

The Silent Killer

Flash Fiction

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It was a chilly night in June when I committed my first murder. At least, as far as I know, it was my first.

I arrived at the door of a lavish hotel room shortly before 10:00 p.m. Even though I hated business trips, my high position provided me with impressive accommodations. After a day of traveling, my fatigued muscles longed to stretch out on the king-sized bed that awaited me. I jammed my key card into its slot and eagerly threw the door open.

But before I could enter my room, a scandalously dressed girl bumped into me. She looked like she was nineteen or twenty. Golden locks of hair framed her porcelain face. Her lipstick was bright red, and her eyelashes were coated with thick, black mascara. There was something captivating about her eyes. Her pupils were blackholes amid torrent seas.

“I’m sorry,” said the older, well-dressed man next to her. He smiled kindly at the girl and gently patted her shoulder. She shuddered in response, and I noticed a hint of purple showing through the layer of makeup on the puffy skin surrounding her left eye. “My daughter has had a rough day.”

“No problem,” I mumbled as the man ushered the young lady into the room next to mine.

A spirit of unease settled over me as I entered my spacious hotel room and shut the door. The girl’s flirtatious dress and black eye reminded me of an article I had read the previous day. It had claimed that hundreds of thousands of girls were held against their will and forced into prostitution.

I took in a deep breath of flower scented air and admired the decorative pillows, satin sheets, and flowing drapes that adorned my room.

Was this the type of place where a pimp would sell a young girl? Didn’t they prefer crummy motels in bad neighborhoods? That man didn’t even look like a human trafficker.

Which made me ask myself, what does a human trafficker look like?

I didn't know the answer.

Shaking my head, I dismissed the whole idea of me bumping into a human trafficking victim as ludicrous. Things like that don't happen in places like this, and they certainly don't happen to people like me.

An hour later though, the girl's eyes still haunted my mind. Had she looked at me pleadingly, or was that just my imagination?

An odd sensation flooded me, pulling me towards the door. I had to get out of that room, but I didn't know why. The urge was overwhelming, overpowering ... almost supernatural. It practically dragged me through the doorway and threw me against the hall wall.

As I stood there, I noticed a nicely dressed man leaving the girl's hotel room. He wasn't the one who had been with her in the beginning. Then another man walked down the hall. He, too, was well dressed, and he smiled and nodded at me before entering the room.

Something wasn't right.

The urge to be in the hall had left me, so I sulked into my room and collapsed on the bed. A part of me wondered if it had been God pulling me into the hall. Maybe He wanted me to see the men coming and going. But what did He expect me to do?

Frustration filled me. Desperate to find peace, I told God that He had one chance to make His will clear. After finding a Gideon Bible in the nightstand drawer, I brashly informed God that if He didn't provide the answer quickly, I would assume He didn't want me to do anything. Flipping the Bible open randomly, my eyes alighted on a section that sucked the air out of my lungs. The passage was Psalms 82:3-4, and it said, "Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold

the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.”

The words settled into my soul, prodding me to do something. My fingers hovered over the phone handle. Then my head got in the way of my spirit.

*What if I call the police, and it turns out that the man is just her father? What if all the other men are here for a business meeting with him? After all, there are plenty of explanations for the things I find suspicious. This is ridiculous.*

Slamming the phone back onto the dock, I told myself that if there were more indicators, I would do something. Without a little more proof though, I could end up making a fool out of myself. Besides, God wasn't really leading me to help this girl. It must have been all in my head. Ignoring the feelings of uncertainty that clouded my mind, I fell into a restless sleep on the plush bed.

In the morning, the girl with the haunting blue eyes was gone. The door to her room was open and the cleaning lady was preparing for another guest.

As I sipped a cup of bitter coffee, I sat on the edge of my bed and talked to my seven-year-old son over the phone. He explained to me why he was sent to the principal's office for punching another kid during recess.

“He was poking a kitten with a stick,” my son sobbed. “I couldn't let him do that, could I, Daddy?”

Of course, he couldn't. Who wouldn't defend an innocent and defenseless animal?

After assuring him that he wasn't in trouble, I promised to be home soon, said my goodbyes, and ended the call with a light heart. But when I turned the T.V. on, a deep despair swallowed me.

On the screen was the picture of a girl, innocent and defenseless. Her face was lit up with a smile, and her eyes were seas of blue. Without all the makeup, she looked much younger. Below her picture were the words 'Human Trafficking Victim's Body Found'. A disinterested news anchor, who had been desensitized by the agonies of the world, read out the details. The mutilated body of a kidnapped child was discovered in an alleyway. The girl was thirteen. Her name was Ella Williams.

She wasn't nameless.

She wasn't voiceless.

I was her voice. And I had chosen to stay silent.

Suddenly, my excuses seemed trivial and foolish. I should have called the police. If I had been wrong, the police would have investigated and then left. But I wouldn't have been wrong, and they would have found her, and rescued her, and safely returned her to her parents.

Instead, she was tortured, mercilessly murdered, and left to rot.

I wondered why they killed her. Maybe she had tried to run away and they made an example of her, or maybe it was just out of cruelty.

No one would ever know, but one thing was certain.

Her blood was on my hands. I had killed her with my eyes, for I had looked away.