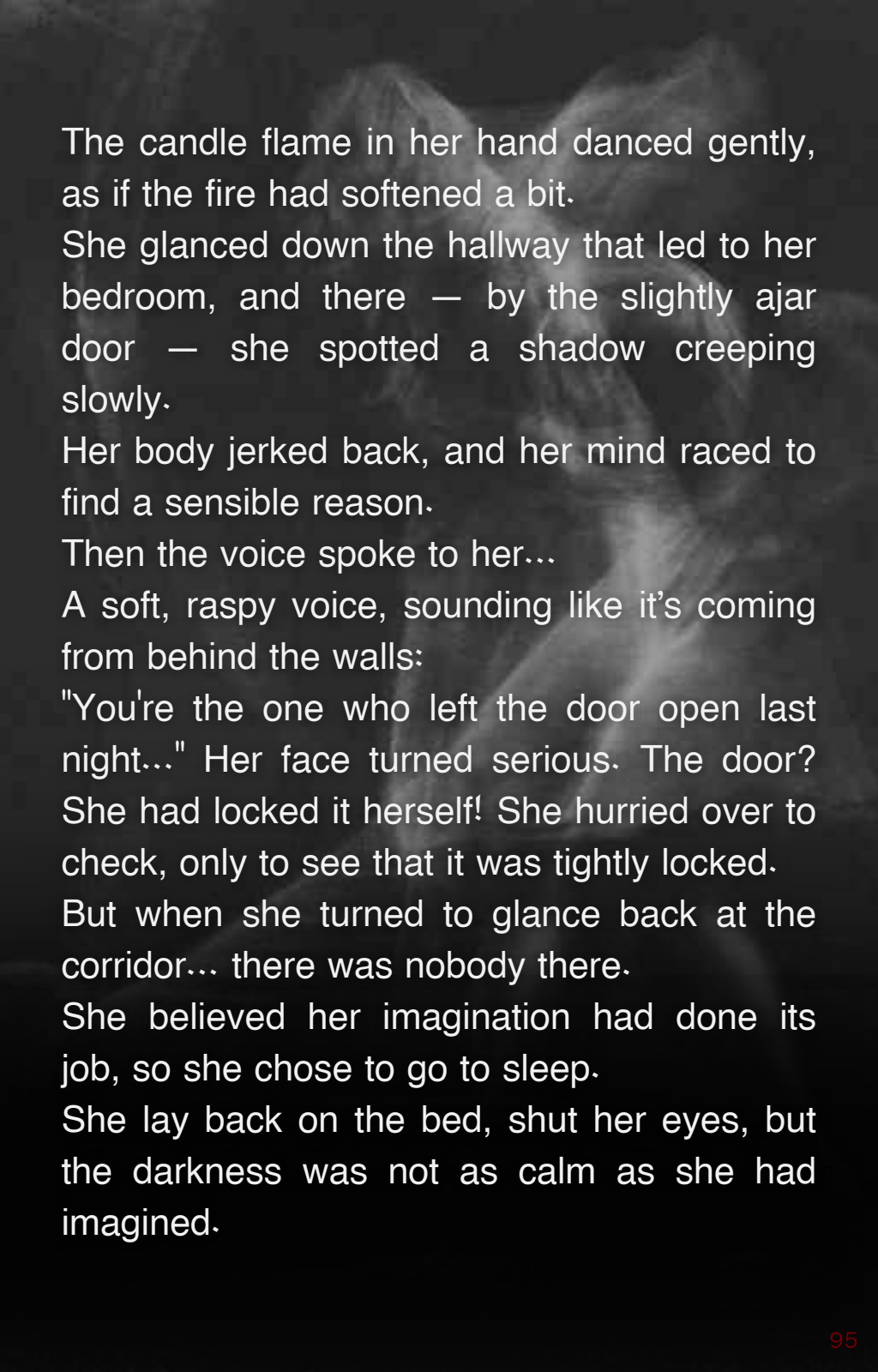
That night, the power went out right at midnight. She wasn't shocked—she was familiar with the outages—but she felt something was off. It was as if this time the darkness wasn't just a lack of light, but the arrival of something else.

She lit a tiny candle and settled onto the sofa, trying to reassure herself that the sounds she was hearing were just the wind. But the wind doesn't knock on doors.

Soft taps... a bit unsure... then getting nearer.

"Who's there?" Nobody replied.

She took a deep breath, trying to brush it off, but the knocking started again, this time slower... as if it were coming from inside the house, not outside.



The candle flame in her hand danced gently, as if the fire had softened a bit.

She glanced down the hallway that led to her bedroom, and there — by the slightly ajar door — she spotted a shadow creeping slowly.

Her body jerked back, and her mind raced to find a sensible reason.

Then the voice spoke to her...

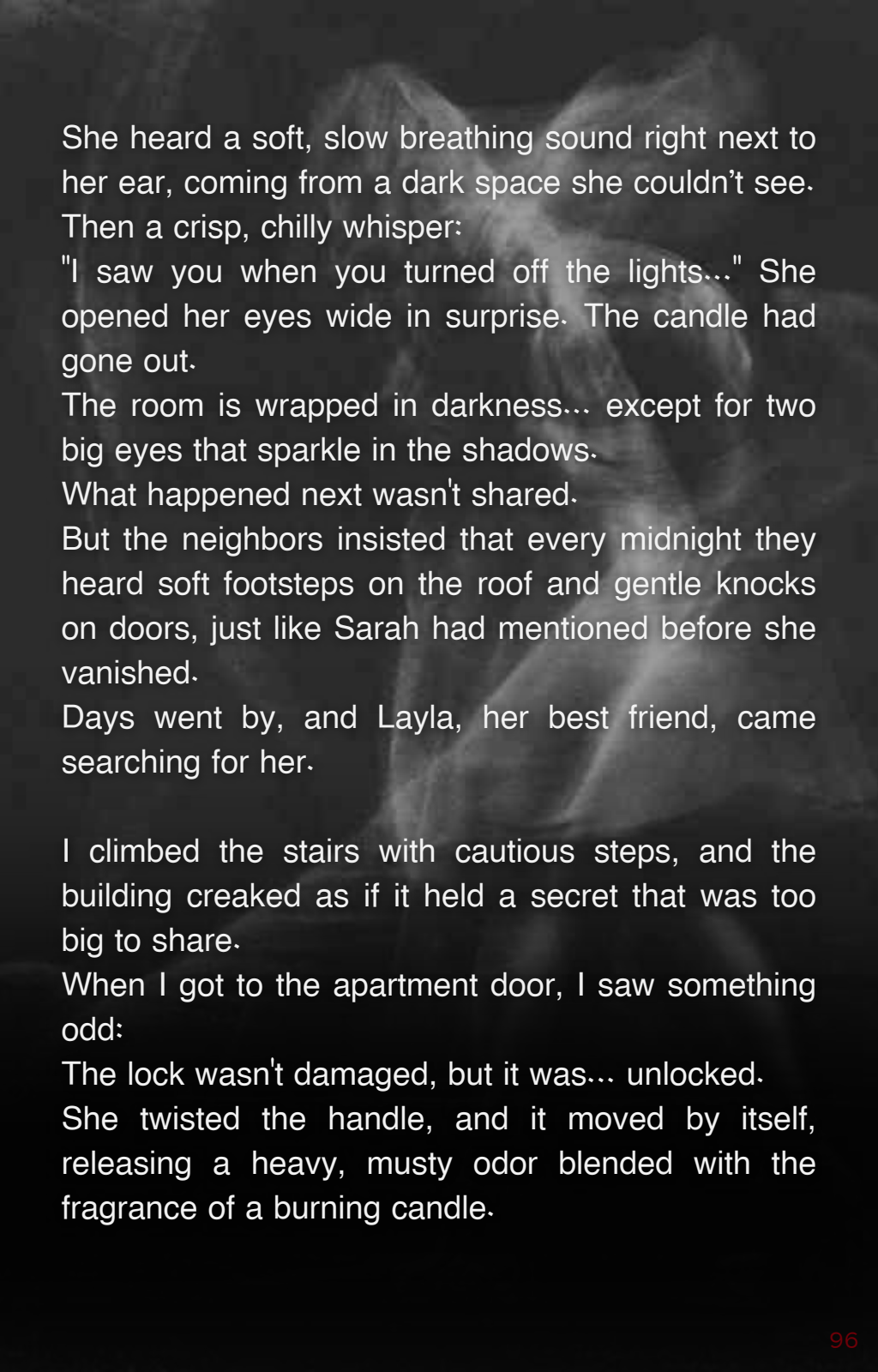
A soft, raspy voice, sounding like it's coming from behind the walls:

"You're the one who left the door open last night..." Her face turned serious. The door? She had locked it herself! She hurried over to check, only to see that it was tightly locked.

But when she turned to glance back at the corridor... there was nobody there.

She believed her imagination had done its job, so she chose to go to sleep.

She lay back on the bed, shut her eyes, but the darkness was not as calm as she had imagined.



She heard a soft, slow breathing sound right next to her ear, coming from a dark space she couldn't see. Then a crisp, chilly whisper:

"I saw you when you turned off the lights..." She opened her eyes wide in surprise. The candle had gone out.

The room is wrapped in darkness... except for two big eyes that sparkle in the shadows.

What happened next wasn't shared.

But the neighbors insisted that every midnight they heard soft footsteps on the roof and gentle knocks on doors, just like Sarah had mentioned before she vanished.

Days went by, and Layla, her best friend, came searching for her.

I climbed the stairs with cautious steps, and the building creaked as if it held a secret that was too big to share.

When I got to the apartment door, I saw something odd:

The lock wasn't damaged, but it was... unlocked.

She twisted the handle, and it moved by itself, releasing a heavy, musty odor blended with the fragrance of a burning candle.

The air feels chilly, like the night is still hanging around.

"Sarah?" she called gently, but the only reply was the soft sound of a drop of water slowly falling from the tap.

I walked up to the bedroom. The door was slightly open, the curtains were drawn, and the air felt thick... like the room was waiting for someone to exhale.

On the wall across from me, I spotted something that looked like it was scratched with fingernails:

"It's not a shadow... it's me when I glanced in the mirror." She took a step back and accidentally bumped into a big mirror behind her.

The mirror trembled and toppled over, but it didn't shatter... instead, the reflection within it started to shift.

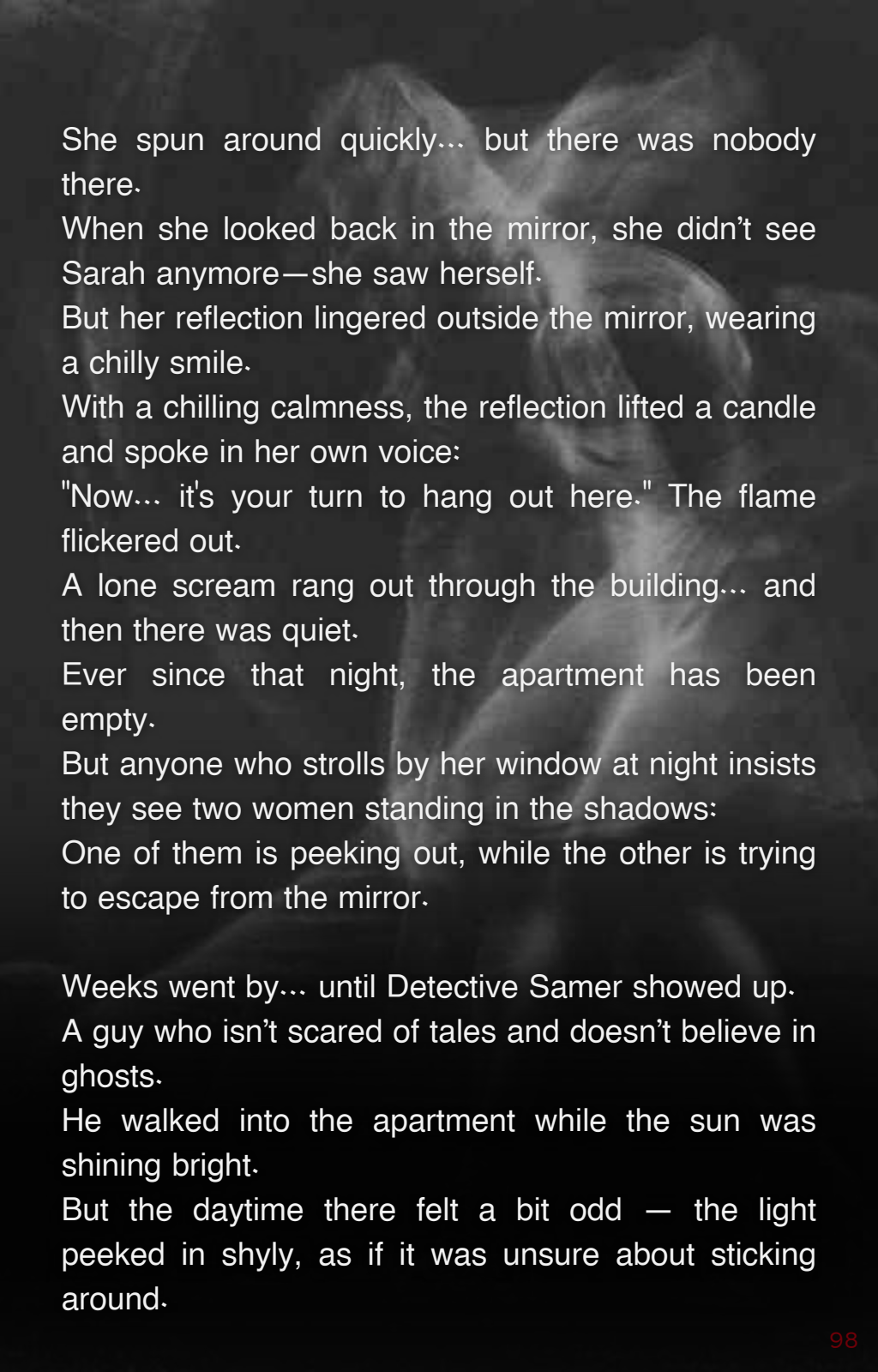
Sarah spotted her. She was standing inside the glass, her face looking pale, her eyes wide open and unblinking.

She gently lifted her hand and began to write from within:

"He's still here..." Layla stood still.

Then she felt a warm breath behind her ear, and a familiar voice whispered:

"I mentioned it before... the door doesn't open twice."



She spun around quickly... but there was nobody there.

When she looked back in the mirror, she didn't see Sarah anymore—she saw herself.

But her reflection lingered outside the mirror, wearing a chilly smile.

With a chilling calmness, the reflection lifted a candle and spoke in her own voice:

"Now... it's your turn to hang out here." The flame flickered out.

A lone scream rang out through the building... and then there was quiet.

Ever since that night, the apartment has been empty.

But anyone who strolls by her window at night insists they see two women standing in the shadows:

One of them is peeking out, while the other is trying to escape from the mirror.

Weeks went by... until Detective Samer showed up.

A guy who isn't scared of tales and doesn't believe in ghosts.

He walked into the apartment while the sun was shining bright.

But the daytime there felt a bit odd — the light peeked in shyly, as if it was unsure about sticking around.

Stroll gently, the air is dusty, and it feels chillier than normal.

In the bedroom, he discovered the mirror.

Its surface wasn't just glass anymore... it was alive. He stretched out his hand, and the surface trembled like water, revealing the face of a woman — Sarah.

"They... woke him up..." she said from behind the glass.

Take a little step back.

"Who? Who woke him up?" But then, the wall behind him started to make funny noises, like something was scratching it from the inside.

The paint had cracked, showing a black wall covered in odd symbols and little hands marked with blood.

A deep voice rose up from the depths:

"Whoever knocks on the door... it should be opened for them." The wall creaked open, showing a shadowy passageway that led to a tilted wooden door at the end.

Samer walked in, the lamp he was holding shaking a little.

Inside, he discovered a metal chair with a human skeleton strapped to it, and right in front of the chair was an old camera glowing with a faint light.

On the wall, there are pictures of women who are missing — Sarah, Leila, and many others whose names we don't know.

He walked over to one of them.

The words below the picture were:

"A mirror isn't a door... it's more like a prison." Then the lamp flickered off.

The door banged closed right after he walked through.

A gentle whisper drifts closer to his ear:

"Anyone who looks at them... gets their face reflected in the mirror." The camera turned on by itself.

A speedy glimpse.

In that brief flash of light, Samer showed up in the mirror — yelling, but no sound came out.

When the police showed up in the morning, they discovered that no one was there.

But the mirror transformed. It grew wider, deeper, and showed three faces looking out.

And ever since that day...

Anyone who looks at it for more than five seconds will notice a fourth face gradually appearing...

A face that looks just like his, but he never shows a smile.

THE TALISMAN

Nurayla Al Hussein

She opened the box. A blood-soaked note held one word.

I'm Back



I was busy cleaning old houses when a woman asked me to tidy up her late father's home on the edge of the village.

The house felt lonely, with its walls cracked like they were sighing, and the air inside was thick, as if it were keeping a secret.

Among the dust, I discovered a tiny box crafted from black leather, tied up with red threads.

When I touched it, a peculiar warmth flowed through my fingers, and I heard a whisper that felt like a breath rising up from deep within the earth.

I told the lady, and she yelled at me to put it down right away, but my curiosity got the better of me... so I opened the box.

Inside was a piece of paper written in dark red, and it had just one word: "You have returned."

Since that night, every time I glance in the mirror, I notice a shadow moving behind me that doesn't look like me, and it just won't go away.

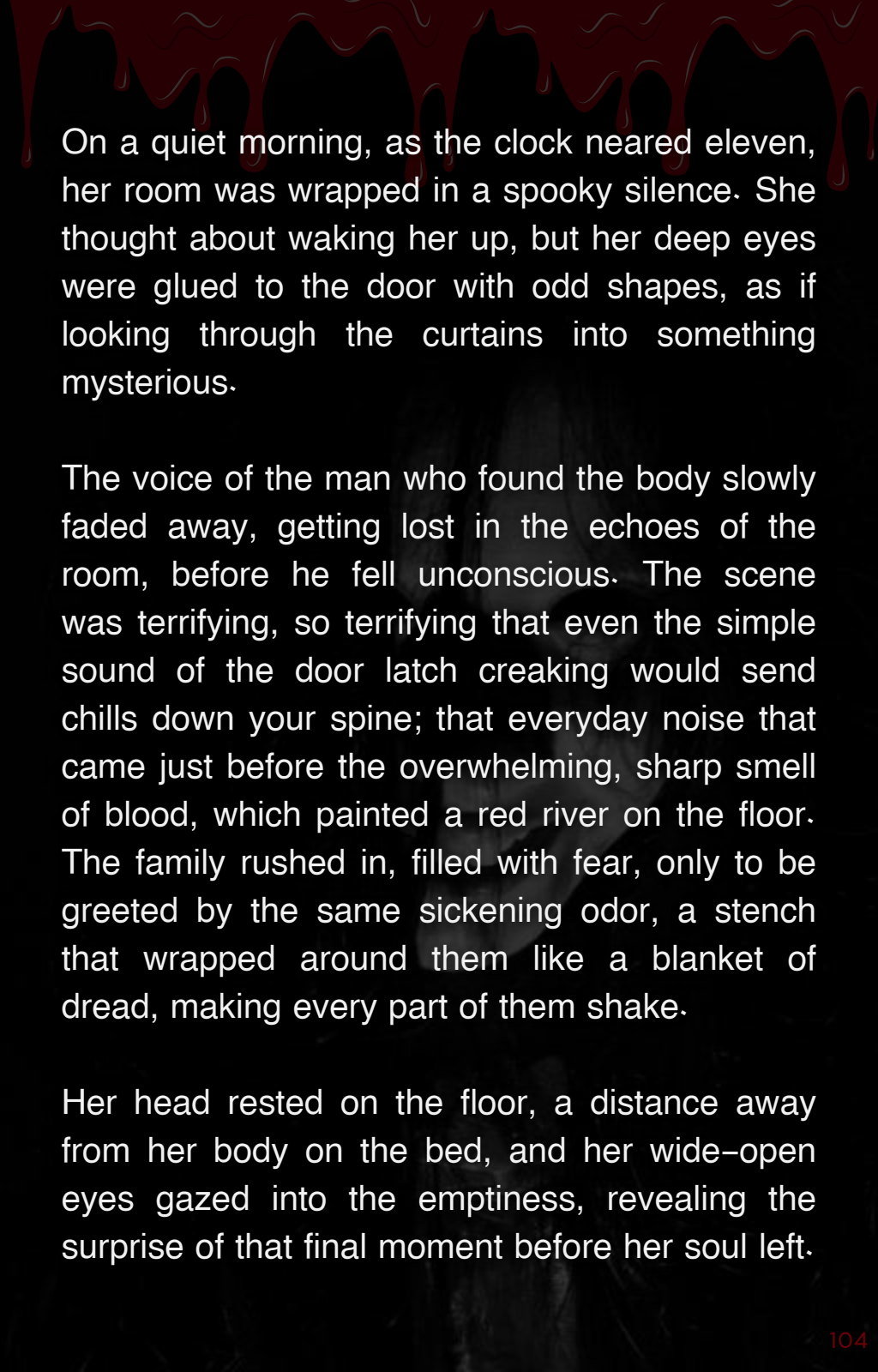
And now, three weeks later, I started to hear a voice calling my name every morning from beneath my bed...

He says it's time to give back what I borrowed.

"How dare you kill me? After all those years, you still weren't afraid of me?"

BIOLOGICAL FEAR

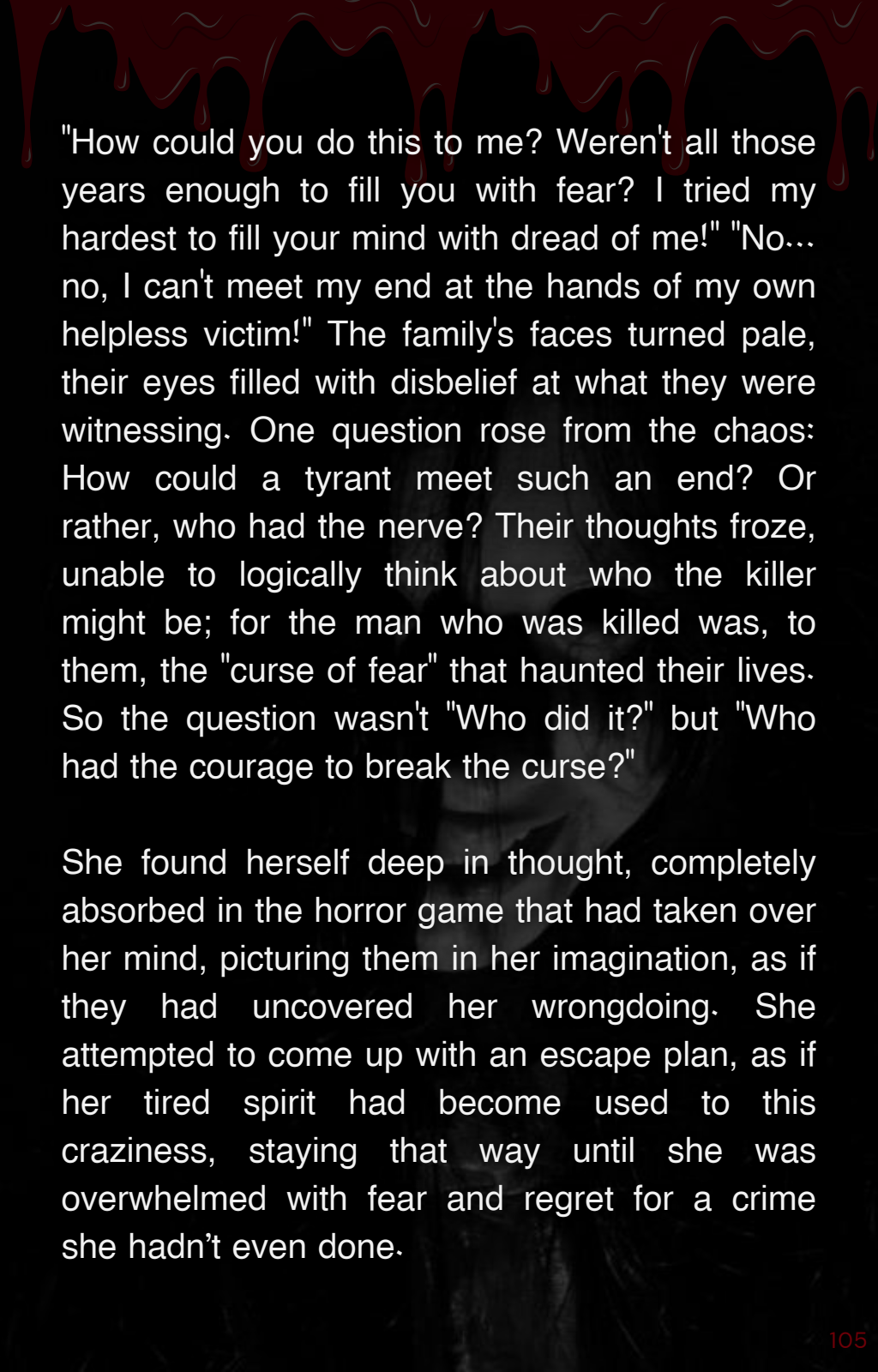
***Amira
Ihab***



On a quiet morning, as the clock neared eleven, her room was wrapped in a spooky silence. She thought about waking her up, but her deep eyes were glued to the door with odd shapes, as if looking through the curtains into something mysterious.

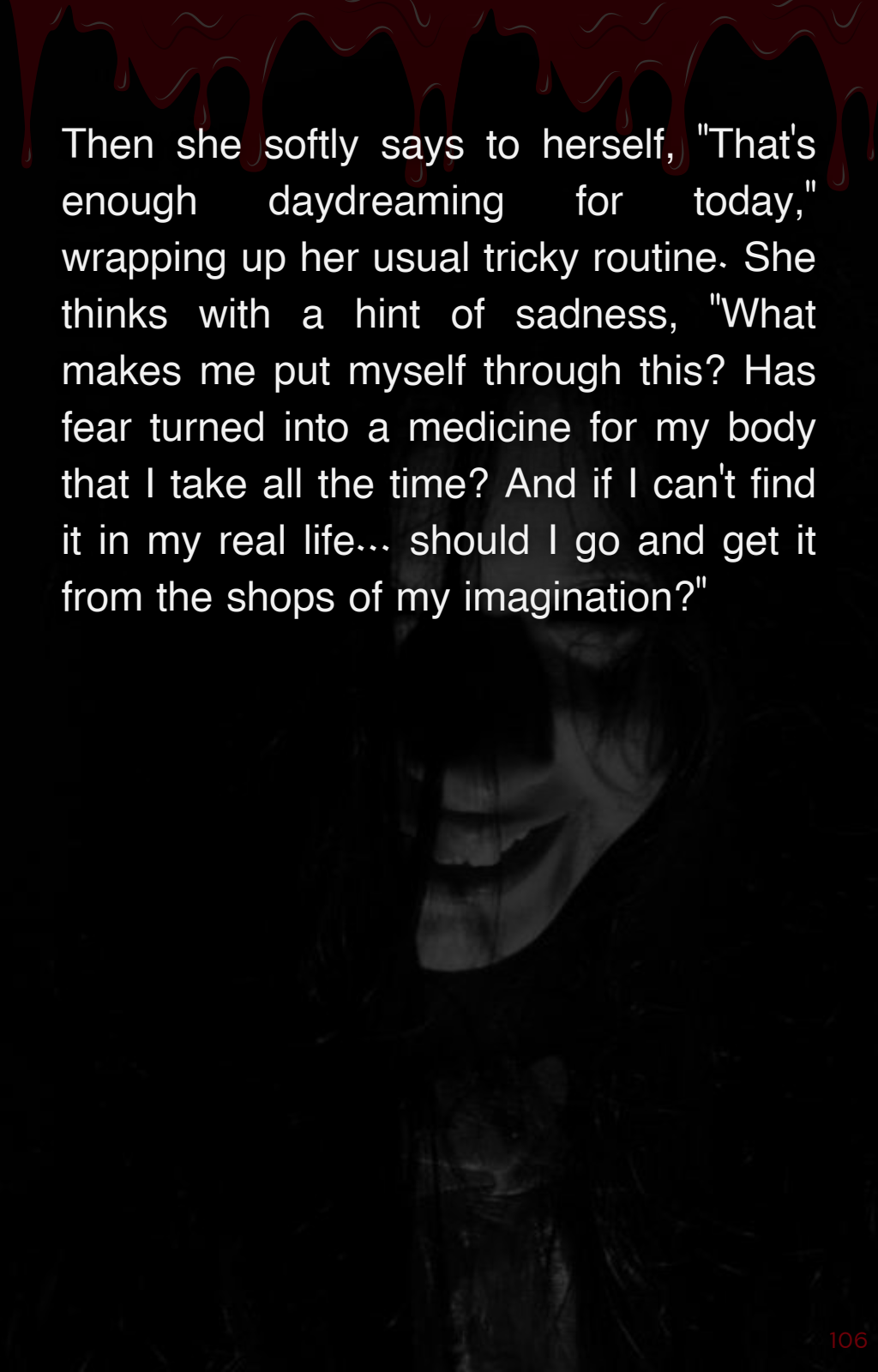
The voice of the man who found the body slowly faded away, getting lost in the echoes of the room, before he fell unconscious. The scene was terrifying, so terrifying that even the simple sound of the door latch creaking would send chills down your spine; that everyday noise that came just before the overwhelming, sharp smell of blood, which painted a red river on the floor. The family rushed in, filled with fear, only to be greeted by the same sickening odor, a stench that wrapped around them like a blanket of dread, making every part of them shake.

Her head rested on the floor, a distance away from her body on the bed, and her wide-open eyes gazed into the emptiness, revealing the surprise of that final moment before her soul left.



"How could you do this to me? Weren't all those years enough to fill you with fear? I tried my hardest to fill your mind with dread of me!" "No... no, I can't meet my end at the hands of my own helpless victim!" The family's faces turned pale, their eyes filled with disbelief at what they were witnessing. One question rose from the chaos: How could a tyrant meet such an end? Or rather, who had the nerve? Their thoughts froze, unable to logically think about who the killer might be; for the man who was killed was, to them, the "curse of fear" that haunted their lives. So the question wasn't "Who did it?" but "Who had the courage to break the curse?"

She found herself deep in thought, completely absorbed in the horror game that had taken over her mind, picturing them in her imagination, as if they had uncovered her wrongdoing. She attempted to come up with an escape plan, as if her tired spirit had become used to this craziness, staying that way until she was overwhelmed with fear and regret for a crime she hadn't even done.



Then she softly says to herself, "That's enough daydreaming for today," wrapping up her usual tricky routine. She thinks with a hint of sadness, "What makes me put myself through this? Has fear turned into a medicine for my body that I take all the time? And if I can't find it in my real life... should I go and get it from the shops of my imagination?"



The Treasure

Soheila Tarek

I gasped for air, lost, terrified... with no idea where I was.

At the stroke of midnight, I was cozy in my room, sipping on my usual cup of coffee, when I noticed a shadow in my garden. At first, I thought it was just the trees casting their shadows, but then I heard some branches snapping. I quickly grabbed a candle and made my way downstairs to the garden, where I spotted someone sneaking into my basement.

I followed him and watched as he went in with a little kid. I saw him shift the flame, and then the wall opened up like he was familiar with the place.

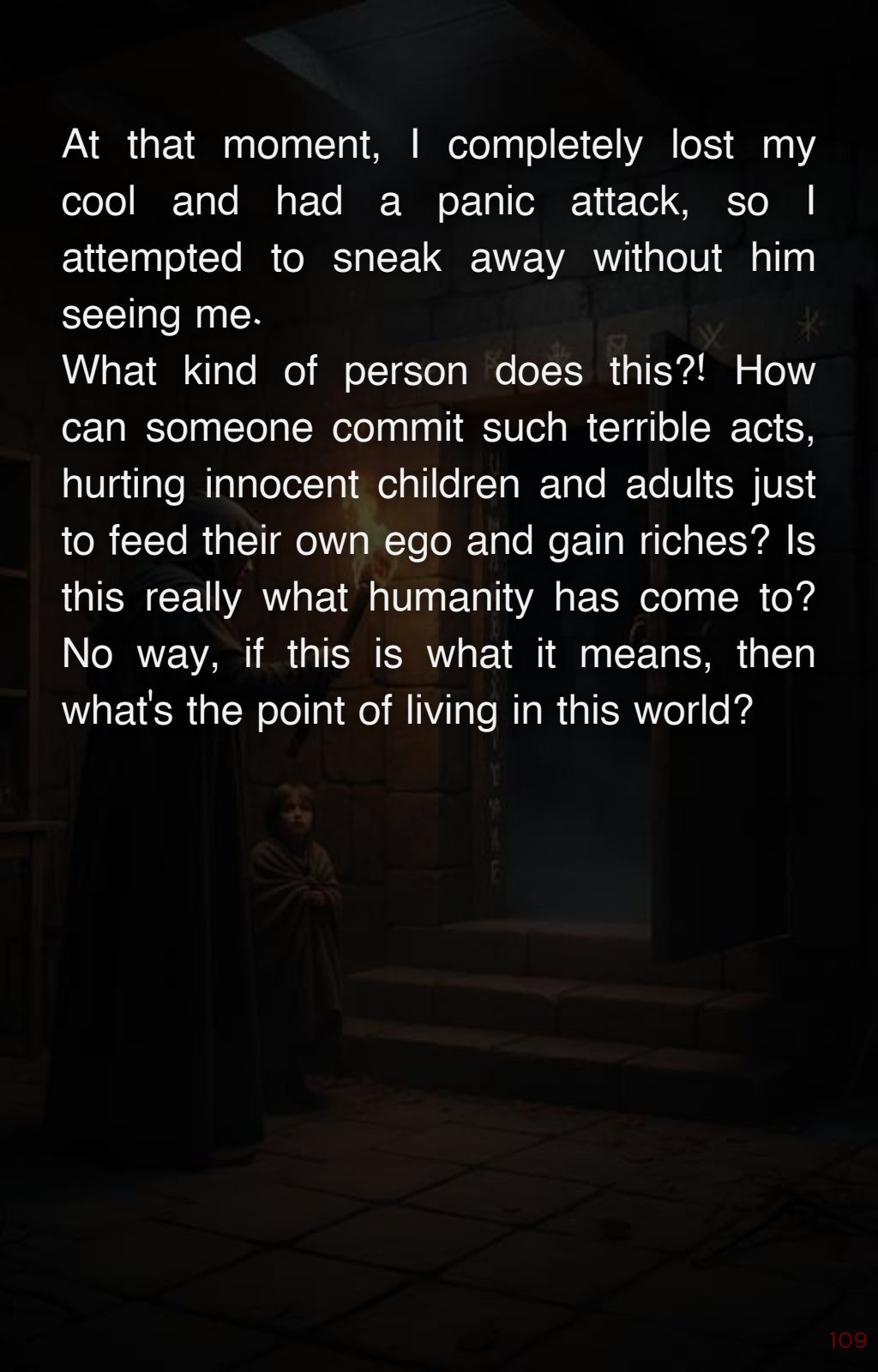
I quietly trailed behind him, and it felt like we were in a moving tunnel. I was having a hard time breathing, and I had no idea what was going on, what might happen next, or where I was.

Then I discovered a tomb, and I watched him take the child as a sacrifice, and the tomb opened up, releasing heaps of gold!

And there was the surprise: a never-ending number of bodies and kids.

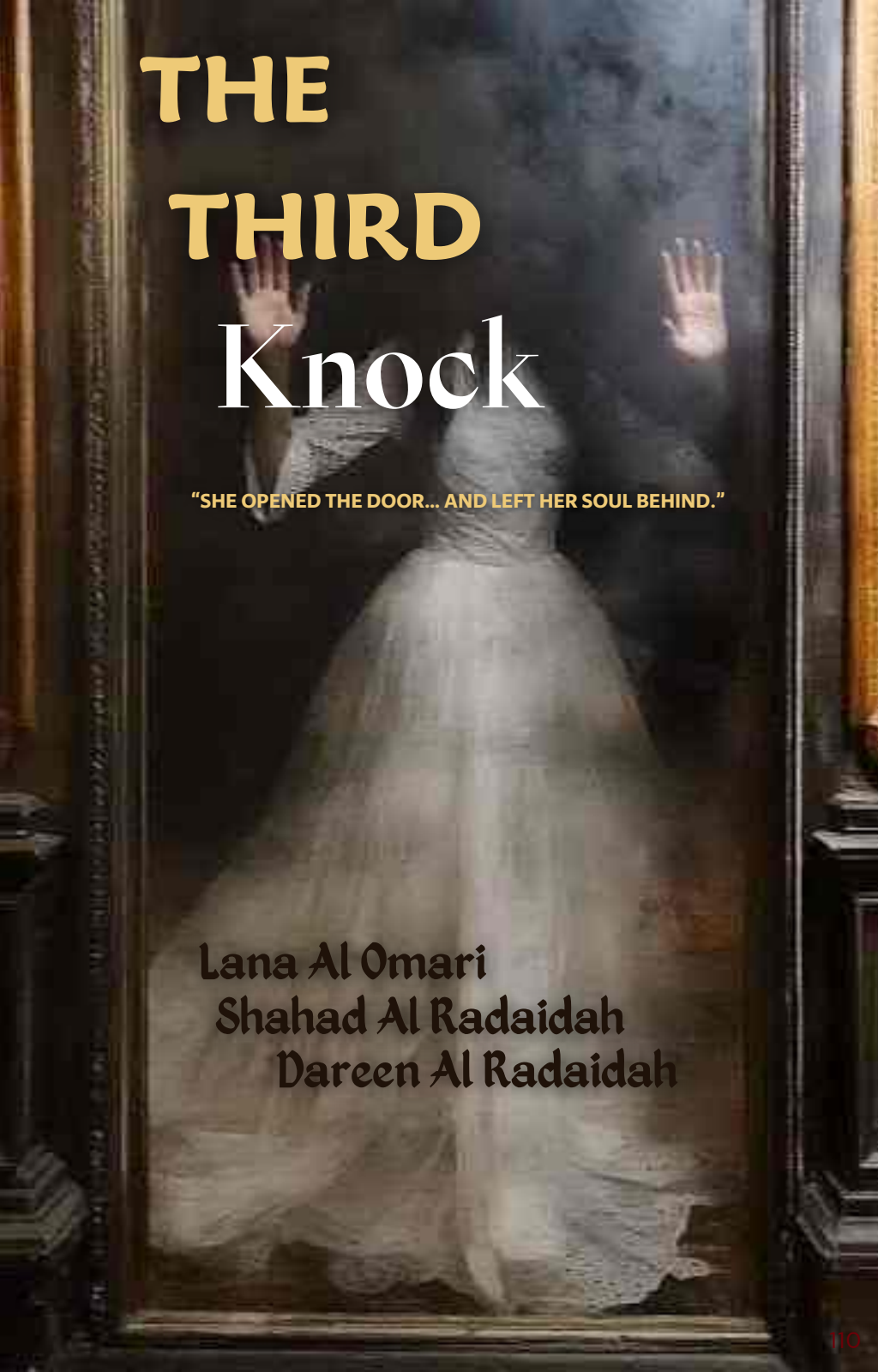
I can't tell anymore if I'm dreaming, if this is real, or if I'm just in a world of make-believe!

Can you believe there are people who are brave enough to go this far?



At that moment, I completely lost my cool and had a panic attack, so I attempted to sneak away without him seeing me.

What kind of person does this?! How can someone commit such terrible acts, hurting innocent children and adults just to feed their own ego and gain riches? Is this really what humanity has come to? No way, if this is what it means, then what's the point of living in this world?

The background of the entire page is a painting of a woman in a long, flowing white dress standing in a dark doorway. Her hands are raised, palms facing forward, as if she is about to enter or has just exited. The lighting is dramatic, with the woman's dress and hands highlighted against the dark background of the doorway and the surrounding walls.

THE THIRD Knock

"SHE OPENED THE DOOR... AND LEFT HER SOUL BEHIND."

Lana Al Omari
Shahad Al Radaidah
Dareen Al Radaidah

I never thought that the night kept more secrets than it shared, until that one evening when I felt a flutter in my chest, and the silence became a creature that breathed alongside me.

The clock read a quarter past two. The house was wrapped in deep darkness, as if the walls had gobbled up the light in fright.

I was sitting on my bed, going over my papers, when I heard a gentle knock on the door. I stayed still, thinking it might just be a trick of my tired mind from being so worn out and not having slept.

Then there was another knock.

Heavier than the first, like a mysterious hand trying to sneak into the world of the living.

I walked forward slowly, each step making a sound like the ground was hurting under my feet.

I pressed my ear against the door, but all I could hear was my own breathing, which felt like the quiet gasps of someone fading away.

I reached out for the handle, but just as I was about to touch it, I heard a third sound—a knock that was different from the first two.

It felt like a sharp poke right in the heart of the night.

I shook so much that I nearly lost my balance.
I slowly pulled the door open, and it revealed a
chilly emptiness that felt like it was creeping in
like death.

nobody.

But a weird smell sneaked into my nose, a blend
of rust, dampness, and decay, kind of like the
scent of an old injury.

I glanced down at the floor and saw wet
footprints leading down the corridor, disappearing
just before they hit the light.

I thought to myself: maybe it's just a trick of the
mind, or maybe it's an optical illusion, but I saw
something that made my heart skip a beat for a
moment; the traces were shifting from inside my
room to the outside, not the other way around.

The pen slipped from my hand, and along with it,
my balance wobbled.

I crawled back into bed, shaking like there was
ice running through my veins.

I pulled the blanket over my face, but I still heard
a whisper in my ear, chilling like ice, saying, "The
door has been opened, at the wrong time."

Then I felt a chilly breath brushing against my
face from beneath the blanket.

I pulled back the blanket, and the room was empty.

But the door was locked on the inside.

I couldn't get any sleep.

How can anyone drift off to sleep when they feel breaths that aren't their own tickling their face? I found myself fixated on the closed door, as if my stare could hold back the danger lurking behind it. But the real danger, as I found out, is in that space between your eye and what you see, in that moment when you start to wonder if you're really seeing things or just imagining them.

The minutes felt like fiery ropes tightening around my chest. Then, I heard him.

A soft noise, coming from beneath the bed.

It sounded more like a soft whimper of a child trying to stay hidden.

It got really cold. Even the air felt frozen.

I reached my hand down to the ground slowly, like I was moving on a guillotine, and whispered in a shaky voice, "Who's there?" Nobody replied, but the crying suddenly stopped, and then there was a quick, sharp laugh, as if it came from a mouth that wasn't human.

I backed up against the wall, peering into the empty space beneath the bed, when I spotted something shifting: a gray hand with fingers that were way too long, creeping slowly across the floor, almost like it was searching for me.

I didn't shout.

I wasn't able to.

The only sound that escaped me was the shaky rhythm of my breath.

Then I heard the footsteps again, the same ones I had noticed on the stairs a few days ago, but this time they were coming from inside the walls.

It felt like the entire house was alive, moving, and inching closer.

Silence wrapped around me, and then I heard a fourth knock.

This time, she wasn't at the door; she was hiding in the closet right behind me.

I slowly turned around and heard a raspy voice whispering from within her:

"I opened the door and forgot to close the soul."

I took a step back and bumped my shoulder against the wall. The room was growing dimmer and dimmer, even though the lamp was still shining bright.

Everything became gray, and even my voice vanished within me like a heavy stone.

I opened the closet, and inside, I discovered nothing except a tiny, cracked mirror. In it, I saw my face, but the eyes staring back at me weren't mine.

The mirror was just a circle of shattered glass, yet it seemed to be alive.

I promise I saw a light mist lifting from its surface, almost like a chest gently rising and falling.

I walked forward with chilly steps, each thump of my heart shouting, "Turn around, don't get any closer." But my curiosity, or maybe a bit of madness, was even stronger.

I bent down in front of her, looking at my reflection; it didn't look like me at all.

My face was really pale, my eyes were as dark as if the night had been spilled into them, and my lips were moving all by themselves without making a sound.

Then, for the very first time, a voice emerged from within the mirror:

"You were watching closely, and now it's our chance to watch you." My heart jumped as if it wanted to leap out of my chest.

I picked up the mirror with my hand, but it felt like it was glued to my skin, almost like it was trying to pull me in slowly.

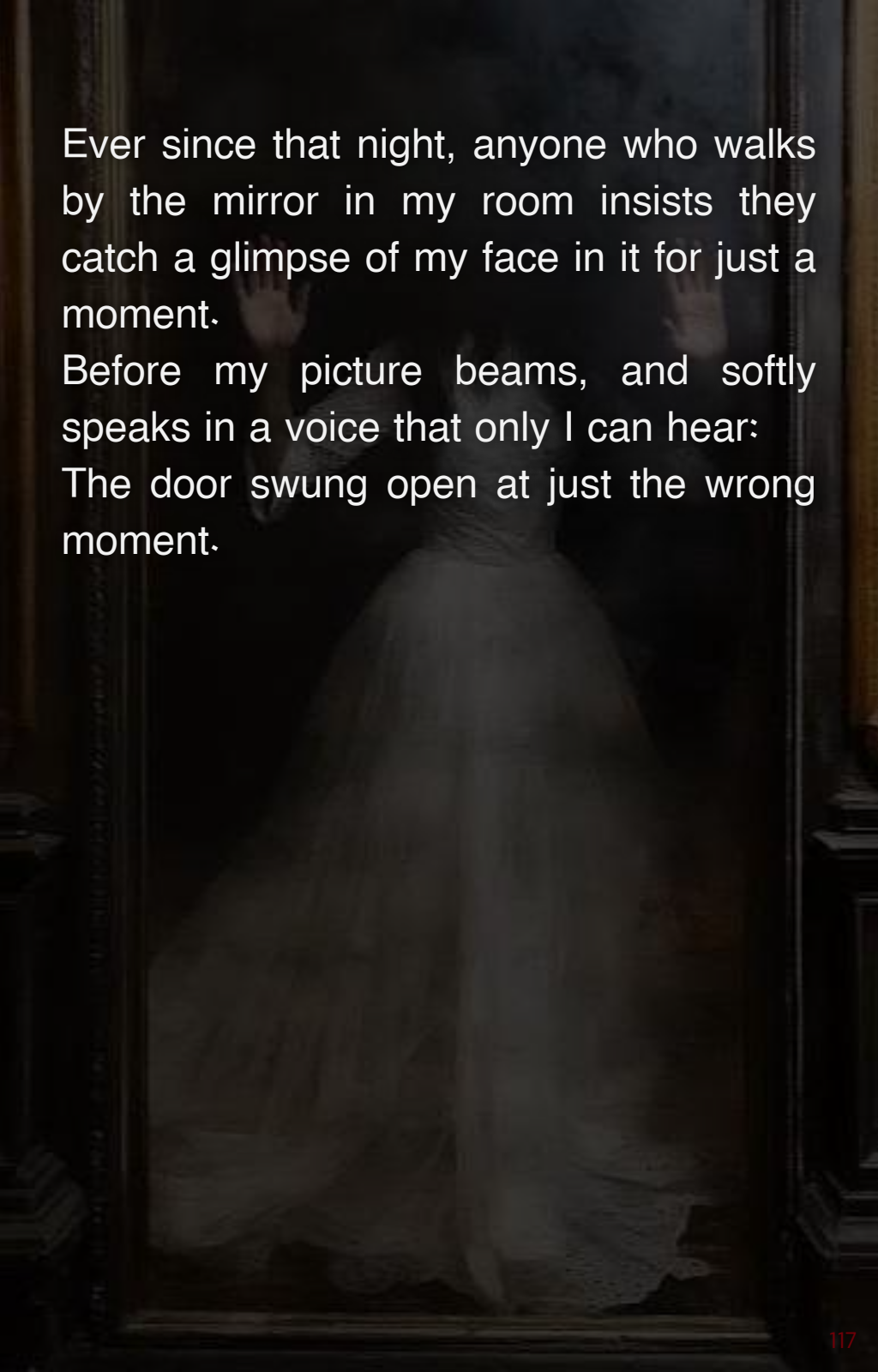
I watched as the room got smaller, the colors faded away, and the walls seemed to melt around me, until I realized I was standing right inside the same mirror.

Outside was the other "me."

The same face, the same hands, the same everything, but she had a crooked smile, like she didn't quite understand what it meant to be human. She gently reached for the door, opened it softly, and stepped outside.

I tried to shout and pound on the glass from the inside, but my voice was getting lost in the emptiness.

I looked at the world through the glass: my room, my bed, the soft light, and the part of me that stepped out in my place, wandering among things as if figuring out how to be human.



Ever since that night, anyone who walks by the mirror in my room insists they catch a glimpse of my face in it for just a moment.

Before my picture beams, and softly speaks in a voice that only I can hear:
The door swung open at just the wrong moment.

the darkest night

Maria Al Omari



She ran... but the same child was always waiting.

The village of "Waad" was quite a distance from the city center, and it was a remote town, lacking lights and services after dark.

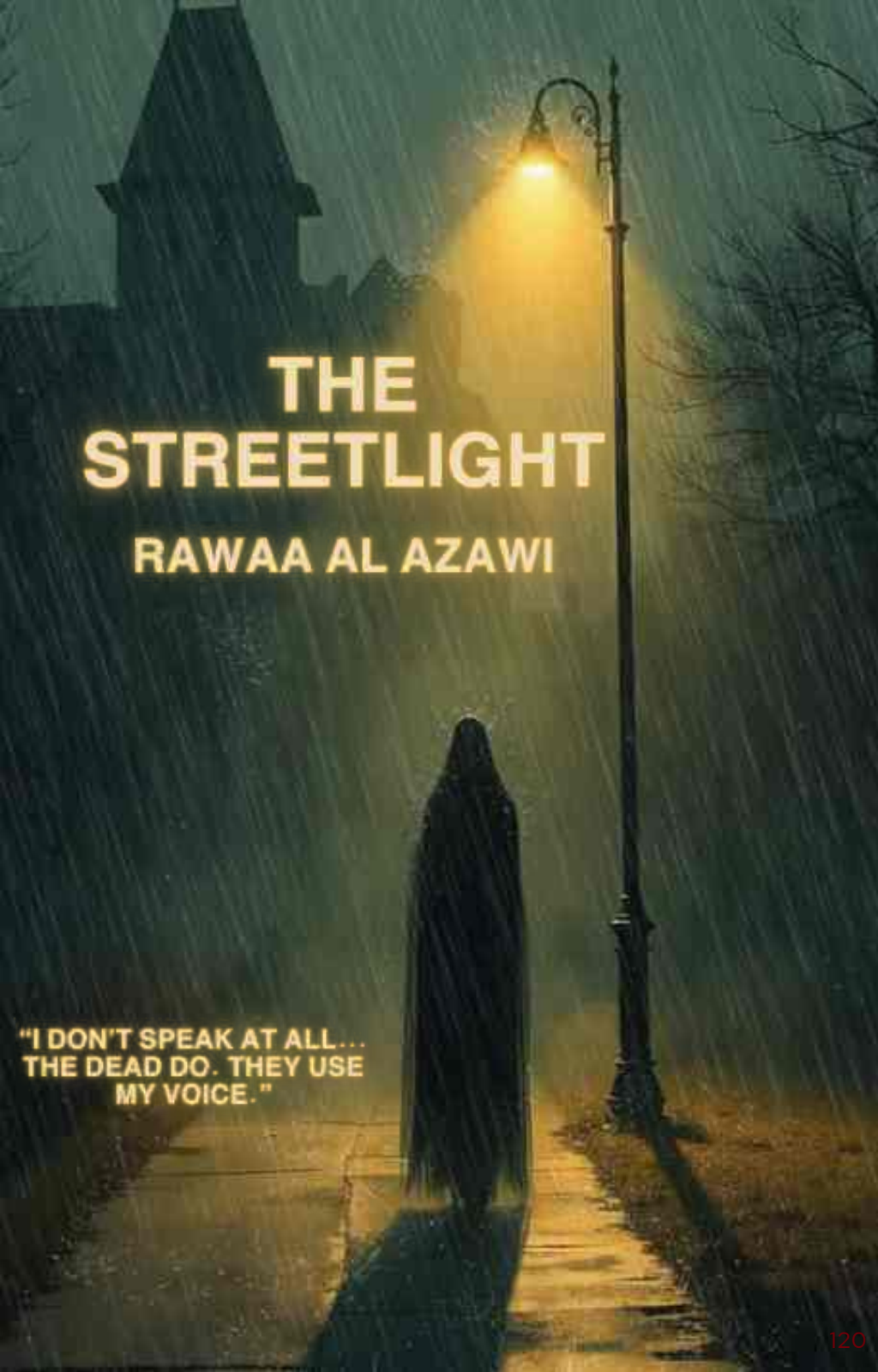
On her way home from work, it was super dark, and her car lights had stopped working. Waad felt her heart start to race as she glanced around, but when she saw no one to help her, she decided to turn back and keep going without any lights.

Only a few seconds went by before a light popped up in front of her, and she came to a halt. A little kid appeared, grinning oddly at her, his steps wobbly. Waad's fear grew stronger, and she started to cry. Every time she took a few steps, she found the same child right there in front of her.

I arrived at a crossroads by a river and saw a bunch of kids crying at a grave. But what was really odd was that all the kids looked just the same.

Waad took a step back, but she slipped and fell into the river. Out of nowhere, she heard her mother's voice calling her:

"Hey there, it's time to get up! You're running late for work!"

A person wearing a black niqab is walking away from the viewer on a wet, reflective street at night. A single streetlight on the right side of the path casts a warm, yellow glow, illuminating the person and the wet pavement. In the background, the dark silhouette of a building with a pointed roof is visible against a dark, rainy sky. The overall mood is somber and mysterious.

THE STREETLIGHT

RAWAA AL AZAWI

"I DON'T SPEAK AT ALL...
THE DEAD DO. THEY USE
MY VOICE."

Speak out, stand up, and let your voice be heard...
On one of those five nights, the weather was peaceful, the rain was pouring down, and the wind seemed to whisk you away to another world...

I found myself alone, lost in a sea of thoughts and questions. From my window, I quietly observed the happenings outside this world. I could sense things before they unfolded...

I might not have all the answers, but I sure know what's on my mind!

Are you curious? Haha!

I've finally gotten to the part I wanted to share with you...

But all this chatting... is not for you! Haha, I was just having a little conversation with myself, like every chilly, dark night, filled with thoughts inside, not outside.

I watched you quietly, until my spirit and my seven spirits, my sacred spirit, found their place in your parallel world!

I don't want anything, but I'd really appreciate it if you could leave quietly, without making a sound, so the others in the group aren't disturbed.

You ask, "Which group?" I'm referring to you and your seven clans...

Don't you realize what you've done to my souls? Hahaha... I forgive you, you jinn, you just don't understand; you untangle what you desire and link what makes you happy!

"Are you being sarcastic?" Nope, I'm not being sarcastic at all... Actually, I'm not speaking at all; it's my soul that's doing the talking... not my tongue!

Your voice had a funny sound, and the rain that night was even weirder...

Everything felt a bit odd when the doorbell chimed...

But before I respond to the stranger, I asked you: Are you the one who digs around in the shadowy corners? Or do you want me to step into your terrifying place, which wipes out everyone who lays eyes on it? No, I really don't want to go...

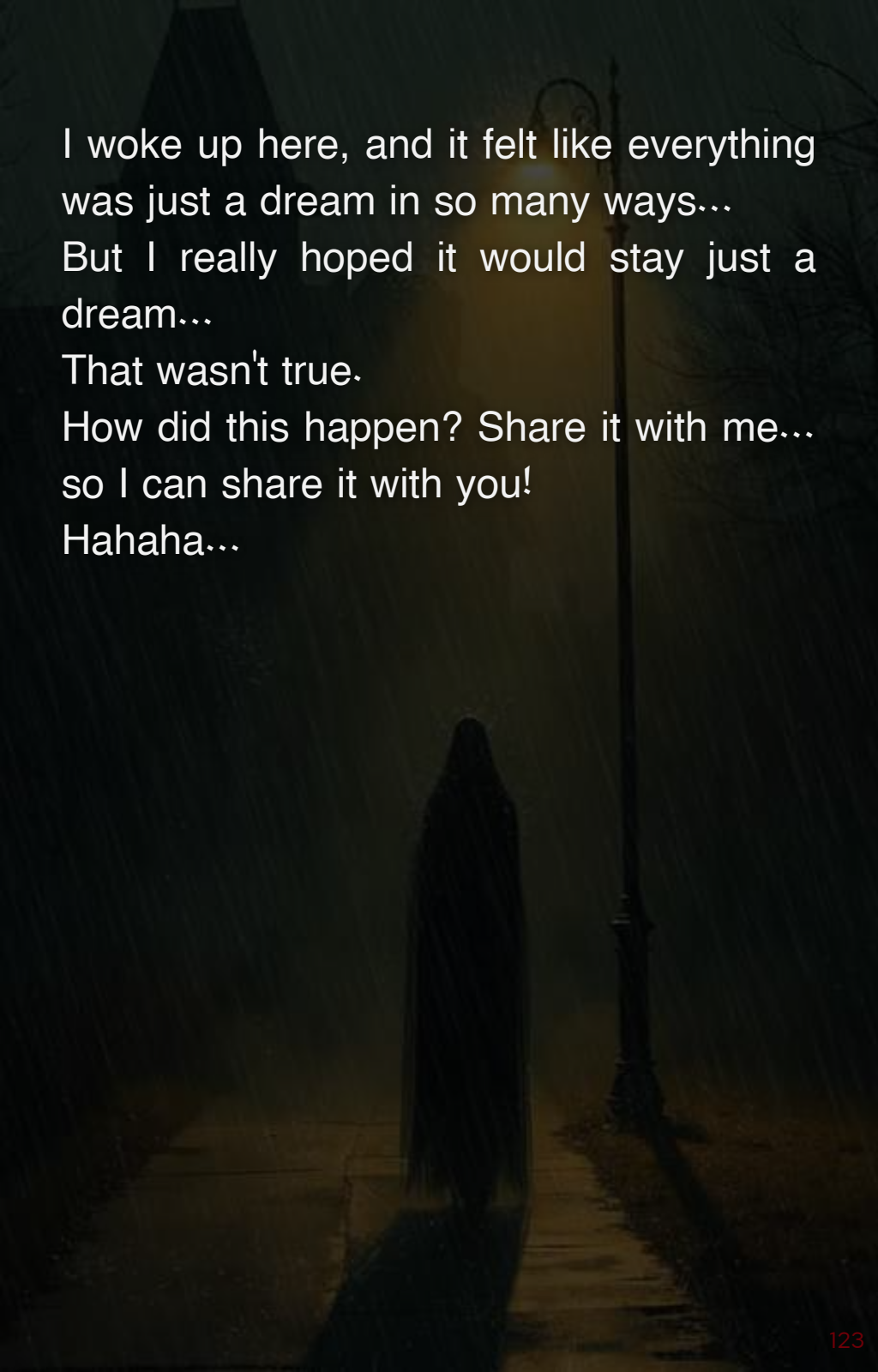
Suddenly!

I stood in front of my mirror, watching my eighth soul come to life...

But something different happened!

The mirror broke into pieces, almost as if it was trying to tell me:

"Don't be afraid of your inner thoughts anymore..."



I woke up here, and it felt like everything
was just a dream in so many ways...
But I really hoped it would stay just a
dream...
That wasn't true.
How did this happen? Share it with me...
so I can share it with you!
Hahaha...

BLACK WEDDING

All this... while the underworld prepared my wedding among its dead.



Amal Al Sheikh

I'm not sure if it was my voice or my breath, or if she was just there with me all along. When I sit by my window, is she watching me, or am I the one looking at those around her? I feel so lost; this illusion is starting to take over, and she always seemed to gaze at me with her dark eyes. Maybe she wanted to talk to me, but she could sense my fear and how I reacted; the way my breath would tighten whenever she tried to come closer.

I sense that she wants to reach out to me, and I can't shake the feeling that I might scream, so she dashes away so quickly that I can feel the air swirling around me, and I hear her giggles as she tries to sneak away.

I always tried to chat with her, calling out her name to make her feel better. I didn't know her name, but I would say some letters like "H F F" — I'm not sure why, they didn't mean anything — but I really wanted her to tell me her name.

Then evening arrived, and at midnight on Sunday, I heard her grabbing my hairbrush from the closet, so I hurried to my bedroom, but there was no one there.

I walked up to the mirror to check myself out, and there she was, right behind me with her long black hair, gazing at me. Her hand reached out, and her body seemed to stretch on forever! The sight of her figure and that eerie smile sent me into a panic, and I screamed and screamed, but no one could hear me. I was trapped in her world, surrounded by its strange inhabitants, listening to voices I had never heard before and music that seemed to come from nowhere. It felt like someone was getting ready for a wedding.

Then it was my turn to put on a dress that I had no idea where it came from or who had brought it. I hurried to the mirror and realized that the bride was me! All this time, I had no clue where I was, until I heard my mom's voice calling me, and I said, "I'm here," but she couldn't hear me because I was in a world that wasn't my own.

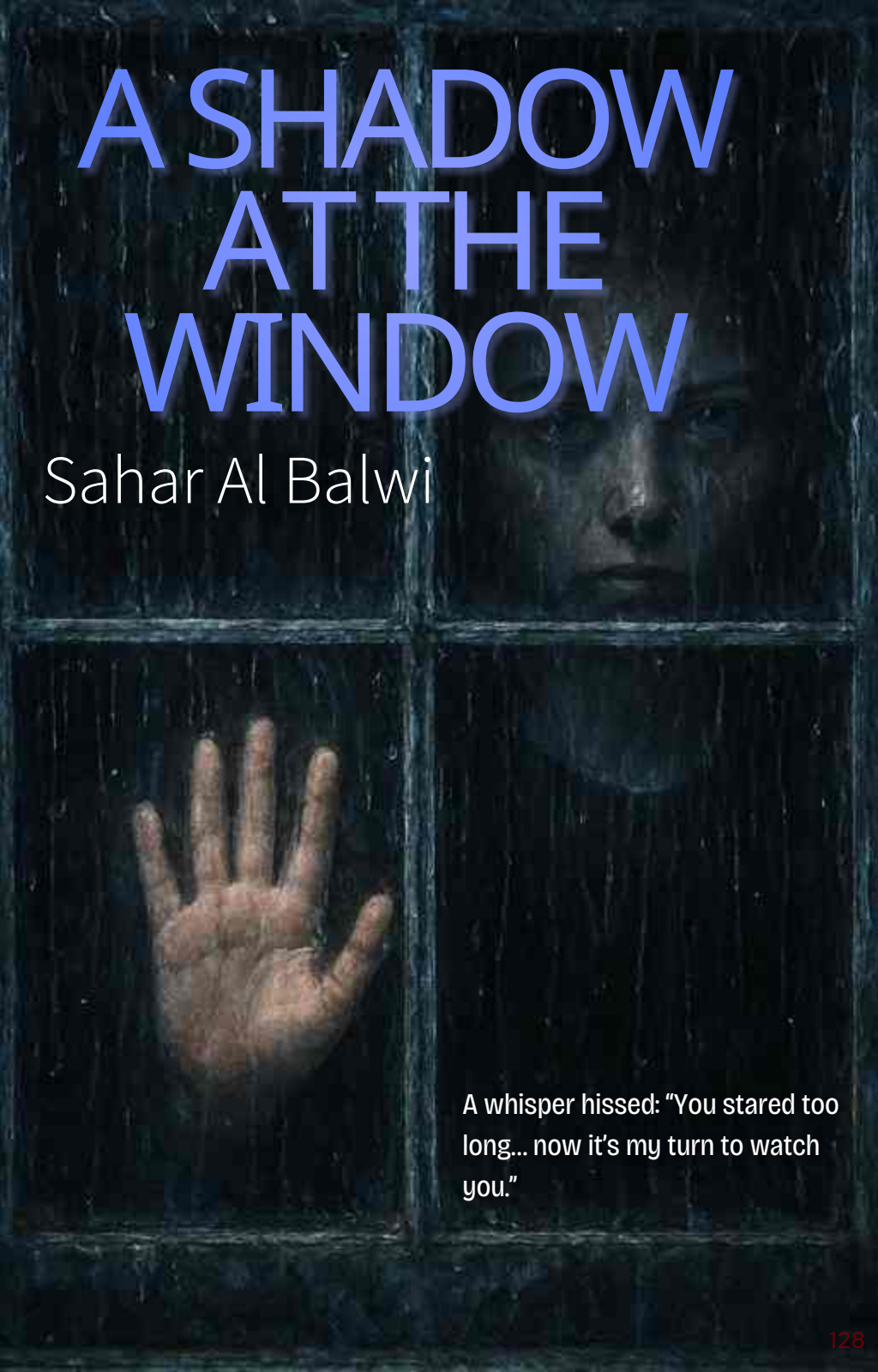
Until the sun came up, I heard a voice saying, "Come on, wrap it up! It's too late, we can't keep going here." The darkness faded away, and I found myself in my room, surrounded by my makeup, sitting at my vanity.

My mom looks at me and asks, "What's going on? Why is there such a mess?" I can't find the words, feeling like someone is watching me, and a wave of fear washes over me; I just freeze and stay quiet. Meanwhile, I'm in a world getting ready for my wedding day, surrounded by folks from the underworld.

And in that moment, as I looked into her dark eyes in the mirror, I understood the awful truth... 'She' wasn't a different person from me, but instead the shadow formed by my loneliness and the fear I had fed with my madness all these years. She was me, and I was her.

But the most painful twist was that the voice of my mother I heard wasn't real either... I found myself in the morning sitting in front of the mirror, holding my hairbrush, whispering words I didn't understand... and I realized that 'The Wedding of the Underworld' was just a metaphor for my mind drifting to a place where reality and illusion blended together. And now, whenever I look in the mirror, I see her smiling at me... and I can't tell if she's trying to take hold of me, or if I've started to take hold of her.

A SHADOW AT THE WINDOW

The background of the entire page is a dark, moody photograph of a window. The window is divided into four panes by a dark frame. In the top-right pane, a person's face is visible, looking out with a serious expression. In the bottom-left pane, a hand is pressed against the glass, palm facing out. The lighting is low, creating a sense of mystery and suspense.

Sahar Al Balwi

A whisper hissed: "You stared too long... now it's my turn to watch you."

It was three in the morning, and the rain was tapping on the glass like it wanted to come inside. The air was howling through the old cracks in the walls. I sat in the chair across from the window, staring at my reflection... but it didn't look like me. The similarity was clear, but he had a smile on his face, and I didn't.

I raised my hand, and he raised his too, but it took him two seconds.

My blood turned to ice in my veins.

I stepped a little closer, and his smile grew bigger, like he could tell I was feeling scared.

I was super scared... but my curiosity helped me push through the fear.

I opened the window to take a look... and the wind rushed in like a chilly, mysterious breath, and I caught a soft whisper:

"You searched for such a long time, so I thought I'd take a look at you this time..."

I hurriedly shut the window and dashed to the door... but it just wouldn't budge. Everything went black.

Even the rain just came to a halt.

In the dark, I could hear footsteps coming up behind me, moving slowly, and then I felt the sound of heavy breathing right on my neck...

"Now it's your turn to stand behind the glass..." And from that night on... everyone who walks by my window sees a shadow that resembles me, smiling, even when I'm not around.



I walked into the kitchen. A whisper said,
"This is where the story ends."



Claustrophobia

Lamis Suleiman

In that faraway spot, a few kilometers from our home, there's a spooky cellar tucked away in an old building. I've been hearing about it since I was three, during the chats my mom had with her neighbors, who loved to gossip, share wild stories, and sometimes stretch the truth a bit.

We never spent a night beside our mother without her keeping a story about him close to her heart. Sometimes it would end with someone passing away, and other times it would wrap up in a tragedy, whether it was less or more terrible.

I asked her, breaking into my brothers' nap time while they were wrapped up in that pesky blanket: Until when?!

She leaped up, a question mark on her forehead with a dot that almost felt like it was about to hit my head, and exclaimed in a voice full of urgency: What?!

Will you keep feeling stuck in the idea that the cellar is like a mesmerizing love? That's how I replied to her...

She let out a sigh, and the breath from it nearly whisked me away to the entrance of our alley, then she said:

I really wish that was just a dream or a bunch of letters and made-up tales.

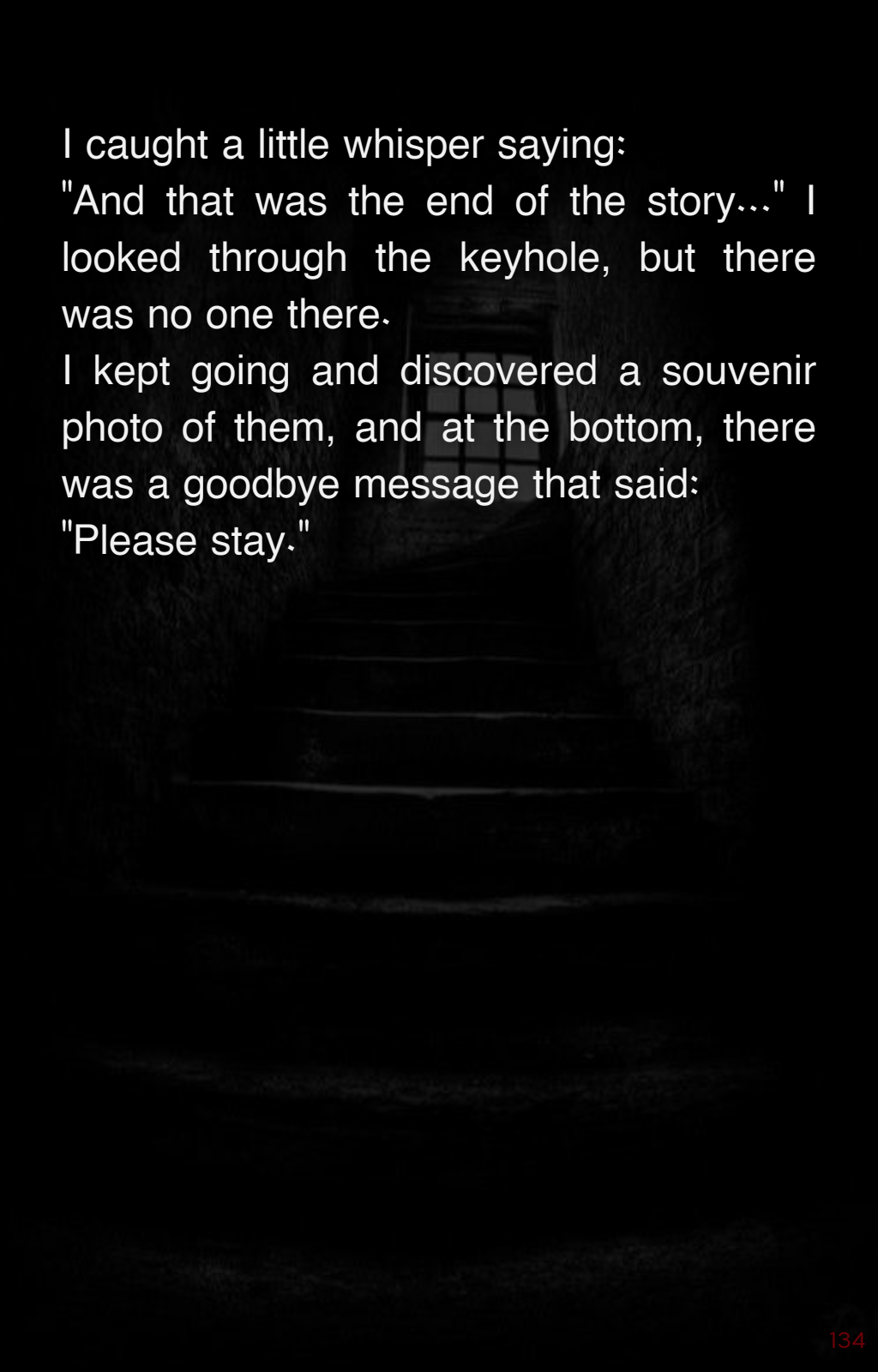
She looked away from me and pointed fingers at my question and my roundabout words, saying I was accusing her of lying.

A trip into the crypt...

This is what I heard "Abu Nazarat Al-Amyan" (as we like to call him) say during one of our get-togethers.

I hurried through the dusty streets, warmed by the sun, weaving between the rubble of a busy road filled with people and onlookers, while I babbled mindlessly about him and his ideas. I finally made it to the room, shut the window, and draped it with my mom's cloth, which was a daily source of strength for the women.

I kept filling the holes in the back wall

A dark, atmospheric photograph of a stone staircase leading up to a doorway with a window. The scene is dimly lit, with the light source coming from the window, creating a sense of mystery and suspense. The text is overlaid on the image in a white, serif font.

I caught a little whisper saying:
"And that was the end of the story..." I
looked through the keyhole, but there
was no one there.
I kept going and discovered a souvenir
photo of them, and at the bottom, there
was a goodbye message that said:
"Please stay."

AT 4OUR

"You're next... just as we were."

Mohammad
Badra



Hala was a nurse in the emergency department of a cozy little hospital on the edge of town. She was familiar with night shifts, but they weren't her favorite. After midnight, things got a bit odd, especially down in the basement where the old equipment was kept.

One evening, as she was going through patient files, she spotted that an old medical device had been marked as "used" just moments ago, even though it had been tucked away for years. Feeling a bit suspicious, she made up her mind to head down and take a look.

The basement was gloomy, damp, and had a musty smell. I stepped into the room and spotted the device right where it should be, but it was functioning. The screen was blinking, and it emitted a soft, rhythmic sound.

I walked over to him, and a patient's name popped up on the screen:

"Hala Abdel Rahman – 4:00 AM" Her blood turned to ice in her veins.

How can we see her name?

No information has been saved on this device for years. I glanced at the clock; it read 3:47. She hurried back upstairs, but everything seemed changed. The lights were low, and the patients were resting oddly, as if in a deep sleep. She attempted to call her coworker in the monitoring room, but the phone wouldn't cooperate. She switched on the computer and discovered a new file with her name on it, holding a death report dated today at 4:00 AM.

She started to hear footsteps in the hallway, but there was no one in sight. Then, a man showed up, wearing old-fashioned medical scrubs. His face was scarred, and his eyes looked empty. He walked closer to her and spoke in a soft voice:

"You've been registered... No one is allowed outside after four." She attempted to flee, but every door was locked tight. It was 3:59. She started to feel a bit panicky, and the light began to fade. The instant the clock hit four, all the lights went dark, and there was total silence.

The next morning, the new crew came in and noticed that everything was just as it should be... except for Hala. She was missing, but the old machine downstairs was buzzing away, showing a new name on its screen:

"Dr. Sami – 4:00 AM"

The dark folder...

The morning after Hala went missing, Dr. Sami showed up at the hospital for his shift. He could feel a tense vibe in the air, with staff members whispering about the mysterious disappearance. Although he didn't know Hala very well, he could sense something odd, as if the place was pushing back against him.

While going through patient records, he spotted a new electronic file on his desktop, named:

"Four o'clock – storage floor" He opened the file and discovered surveillance camera footage of Hala walking into the basement, and then... nothing.

The camera stopped recording at 4:00.

It was quite odd that the photos came with a medical report that had his signature on it, even though he wasn't working that night.

Sami chose to head downstairs on his own. It felt chillier than normal, and the lights were a bit low. As he stepped into the storage room, he saw that the old device was still up and running, but this time, the screen was blank of any name... just a countdown.

00:12... 00:11... 00:10...

Before he could step outside, the door banged shut behind him. He heard whispers echoing from the walls, voices he recognized:

"You're up next... just like we were..."

Faces started to show up on the walls, the faces of people who had gone missing from the hospital over the years. They were all staff members, and each one had vanished in strange ways. Then Hala's face appeared, gazing at him with teary eyes, and she softly whispered:

"Please don't sign the file... Please don't sign..."

At that moment, Sami heard a voice calling from above through the loudspeaker:

"Dr. Sami, could you please head over and sign the basement file?" The countdown on the device hit zero. The lights flickered off. When they turned back on, the basement was deserted.

The following day, nurse Ruba came in for her shift and noticed a new file sitting on the desktop:

"The fourth hour – Dr. Sami" Ruba noticed that everyone who had come before her vanished after their names showed up on the device screen, so she made up her mind to change things.

She went back to the basement, this time with a flashlight and a little knife that she had tucked away in her pocket.

When I walked into the room, the device was doing its usual thing, but this time there was no countdown... instead, just one word lit up on the screen:

"Akhtar."

Then two pictures showed up: her picture and a picture of Dr. Sami.

She got the message loud and clear. It was time to decide who would step in for her. Her hands shook, and she started to wonder: Should she look out for herself and let Sami take the fall? Or should she put an end to this awful game? Out of nowhere, Hala's words popped back into her mind:

"Don't sign the file..." She glanced around and noticed a stack of old files in the corner of the room. Curiously, she walked over and started ripping them apart one by one. With every file she tore, she heard a faint scream, like a soul being set free.

When she got to her file, she paused for a second. Her heart was racing, but with a burst of bravery, she ripped it open.

The machine turned off, and everything went quiet. Suddenly, the walls started to crack, and the air felt thicker. She sensed something being tugged from her body, as if she were being torn away from this world.

But she fought back. She yelled as loud as she could and drove the knife into the machine.

The light flooded into the room, and then... complete darkness.

Ruba opened her eyes in the hospital bed, with her colleagues nearby. The clock showed 3:59. She glanced around; everything seemed just fine. No files, no equipment, no basement.

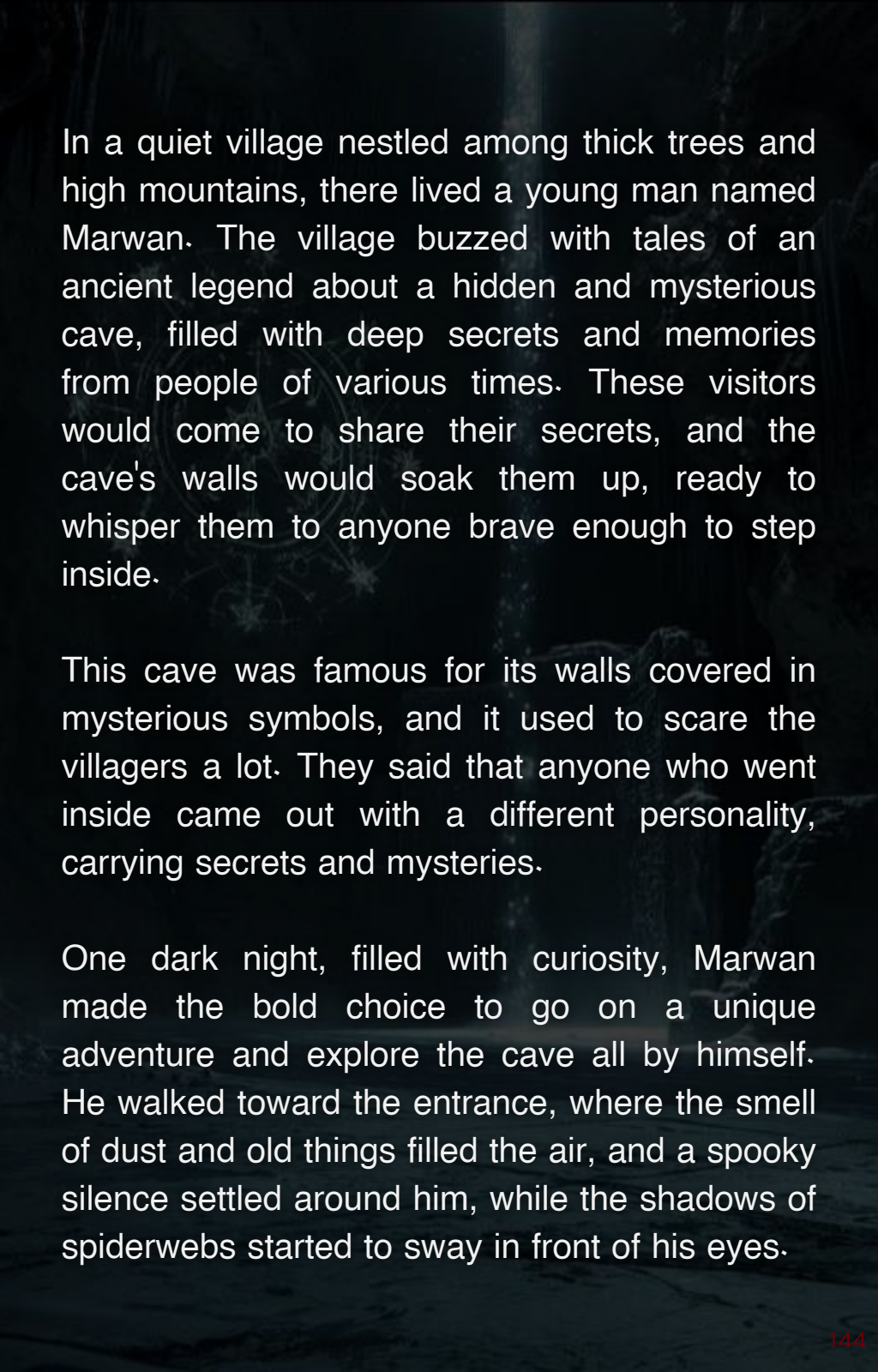
But she spotted something interesting: on her wrist, a shiny new bracelet with a tiny engraved number:
"04:00"

A dark, atmospheric cave scene. A bright, shimmering beam of light descends from the top center, illuminating a stone pedestal. On the left wall, a large, intricate circular diagram with star-like patterns is visible. The cave walls are rugged and covered in stalactites.

*They say the cave
changes everyone who
enters... and some secrets
come back with them.*

The Hidden Cave.

Ayah Al Hawmi



In a quiet village nestled among thick trees and high mountains, there lived a young man named Marwan. The village buzzed with tales of an ancient legend about a hidden and mysterious cave, filled with deep secrets and memories from people of various times. These visitors would come to share their secrets, and the cave's walls would soak them up, ready to whisper them to anyone brave enough to step inside.

This cave was famous for its walls covered in mysterious symbols, and it used to scare the villagers a lot. They said that anyone who went inside came out with a different personality, carrying secrets and mysteries.

One dark night, filled with curiosity, Marwan made the bold choice to go on a unique adventure and explore the cave all by himself. He walked toward the entrance, where the smell of dust and old things filled the air, and a spooky silence settled around him, while the shadows of spiderwebs started to sway in front of his eyes.

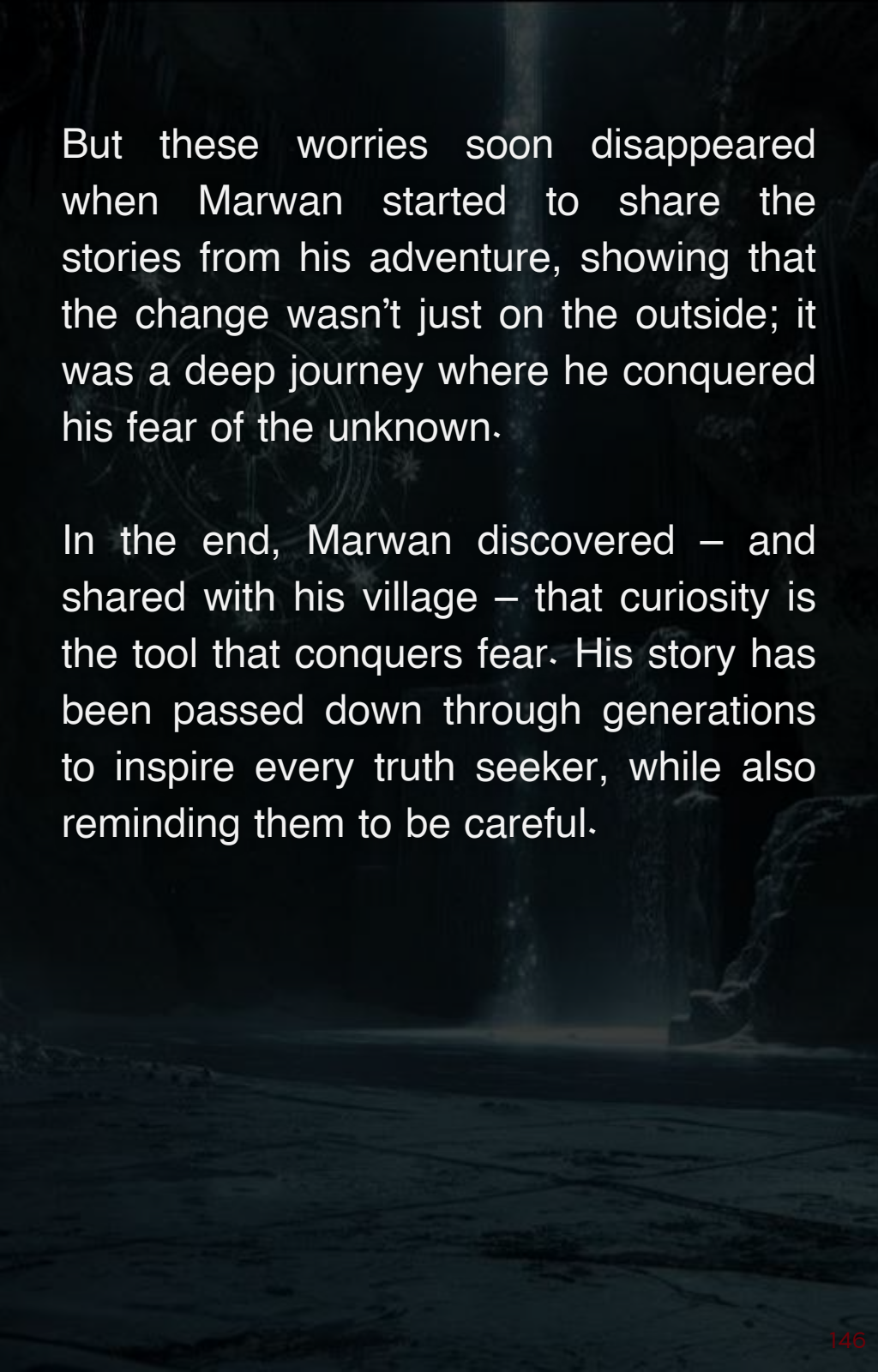
Inside, Marwan came across some odd things; he heard whispers coming from the walls, as if memories had transformed into ghostly voices chatting with him.

At first, he felt really scared because of the ghosts and bats that had taken over the cave, but his curiosity pushed him to keep exploring.

As time went by, Marwan started to pay attention to those memories and really focus on them. He felt a special bond with them, almost like they were real people. Even though the language was a bit odd, he managed to connect the symbols to the whispers, helping him figure out the cave's secrets. His fear slowly disappeared, making room for understanding.

When Marwan chose to step outside, he could feel the ground tremble under his feet.

The village saw his transformation right after he left; his face looked different, his eyes shone with a mysterious glow, and his voice had a peculiar echo that filled the townsfolk with surprise and a bit of fear.



But these worries soon disappeared when Marwan started to share the stories from his adventure, showing that the change wasn't just on the outside; it was a deep journey where he conquered his fear of the unknown.

In the end, Marwan discovered – and shared with his village – that curiosity is the tool that conquers fear. His story has been passed down through generations to inspire every truth seeker, while also reminding them to be careful.

YOUSSEF AND THE DAUNTING SHADOW

Maya Barhom

Youssef whispered, "Mom... something's still in my room."

In one of the charming old neighborhoods, where families resided in cozy houses side by side, there was a young boy named Joseph who lived with his parents, a small and loving family. Joseph was seven years old and had a big fear of his room, which was at the end of the hallway, far from his parents' room, making him feel uneasy. Every night before he snuggled into bed, he would double-check that the wardrobe door was shut tight because he thought something might be hiding inside it.

One night, Joseph stirred awake to a soft scratching noise.

He glanced over at the closet and noticed the door standing wide open, even though he distinctly recalled shutting it before drifting off to sleep. In the thick darkness, he couldn't make out what was lurking inside the closet, but he sensed that there were eyes watching him from deep within.

He hurriedly covered himself, and when he bravely peeked again a few minutes later, the door was shut once more.

The next morning, he asked his parents if either of them had come into his room during the night, but they both said no. His mom chose to comfort him by saying it had all just been a dream.

But the next night, the same thing happened once more. He woke up to the sound of scratching, but this time the door was slightly open, and he spotted a tall, dark shadow standing inside. It didn't have any clear features, just that it was really tall and thin. The shadow vanished when Joseph shouted for help.

Youssef started to be afraid of sleep. He grew pale and scared, and his parents, who initially thought it was just a child's imagination, began to feel concerned.

On the third night, his dad chose to stay with him in the room. The dad settled down on a little sofa right next to Joseph's bed. In the middle of the night, the dad woke up to Joseph softly saying, "Dad, look... he's copying you."

The father blinked awake to find a tall, slender figure standing right in the center of the room. It was dressed in pajamas that matched his own perfectly, and its face looked just like his, except for the eyes, which were entirely black. It wore a big, eerie smile.

The father stood frozen in fear as he saw the creature start to creep toward Joseph's bed with jerky movements. He attempted to scream, but his voice got stuck in his throat. He tried to leap up, but felt completely paralyzed, unable to budge.

Youssef noticed the creature coming closer to his bed, while his father couldn't do anything to help him. The creature spoke in a voice that sounded like his father's, but it was twisted and shaky: "Don't be afraid... Father is here." Just then, the father broke free from his stillness and yelled: "Get away from my son!" But the creature didn't back off. It hunched over Youssef, and its shadow slowly started to cover the little boy.

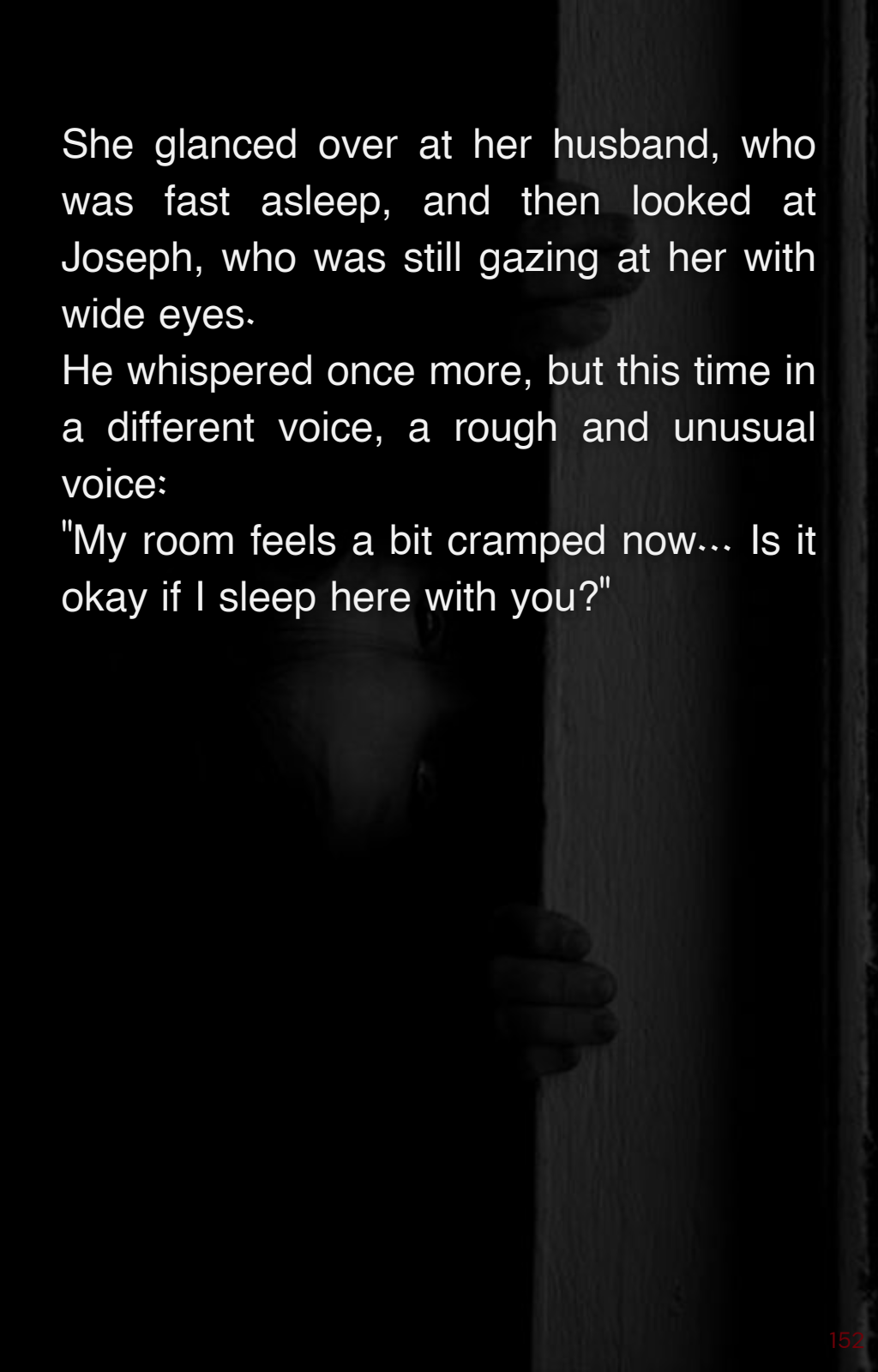
The dad hurried over to the bed, and just as he got there, the creature vanished out of nowhere.

Joseph was shaking with fear, holding tightly to his dad. The next morning, his parents chose to have Joseph sleep in their room.

That night, Joseph snuggled up between his parents in their big bed. In the middle of the night, his mom woke up to a soft whispering sound.

She opened her eyes and saw Youssef standing at the edge of the bed, looking at them. "Youssef, are you alright?" she asked. Youssef whispered, "Mama, there's still something in my room."

The mother reached out her hand to soothe him, but then paused suddenly. In the soft glow of the moonlight, she noticed that Joseph's shadow on the wall wasn't that of a child; instead, it was a tall, slender shadow. There are three people standing side by side.



She glanced over at her husband, who was fast asleep, and then looked at Joseph, who was still gazing at her with wide eyes.

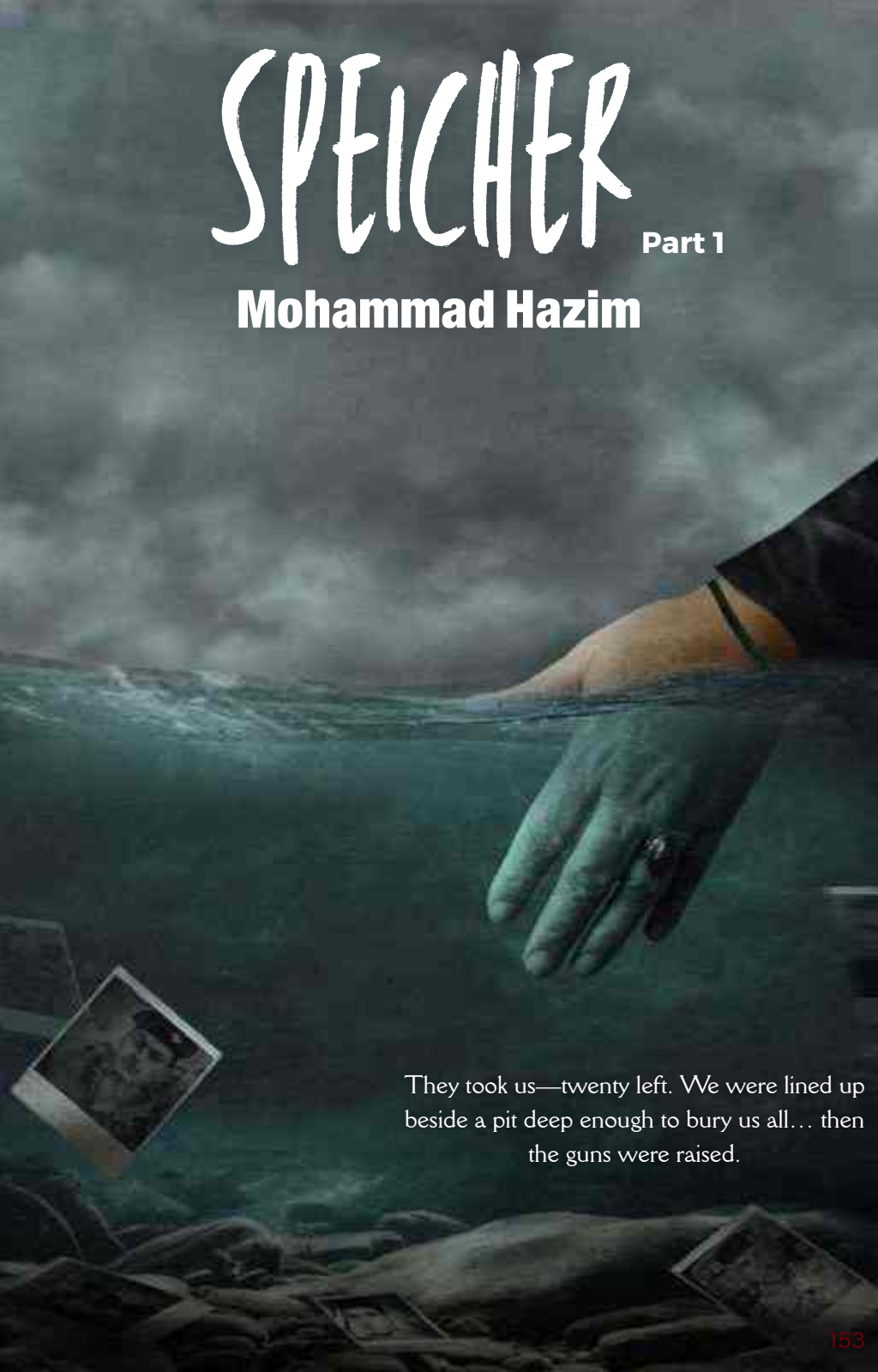
He whispered once more, but this time in a different voice, a rough and unusual voice:

"My room feels a bit cramped now... Is it okay if I sleep here with you?"

SPEICHER

Part 1

Mohammad Hazim

A hand reaches out from the water under a stormy sky. A photograph of a person in a military uniform floats in the water. The scene is dark and moody, with a hand reaching out from the water and a photograph floating nearby.

They took us—twenty left. We were lined up
beside a pit deep enough to bury us all... then
the guns were raised.

A new morning broke, and sunlight spilled across the wall of my room. I rose quickly, waking my comrades so we could prepare for the day ahead. With so many changes sweeping through several of our cities that month, we had to remain fully prepared and continue our military training with the Iraqi Air Force.

It was eleven o'clock, yet we had attended neither a lecture nor a training session. Something felt wrong. The situation was taking an unfamiliar and unsettling turn—something none of us had expected, least of all from our commanders.

Then came the first sign that things were about to take a darker turn.

We were informed that Tikrit had been placed under siege by Islamic State forces.

Who were rapidly tightening their grip on the city and its surrounding areas. We were ordered to abandon our military base, Camp Speicher.

We left on foot, with no choice but to obey.

There were more than fifteen hundred of us.

It took barely an hour for the truth to reveal itself.

We had walked straight into a deadly trap.

A large number of vehicles belonging to the organization surrounded us from every direction. Most of the men inside were dressed in civilian clothes, a calculated disguise meant to deceive us until it was too late.

Some of us were taken toward the banks of the Tigris. I was among them.

They began carrying out executions on the spot—dozens of men, one after another. A bullet to the head, then their bodies were thrown into the Tigris. Before long, I saw the river itself stained red.

Only two men remained ahead of me in line. My turn was next.

Then one of their commanders ordered the rest of us taken into the desert, far from prying eyes, where they intended to bury us in mass graves.

When we arrived and were gathered with another group of prisoners, I found my friend Muhammad again. He was from the same city as me.

I wish I never had.

I watched as they dragged him toward his death. Before killing him, they demanded that he renounce his Shiite faith, which they condemned. Desperate to survive, he tried to appease them, claiming that he was Sunni. But when he performed his prayers in front of them, the truth was exposed.

He begged them to spare his life.

It was too late.

Their executioner had already drawn his blade—and before my eyes, he slit Muhammad's throat.

They took us away. Twenty of us remained, and we were lined up before a large pit, deep enough to hold all our bodies. Guns were trained on us.

In that moment, I could think of nothing but my two-year-old daughter—her smile whenever I held her, the way she would cry when I tried to wake her from sleep just to play with her.

Then I thought of my wife. I could never get enough of her gentle touch or the way she looked at me.

And slowly, painfully, I began to understand the truth:

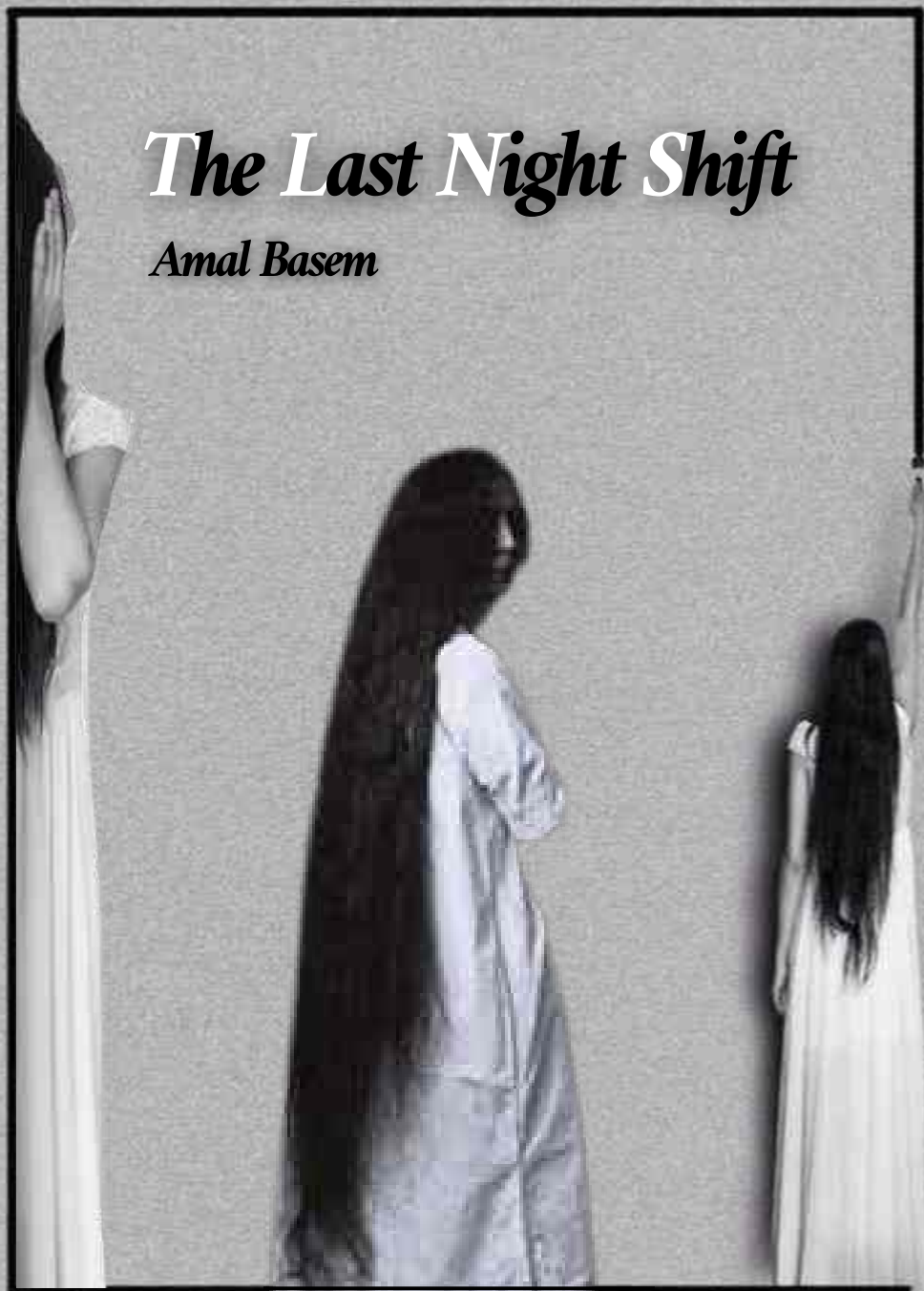
I would never see them again.

TO BE CONTINUED

*Sometimes, I wake to a faint giggle at the end of the hallway... the same
one Ruba used to make.*

The Last Night Shift

Amal Basem



I'm a psychiatrist who has spent over ten years working in a hospital for mental health. I've witnessed it all: people screaming, experiencing hallucinations, and having intense episodes of schizophrenia. I've gotten used to things that might scare most folks: patients yelling at night, sudden outbursts of anger, and the clanking of metal restraints when someone is moved to the isolation room...

But what took place in Ward 4 wasn't really a mental illness... at least not in the way we usually think of it.

It was nearly three o'clock in the morning. The shift was surprisingly calm. I was sitting there going over patient files when I heard a gentle knock on my office door. I looked up, but there was no one around... I brushed it off until I heard the soft sound of bare feet walking past my door, heading toward ward number (4), the locked ward that no one is allowed to enter at night.

I dashed out in a hurry; the hallway was deserted, except for shadows dancing in the flickering glow of the lamps.

When I got to the suite door, I saw it was unlocked. That couldn't be right; I was the last one to lock it myself. I gently pushed the door open, and a thick, musty smell wafted through the air. I could hear a soft hum coming from the last room down the hallway. That room belonged to a woman named Ruba.

A patient who had tried to take her own life multiple times in a very distressing way, by cutting her arteries with the wires from an electrocardiogram machine, and who battled severe schizophrenia, passed away two weeks ago.

I walked over slowly, and with every step, my heart felt heavier. I opened the door and found her sitting on the bed, her hair hiding her face, dressed in the same white dress they had laid her to rest in. She was giggling softly and whispering my name...

I stepped back, then took another step, until I bumped into the wall. I shut my eyes for a moment, and when I opened them... the room was empty, the bed was neatly made, the windows were shut, and there was no trace of anyone...

The following day, I took a look at the surveillance cameras.

In the video, you can see me opening the suite door and chatting with an empty bed for two minutes before I dash away in a panic.

I didn't return to the hospital after that night, but sometimes when I wake up in the middle of the night, I hear a soft laugh coming from the end of the hallway in my apartment... just like Ruba used to.

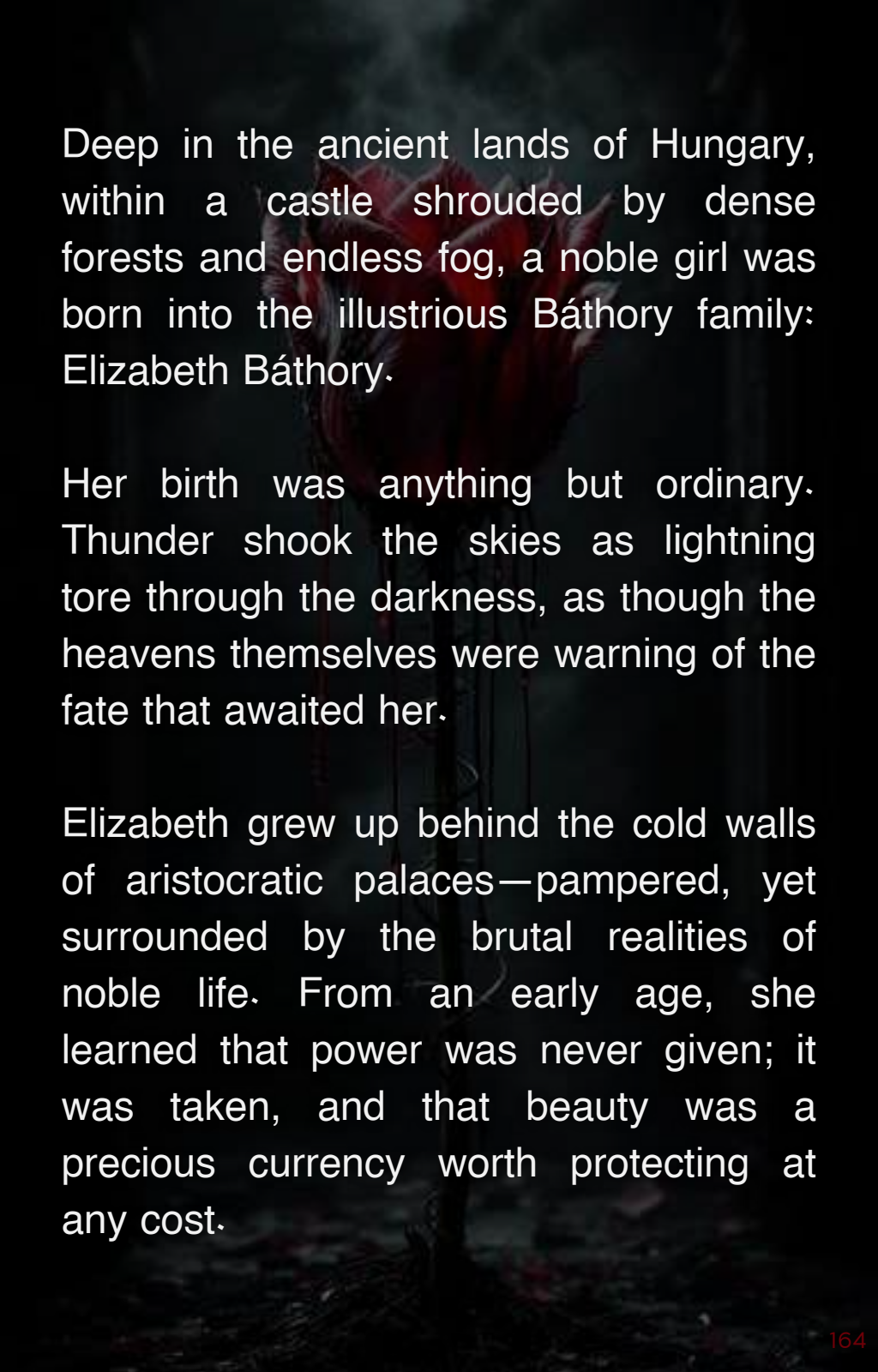


For hours, she whispered to herself: "I was the fairest... I was immortal..."

A dark red rose is the central focus, its petals tightly closed. From its stem, several streams of dark red liquid, resembling blood, drip down. The liquid falls into a clear, ornate glass that is partially filled with the same red liquid. The background is dark and textured, with some light reflecting off the rose and the glass. The overall mood is mysterious and macabre.

THE BLOOD COUNTESS

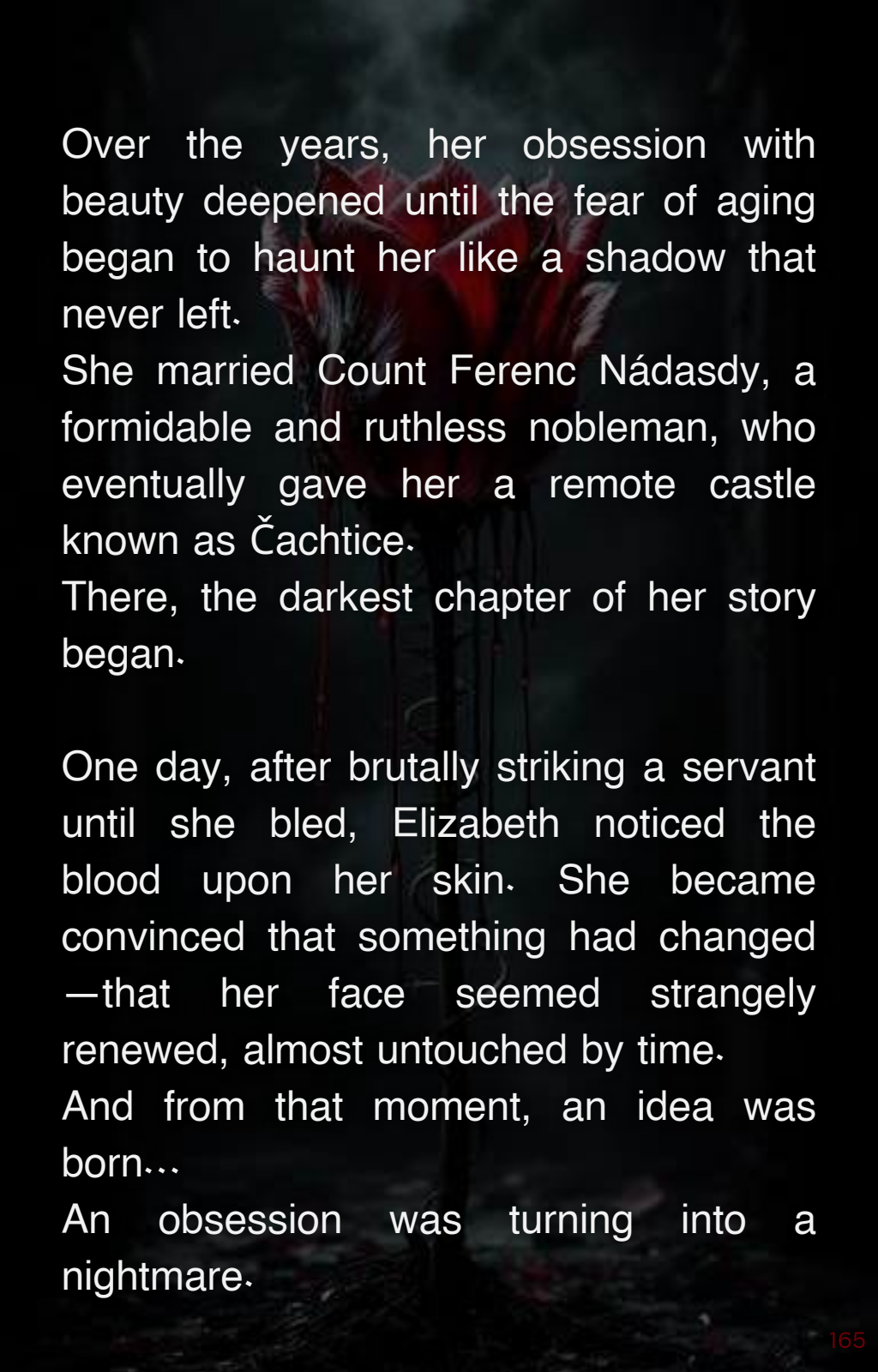
Najah Itani



Deep in the ancient lands of Hungary, within a castle shrouded by dense forests and endless fog, a noble girl was born into the illustrious Báthory family: Elizabeth Báthory.

Her birth was anything but ordinary. Thunder shook the skies as lightning tore through the darkness, as though the heavens themselves were warning of the fate that awaited her.

Elizabeth grew up behind the cold walls of aristocratic palaces—pampered, yet surrounded by the brutal realities of noble life. From an early age, she learned that power was never given; it was taken, and that beauty was a precious currency worth protecting at any cost.



Over the years, her obsession with beauty deepened until the fear of aging began to haunt her like a shadow that never left.

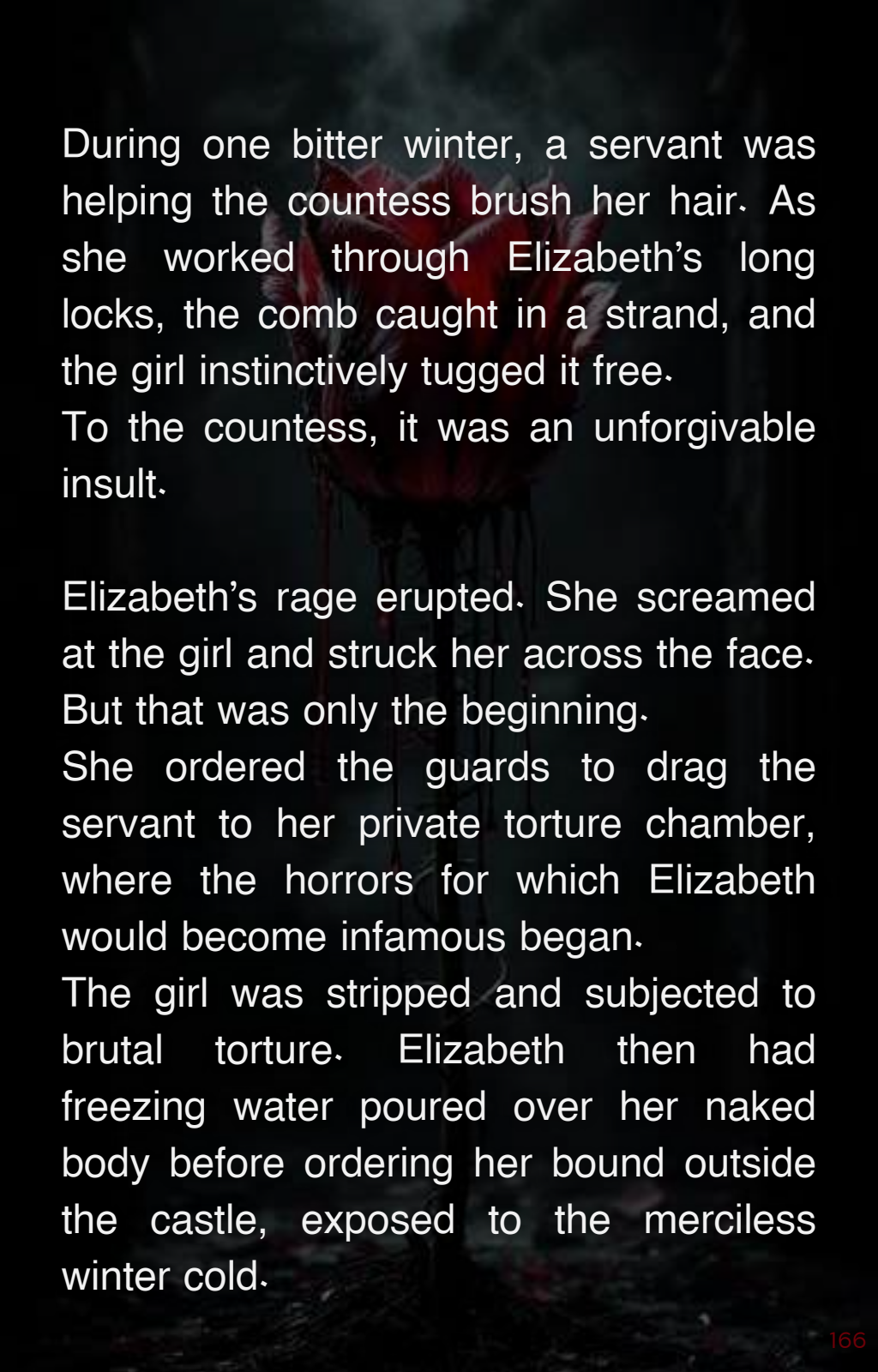
She married Count Ferenc Nádasdy, a formidable and ruthless nobleman, who eventually gave her a remote castle known as Čachtice.

There, the darkest chapter of her story began.

One day, after brutally striking a servant until she bled, Elizabeth noticed the blood upon her skin. She became convinced that something had changed—that her face seemed strangely renewed, almost untouched by time.

And from that moment, an idea was born...

An obsession was turning into a nightmare.



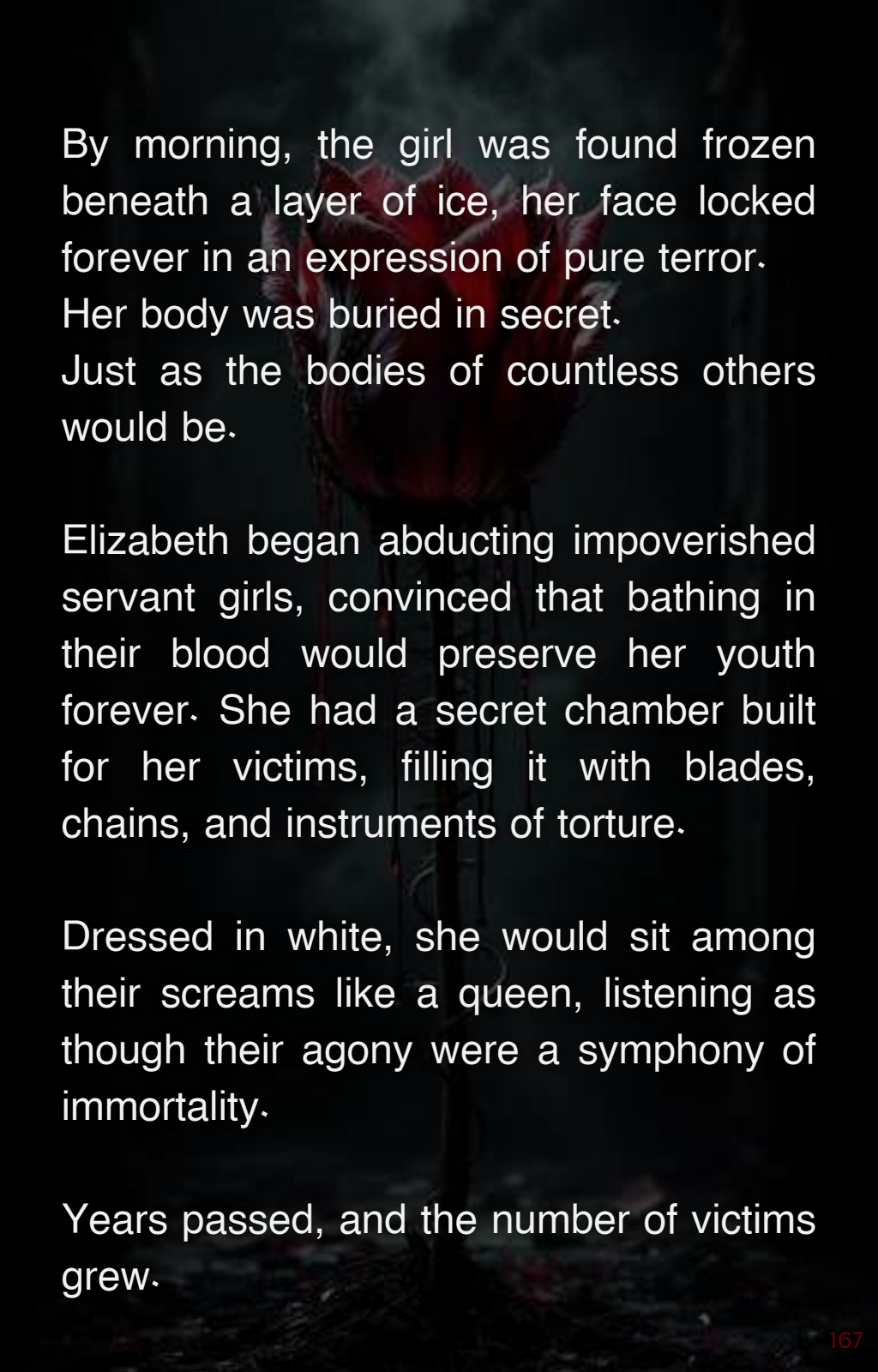
During one bitter winter, a servant was helping the countess brush her hair. As she worked through Elizabeth's long locks, the comb caught in a strand, and the girl instinctively tugged it free.

To the countess, it was an unforgivable insult.

Elizabeth's rage erupted. She screamed at the girl and struck her across the face. But that was only the beginning.

She ordered the guards to drag the servant to her private torture chamber, where the horrors for which Elizabeth would become infamous began.

The girl was stripped and subjected to brutal torture. Elizabeth then had freezing water poured over her naked body before ordering her bound outside the castle, exposed to the merciless winter cold.



By morning, the girl was found frozen beneath a layer of ice, her face locked forever in an expression of pure terror. Her body was buried in secret. Just as the bodies of countless others would be.

Elizabeth began abducting impoverished servant girls, convinced that bathing in their blood would preserve her youth forever. She had a secret chamber built for her victims, filling it with blades, chains, and instruments of torture.

Dressed in white, she would sit among their screams like a queen, listening as though their agony were a symphony of immortality.

Years passed, and the number of victims grew.

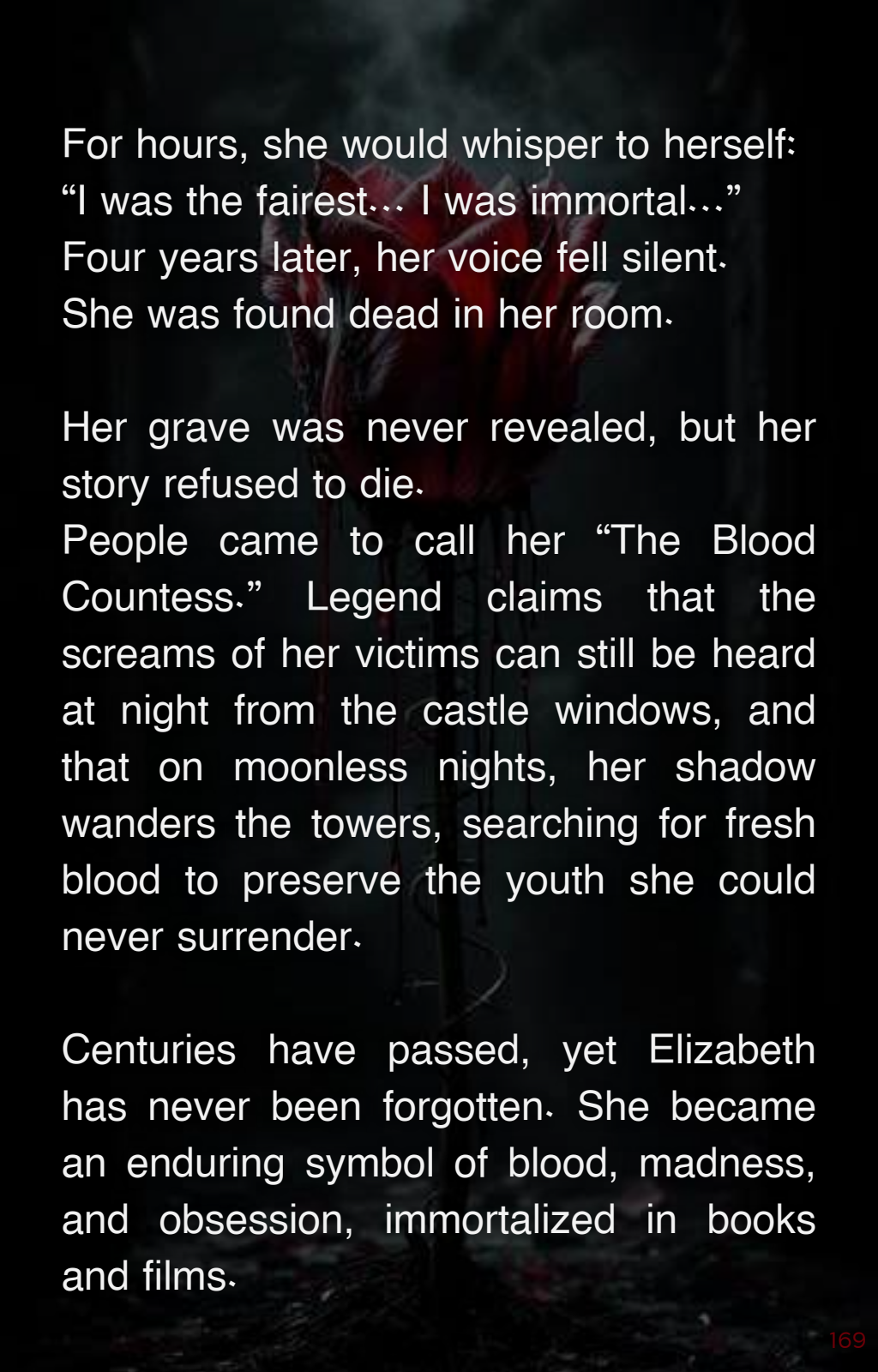


Eventually, even daughters of noble families began disappearing, lured to the castle under the pretense of being taught courtly manners.

None of them ever returned.

Whispers eventually reached the royal court. Judge György Thurzó was sent to investigate. The moment he entered the castle, he uncovered horrors almost beyond description—dead bodies, instruments of torture, and blood staining the walls.

Elizabeth was arrested, but because of her noble status, she was never publicly tried. Instead, she was confined to her chambers, sealed away behind walls with no windows and no mirror to reflect the beauty that time had stolen from her.

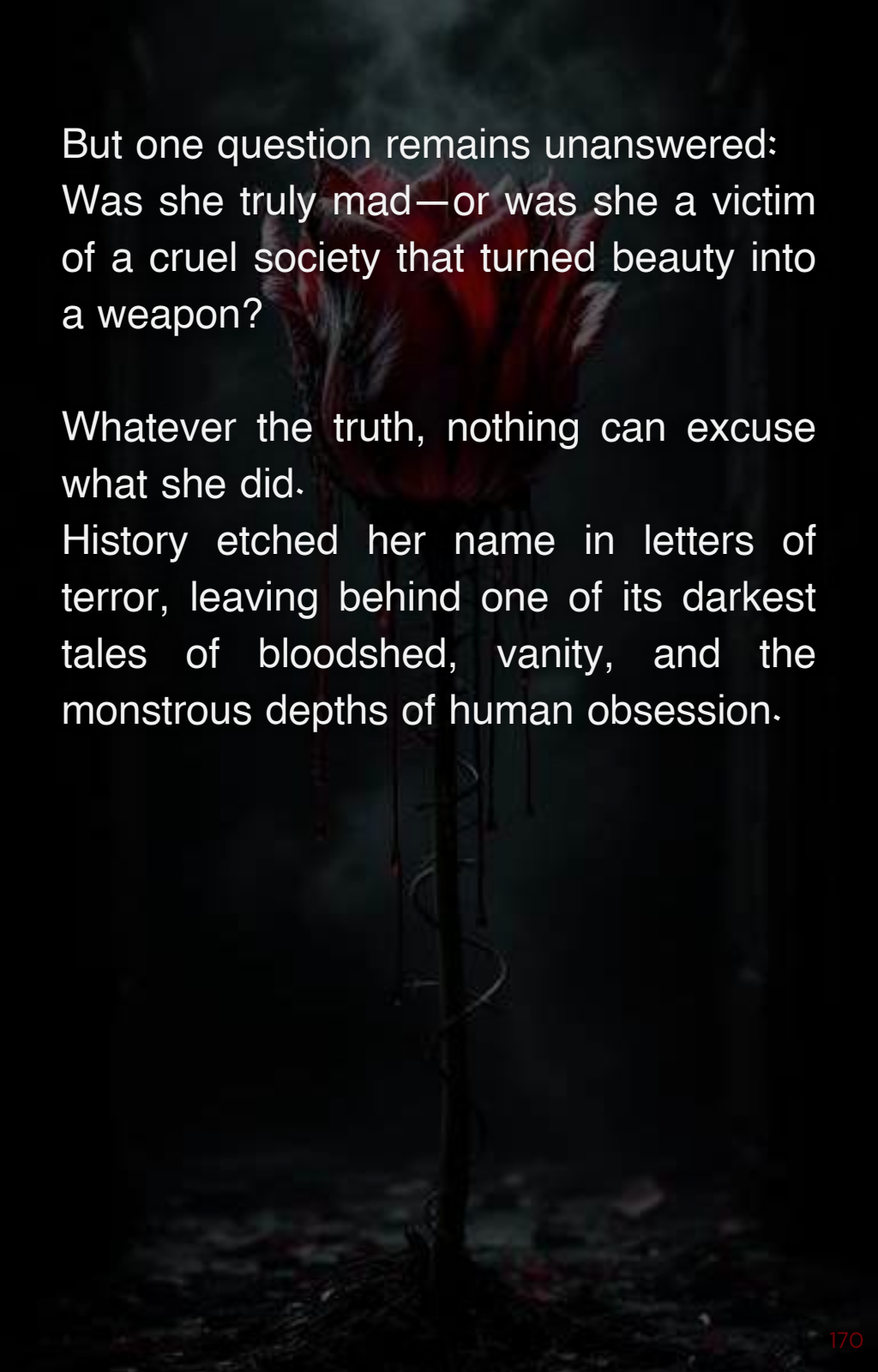


For hours, she would whisper to herself:
“I was the fairest... I was immortal...”
Four years later, her voice fell silent.
She was found dead in her room.

Her grave was never revealed, but her story refused to die.

People came to call her “The Blood Countess.” Legend claims that the screams of her victims can still be heard at night from the castle windows, and that on moonless nights, her shadow wanders the towers, searching for fresh blood to preserve the youth she could never surrender.

Centuries have passed, yet Elizabeth has never been forgotten. She became an enduring symbol of blood, madness, and obsession, immortalized in books and films.



But one question remains unanswered:
Was she truly mad—or was she a victim
of a cruel society that turned beauty into
a weapon?

Whatever the truth, nothing can excuse
what she did.

History etched her name in letters of
terror, leaving behind one of its darkest
tales of bloodshed, vanity, and the
monstrous depths of human obsession.

THE SUICIDE NOTE



Mom...

Don't look for me. I'm not
hiding.

I'm only undoing the mistake of
my birth.

Aqeel Jawarneh

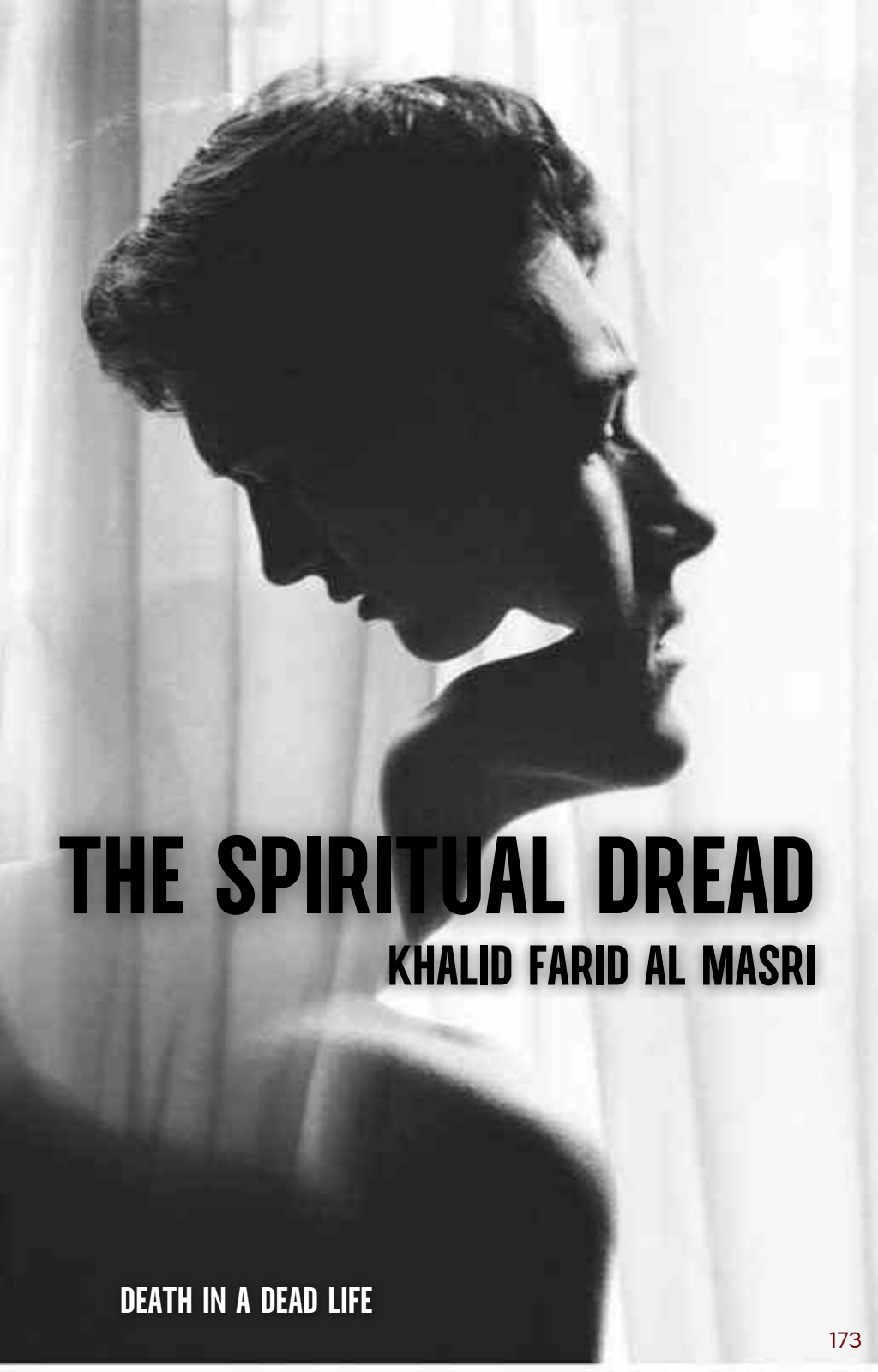
My mom...

Don't go searching for me; I'm not tucked away in the closet or hiding under the bed. I'm just fixing the little mix-up of having me around.

You don't need to feel guilty about that, so don't cry for me; my soul will finally find peace, as it has faced many hurts, and now it's time for it to take a break from the pain.

I aged from all the pain I went through. I held on to the hope that usually comes after sadness, but it feels like it will never arrive. So, I chose a path in life that felt just right and cozy for me. Don't fret, it's not the first time I've faced death. I've faced it many times before, and I smiled so that no one would catch a whiff of the sadness lurking inside me.

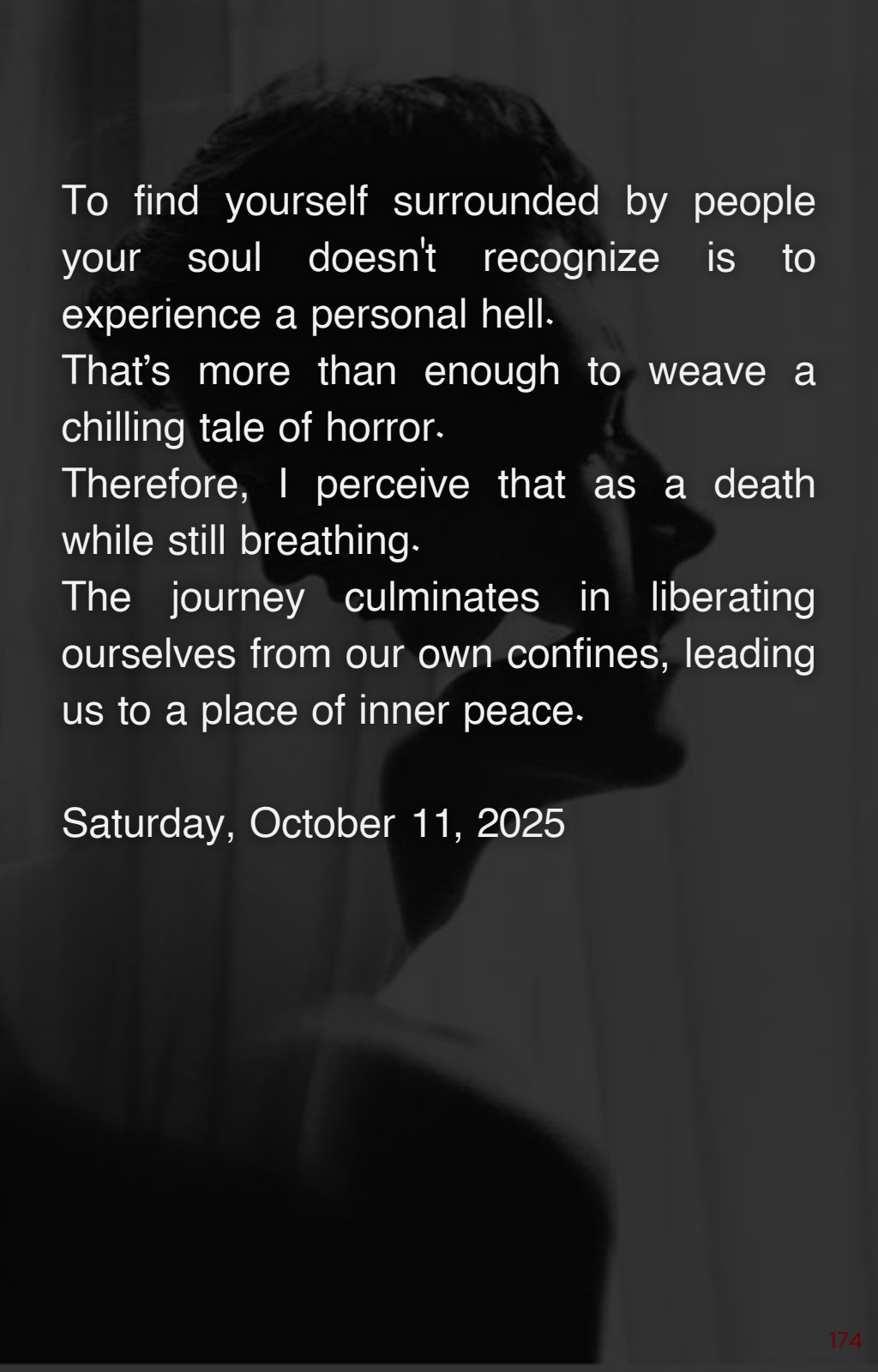
Farewell!



THE SPIRITUAL DREAD

KHALID FARID AL MASRI

DEATH IN A DEAD LIFE



To find yourself surrounded by people
your soul doesn't recognize is to
experience a personal hell.

That's more than enough to weave a
chilling tale of horror.

Therefore, I perceive that as a death
while still breathing.

The journey culminates in liberating
ourselves from our own confines, leading
us to a place of inner peace.

Saturday, October 11, 2025

Index

- THE CRIMSON BUTTERFLY... MUHAMMAD AL-HALABI
- THE HOUSE THAT SIGHS AT NIGHT... HANIN RUSHDI
- THE NIGHT'S WHISPERS... FATIMA DAWLA
- A THREAD HANGING BY THE TRUTH... SHAHD DABOUR
- THE ALLEYWAY KILLER... HADEEL AL-HASSAN
- IT WAS A NIGHTMARE... ZAINAB HAMDO ALI
- A WHISPER IN MY HEAD... SAHAR RIFAT
- JUST A KILLER... MARAM HUSSEIN
- DEATH BEHIND THE WALLS... NOUR HASSAN
- THE NIGHT THE GUESTS NEVER LEFT... WA'ED MOHAMMAD
- WHISPERS OF VOID... HAWRAA MUHAMMAD
- THE STORY WITHIN... BATOUL ABDULFATTAH
- A MONSTROUS ENTITY... MUHAMMAD SAWARI
- THE DARK ROOM... REEM AL BADRI
- MIDNIGHT SHADOWS... MARWA AL-RA'INI
- THE TALISMAN... NUSAYBAH AL-HUSAYN

Index

- BIOLOGICAL FEAR... AMIRA EHAB
- THE TREASURE... SUHAILA TARIQ
- BLACK MARRIAGE... AMAL AL-SHEIKH
- A SHADOW AT THE WINDOW... SAHAR AL-BALAWI
- CLAUSTROPHOBIA... LAMIS SULEIMAN
- AT 4OUR... MUHAMMAD BADRA
- THE HIDDEN CAVE... AYAH AL-HAMAWI
- YOUSSEF AND THE DAUNTING SHADOW... MAYA BARHOUM
- SPEICHER... MUHAMMAD HAZEM
- THE LAST NIGHT SHIFT... AMAL BASSEM
- THE STREETLIGHT... RAW'A AL-AZZAWI
- THE DARKEST NIGHT... MARIA AL-OMARI
- THE THIRD KNOCK... DAREEN AL-RADAIDEH, SHAHD AL-RADAIDEH, LANA AL-OMARI
- THE BLOOD COUNTESS... NAJAH ITANI
- THE SUICIDE NOTE... AQEEL JAWARNEH
- THE SPIRITUAL DREAD... KHALID AL-MASRI

SHARDS OF TERROR: REFLECTIONS OF A NIGHTMARE



A journey through the labyrinths of fear, where mirrors shatter beneath the weight of endless nightmares...

Stories alive with shadows, awakening the deepest fears hidden within you.

Every shard reveals a different face of terror, and every line becomes a cracked mirror reflecting restless souls that refuse to fade.

Najah Itani

