

The air is cold
And the demons in your mind are closing in on you
The clouds are dark
And you are running out of places you can hide
You can feel his hands on you,
His breathing on your neck
Your heart turns to stone, and the tears don't come

1.

She wakes up with her heart pounding in her throat. That dream again. She would have the same dream several times a week, some times night upon night in a row. She knew it was the same dream, yet she could never remember what exactly it was about. Just that it was scary, hurtful, deceitful. Painful, so very painful that it felt like it was suffocating her. Sometimes she would wake gasping for air. She would never go back to sleep. Instead she would get up; have a cup of coffee, sometimes something stronger. Lately, it was almost always something stronger. She curls up on the sofa, glass of Vodka in her hand. It used to be Vodka and Tonic, on the rocks. Then without the ice. Now it is just vodka. Warm, sour tasting vodka. It's better like that, it works better. It knocks her out. When she wakes again, the time is twenty minutes past seven.

The warm water is running down her ice cold body, her head is aching with the memories of another night and another drink lingering in the back of her head. The intention of the shower is to wake her; instead the illusion of a hug that the warm water is providing is slowly sending her back off to sleep. She only snaps out of it when the phone rings, she reaches for her towel and walks slowly towards the phone. No point in rushing, it will be work, and work never goes away. Never leaves her alone.

They found another one, not far from the city centre, just dumped in some filthy one-way street that leads to nowhere but some brick wall that someone put up just to make an old and tired city look even more worn out. The M.O seemed consistent; the injuries sustained by the victim seemed to be near identical to the previous two. Pretty girl the PC who rang her said, sad her life had to end this way. People always seemed to think that murder was sadder when the victim was an attractive young lady. No one seemed to think it a shame when an obese and unattractive housewife gets beaten to death by her drunken husband, or if some forty year old prostitute gets raped and then her throat slit by her "employer" for not bringing back the money. That's the problem with the world today, everything has to be beautiful or no one gives a damn about it. She grabs her sunglasses before she heads out the door, looking in the mirror as she passes it. She wonders if those dark rings under her eyes are as apparent to everyone else as they are to her. She sighs and put the sunglasses on, then slams the door behind her as she leaves.

It starts pouring down with rain as she leaves the apartment building. She doesn't really live in a fancy place; most of the buildings around here are council flats. She doesn't mind though, it's her little place and it's her home. She never realised how important it

was to have something to call home until she was forced to find herself one. Growing up she had been an only child. Living with a mum who expected her to be perfect, and a dad who... well, she did not think about her dad a lot, and there was a reason for it. Her dad was a manic-depressive, which had led to him abusing alcohol. This in turn instead of shutting out the pain sent him into a deeper depression. She spent most of her youth watching her mum taking everything her dad would throw at her, forgiving ever kick, punch, abusive words. He would change this time, he would get better, and he loved them really. One day when she was sixteen he was drunk and was abusing her mum, yelling insults at her. So she stood up to him, she told him what she thought of him. She had had so much frustration that she had kept inside herself for so many years, she'd not even noticed that she had hit him in the middle of it. Then he had his hands around her throat, and she was losing the ability to breathe. Her mum managed to drag him away, but it had been the final straw. At sixteen she had packed her bags and left home, she never went back. Her dad had died a few years later, but even now, when she was closing up on thirty she couldn't forgive her mum for having been so weak, and she thought it highly unlikely that she would ever bother to go see her again. She had gotten a job, a flat, finished college then joined the police. She loved life on the force; her colleagues were her family, although she wasn't really close with any of them. And the criminals she had caught... every single one was her dad.