

CHASED BY REMORSE

A blinding light and, then, nothing. Where was he? He did not know. How had he ended up there? He did not know either. The only thing he remembered was the bright light from the headlights of the car that ran him over. He had not felt any pain, but the place where he was, the utter darkness that seemed to absorb even the slightest trace of light made him think of what he feared the most.

The cold sneaked into his bones and prevented him from ordering his thoughts clearly until, all of a sudden; the memories came back as if they were pieces of a shattered glass. The number of actions which, in the end, had brought him there, played back in his mind so quickly that he could barely hold anything back. He searched for the small thread in his memory that could lead him back to that moment and, gradually, he began to remember.

Before everything happened, our protagonist was running away. His pursuer was not too far from him. He felt panic and agitation deep down inside himself, pushing him to keep running. However, he feared that exhaustion would cause his legs to betray his will, for he had been running for too long. The darkness he was surrounded by prevented him from seeing anything, but the shadow that followed him did not seem to have trouble keeping up with him. Fortunately, there were not too many people on the street, which allowed him to escape. Nevertheless, the fact that there were no people also put him at a disadvantage because, as much as he wished, there was no one who could help him.

The air burned his lungs with every forced breath and, when the idea of surrendering began to seem more tempting than the thought of escaping, he noticed that his pursuer was only a few feet away from him. For the first time, he looked at him carefully. From a distance, he had resembled a shadow, but now that he could finally see his persecutor, his suspicions were confirmed. He was more like a silhouette than a man. His limbs were blurred at the ends and his face was also indistinguishable. It was impossible for that being to be human; it had to be a monster. The fear and guilt he felt were so intense that they made his legs turn toward the road next to him. He could not help it; the bright light from the headlights of an approaching car surprised him. Knowing there was nothing he could do; he closed his eyes tightly and waited for the impact. At that very moment, he felt a force pulling him away from the vehicle and, when he finally dared to open his eyes, he saw the shadow's face for the first time.

How could he not recognize that face? He studied each of its features in detail, the eyes, the nose, the curvature of his jaw... It was his own face, he was the monster. Why was he running away? Before he could answer that question, he watched in horror as the face that belonged to him, but at the same time did not, contorted giving way to a sinister smile. The next thing he felt was a force pushing him towards the road at the exact moment a car was speeding in his direction. This time, he could not help it, no one could have. The last thing he saw was the glaring light from the headlights of the car that ran him over.

Now, he remembered everything more clearly. He was, indeed, a monster. He could not bear the burden of what he had done, so he had decided to run away from it. He escaped from no one in particular, but from his actions, from the infinite remorse and guilt that threatened to consume him. Of course he regretted it, but to what extent had it been an accident? His body had acted unconsciously as soon as he witnessed the scene and, by the time he realized, he was already pushing the man against the wall before the eyes of a frightened, trembling girl. He could not control himself, he knew he should not have intervened, but that man's actions towards the girl were unforgivable. Being honest, he had enjoyed it; it had felt really good to spare the woman from receiving another unjust blow, and even better to see the blood flowing from his opponent's head. When he came out of the trance he had been in and looked at what he had done, he comforted himself by saying that the real monster was that man whose name he did not even know, not him. He was sure he had done the right thing, but then why did he feel he was guilty, too? He could not bear with that feeling and, eventually, he had ended up there, wrapped in a void so thorough that it seemed to snatch him from the life he no longer had.

Exactly, he was not alive anymore. His suspicions about the place where he was were true but, if he no longer existed, how could his emotions feel so real? At that moment, a deep fear was added to the cold that had started to beset him with even greater force. He did not know what would come next, but it was clear to him that he could not bear to keep thinking about the incident that had taken away the only thing he really valued. In the end, he let both the cold and the darkness swallow him, clearing his conscience and taking with them the enormous feeling of guilt that choked him.