

From What Used to be My Window

"Kiss me," he said to the woman lying on her back, half-naked next to him. "Kiss me," he repeated, as he began to turn around until he was right on top of her, his arms stretched in a V along hers, grabbing the woman's wrists to stop her from moving away. Whether she was enjoying it or not was anybody's guess. The only thing that was clear was the ferociousness with which he stared into the woman's eyes, a forcefulness she tried to reciprocate by pushing the man off her, and sideways, so that he was on his back and now she was on top staring down at him. It seemed more of a struggle than a sensuous routine to see who gave in to the other's advances first. This looked and felt like an ongoing battle.

"Kiss me," he had said, or so I imagined. I'll never know for sure. I don't know if they are lovers or husband and wife. All I know is that whenever I pass by my parent's house, go into what used to be my bedroom, and stare out of what used to be my window under the cover of the night, I see them.

The couple. Whose bedroom faces mine, which I can see by looking out of the window, a rectangular white wooden frame, divided into two clear glass panes.

The couple. Whose bedroom is the only one lit after midnight in what used to be my neighborhood. And I still don't know if they are lovers, or married, but they always happen to be fighting each other in bed, whenever I look out and stare at them. I imagine what he must be doing and what she must be saying. Even when they decide to pull the curtains, their shadows tell a quieter yet intense story that moves between one room to another like a messy waltz, though I imagine their battle to be the same.

But when the night sets in and nobody's lights in the neighborhood are on except for those in the couple's apartment, I know their battle is about to begin. I can see him more than anyone or anything else.

It starts as he comes walking from where he parked his car, far from the entrance of the building. He is tall and well built, his head covered by a dark cap, which doesn't help him hide from anyone, because his physique is imposing and unforgettable. I can feel his boots stomping on the sidewalk, making the building tremble as he steps inside, walking towards the elevator to the 10th floor. As he rides up, I know he looks at himself in the mirror, making sure he looks as scruffy and menacing as he wants others to perceive him, because that's what he thinks makes him a man. He surely takes the remaining seconds left before he arrives to pull up the safety lever of the rifle slung over his shoulder. He gets out of the elevator and walks towards the woman's door. From what used to be my window, I see her walking towards the door, pulling it open as quickly as she pushes it back to close it. As soon as he steps inside, he puts his rifle on the right side of the door and walks straight into the bedroom.

I have to stop looking at them for a minute. When I see the man and his rifle, I start to remember, tremble, agonize, bleed and die, all over again. I know it is a rifle like it that killed me with a stray bullet, hitting me when I was having coffee on my parents' balcony. I don't know if it was him that did it, shooting in the air for the fun of it, celebrating having won a cheap gamble, or just trying out his newly-bought little toy. Maybe it wasn't him but it must have been someone like him.

And when I pass by my parents' house, hoping they will finally be able to get some sleep at night, that their hearts will stop bleeding one day because of my absence, hoping they will

realize that I never left their side....I pass by what used to be my bedroom and look out from what used to be my window. I see that man and his rifle. And it feels like I die. All. Over. Again.