

THE DARKNESS - A STORY ABOUT AFGHANISTAN.

Aina is my name. It means mirror in my language and I can see my anxious face in the mirror as I tell you my story. I am a girl, aged 16, and I live in Afghanistan. I used to go to school, but not anymore. My father worked for the government and my mother worked in an office. I was looking forward to receiving 'the key of the door' as I grew older, until, one day, everything changed.

My father had left our home; he had had no choice. My mother had locked the doors to our house, and kept a key with her. As I sat, reading a book, sheltered at the back of the house, the sun streamed its blessings through the window. Then a shadow came across the page and I looked up. What I saw were yellow teeth, surrounded by the hair of his black beard, as he grimaced in effort, smashing the butt of his gun against the door. His angry exhalation of breath was echoed by the fear in my heart.

I was in a state of terror.

I threw my book to one side and ran to the front of the house to find my mother. She was screaming in fear, so we hugged each for support. We had always prayed five times a day, so how could this be our reward? This was not Jannah, our Heaven; it was Jahannam, our living hell. Why had we been forsaken?

'Aaaaaaargh!'

The final thrust at the back door brought a blood-curdling cry from our intruder, as he invoked the name of God and strode through the house. I cannot tell you what happened next, because it is too painful to recount. But now there is just one key to our house. It is to the back door and I have it, because my mother is no longer with me.

My final memory of my mother is seeing her dragged, without mercy, outside, as the bearded intruder locked the door behind him, wanting to make me a prisoner in my own home. I had always been taught that a key is something which opens life's doors, the key to someone's heart, the key to life, the key to Heaven.

But the turning of my mother's key, stolen from her hand, ended life as I had known it.

Now I live alone, in dread. Each day, my neighbours come to the back of my house, bringing me food, for I do not dare to go out. But I survive. What has happened to my mother I can only fear, but I cannot know.

Stop! What is that sound?

This time it is coming from the front of the house. Is he back?

I must go. Thank you so much for listening to me, my friend, and for reading my story. Perhaps we shall meet one day, in Paradise. I hope you shall have your key to Heaven, as I hope I shall have mine.

Goodbye.