

The background of the entire image is a dark, out-of-focus photograph of a car's front end at night. Two bright, rectangular headlights are visible, casting a soft glow. Below the headlights, a horizontal light bar or grille is partially visible. The overall color palette is dominated by dark blues, blacks, and the warm, yellowish-white light from the headlights.

# LAST CASE, FIRST LIE

**KALEB DAWIT**

Last Case, First Lie

## Part 1: The Hero Wakes

Fog filled the narrow street. A thick quiet pressed over the town. The buildings stood still, smoke from chimneys rising into the gray. In the middle of it, the old apartment with chipped bricks and narrow windows stood quiet. On the third floor, behind one of those fogged windows, the detective stirred.

The ringtone echoed from downstairs. Loud. Sharp. He got up quickly, like he had heard a gunshot. Years of habit made him move without pause. He crossed the creaking floor, stepped down the narrow wooden stairs, and reached the phone.

His colleague's voice came through flat and quick. A woman had been killed. Not just any woman. The well-known lady of the town. Her name was Almaz. The address followed. The detective stood silent, listening. He was told everything was already clear. A simple case. Just write it down and pass it on.

He hung up. Reached for his coat. Pulled it over his shoulders and stepped out. The cold bit at his face. The building stood just one block away.

As he walked, people moved from the corners and gathered near the apartment. Faces pale. Some were shocked. Some whispering. Some are silent. Many could not believe Almaz was dead. She had been kind. Sweet. No enemies. That is what they said.

He walked past them with a slow, straight pace, like a man ordered by something above the law. The crowd moved aside as if they knew not to question him.

At the door, he tried to slip in, but a voice caught him.

"You're here," said the town leader. His coat was long, his voice low. "Didn't expect you on a case this small."

They shook hands.

"You know me," the detective said, calm.

"I thought you only touched the big ones. From what I heard, this is easy. The evidence is all here. Won't take an hour."

The detective looked past him.

"Let me see," he said, barely above a whisper.

He stepped through the half-open door. The room was dark, but in the far corner, an orange lamp glowed. There she was. Almaz. Lying flat on her back, eyes open wide like she was still breathing. A single stab wound to the chest. Precise. No mess. No struggle.

He stared for a long moment. Then tilted his head at her body. He did not touch her. He just stood, observing. After a breath, he pulled out his notebook and began to write.

He moved slowly to the desk across the room. The place was wide for an apartment. Shelves lined the walls. The desk was packed with papers, all in order. No mess. No rush. It looked more like a small office.

He opened the drawers one by one. Inside were her daily notes. Letters. Marked pages. It was all written by hand. No machine. No confusion.

The room was so quiet it felt like she was still breathing. He found a page with her handwriting. Clean. Sharp. She had written everything. The time of death. How it would happen. That she knew it was coming. But not a single name. No mention of who. No reason why.

The details were all there, like someone had written the report before he arrived. Most detectives would pass this on. Too easy. Nothing to investigate.

But not him. He stared at the page longer than needed.

He wrote every word into his notebook. He had no plan to turn it in. If they saw how simple this was, they would take it away from him. Assign him something bigger. Something messier.

He folded the notes. Slipped them into his coat. Then into his inner pocket.

He stood still for a moment. Looked back at the body. Then down at the bloodless wound. He got up again. Moved slowly around the room. Studied the corners. Wrote small thoughts.

Then he stopped. He realized something. If someone else stepped through that door, the case would no longer be his. He turned quickly. One last glance at her face. Then stepped out.

The people were still gathered. Their voices low. Their eyes are watching. He moved past them again. This time unnoticed.

A few steps away, near the corner, he entered the foggy booth. The public phone waited, cold in the glass. He dropped a coin and turned the dial.

When the voice picked up, he asked for his colleague. Then said calm and low, "It's not as clear as they told you. I'll stay with it."

He hung up.

A few more steps down the street, he pushed open the door to the pub. Warm air wrapped around him. He nodded at the bartender, then went to the back. Same seat. Same window.

He laid the notes flat. Sat down.

And started writing a list. Names. Faces. Anyone who had been near her. Anyone with a voice in her day.

The pen moved quiet and steady.

## **Part 2 : Faces and Alibis**

He opened his small notebook and wrote the names slowly.

Marta.

Clara

Daglase

Daniel

The Doctor

Name on the table .

He circled Marta's name twice.

He hadn't seen her at the scene. Odd. A maid gone during a murder?

The bar owner approached quietly, drying a glass with a towel. "You're working," he said with a half-smile.

The detective stood, nodding. "Thanks for staying open."

He reached for his pocket to pay.

The owner stopped him. "No. Not for you. Not for the town hero."

"The last case," he added, "everyone still talks about it."

The detective paused. He hadn't thought people still remembered.

He stepped out of the bar and lit a cigarette with a match pulled from his coat. The street was quiet again. Only a few people still lingered near the crime scene. As he walked, he realized going back in might raise eyebrows. The station wouldn't like that. He needed another way.

So instead, he took a turn and headed to the town leader's office. It was a narrow brick building with fog resting on its windows. He knocked twice and let himself in.

The town leader was still inside, hunched over papers. Looked up with tired eyes.

"You again," he said. "Can't get enough of this mess?"

"I'm looking for Marta. The maid."

The town leader sat back. "She didn't show up this week. She was a live-in, mostly. But I think she's been staying near the bakery. You know the one. On Chapel Street."

The detective nodded once, thanked him, and stepped back out.

He walked slowly, each step echoing in the narrow streets. Chapel Street wasn't far, but his mind moved slower than his feet. Why wasn't Marta at the scene? Why now, after all these years, does a case feel off even when everything is laid out?

The bakery came into view. The sign was old, hanging crooked, the smell of burnt flour still clung to the morning air.

He stopped at the edge of the walkway and stared at the door. Maybe she's inside. Maybe she saw more than she should've. Maybe she didn't see anything at all. Either way, he needed to find out.

He stepped inside. The bakery was full of people, all busy buying all sorts of bread and pastries. The warm smell of fresh bread filled the air.

He approached the counter and said, "How are you doing, sir?"

The owner looked up and asked, "How much and what kind?"

The detective stopped and smiled slightly. "Oh, detective. Been a while since I saw you. After the last shot, you've been off."

"How have you been? It's been some time, right? After the last case, the town hasn't seen you much. Only the pub is your place from what I heard."

The detective stopped him and said, "Yeah, Marta. Is Marta here?"

The owner's smile faded. "Do you need her now? She's back there. I can call her for you," he said.

The detective stopped him. "No, no, it's okay. Can I go in the back?"

Before the owner could answer, the detective started walking toward the back. The owner looked confused but went back to his work.

People were busy kneading dough and shaping bread. At the corner, there was a girl—the only girl there facing away. The detective walked fast, then slowed his voice.

"Marta," he said, gently patting her on the back.

She turned around, face scared and shocked, trembling as she wiped flour off her hands.

“Oh, what’s happening? What is this?” she asked.

Marta said, “Yes, it’s me. I work here.”

Everyone in the back stopped and looked at her.

The detective said, “Calm down. I need to talk to you.”

He took her hand and opened the back door, leading her to a private hallway.

“Calm down. You’re Marta. You worked for the lady who died last night, as her maid.”

She nodded nervously. “Yes, but I don’t know what happened. I don’t know who killed her. I was off all week.”

She spoke quickly, scared, like she was trapped.

He asked, “Where exactly were you the last few days? Did you hear anything unusual?”

She answered rushed, “I stayed mostly at home, resting. I didn’t hear much—just normal town noise.”

He pressed, “Did anyone visit the lady recently? Anyone strange?”

She hesitated but replied quickly, “No one I don’t know. Just usual guests, nothing odd.”

Then he paused and asked sharply, “Did you take the knife?”

Both stopped, the question hanging heavy in the air.

She blinked, confused. “Knife? What knife? I only clean and take care of other things. I never touched anything. I’ve never been to the kitchen. Even when I am there, I just clean and leave.”

The detective leaned closer. “I never said it was a kitchen knife.”

Her eyes widened, pupils growing large as the weight of his words hit her.

She shook her head slowly. “Of course, I just thought you meant the kitchen knife... I didn’t even know she was stabbed.”

She sighed deeply. “That’s sad... She was a good person. I took care of her and cleaned. She was always kind and treated me well.”

She paused, then added, “I worked there for a while, but this week I was off. She told me to take the week off and take care of myself.”

“You haven’t heard anything, so that makes you innocent?” the detective leaned back and asked.

“No, but I couldn’t have done it. It doesn’t match,” Marta said quickly.

He looked at her closely. “How does it not match?”

Daniel,” Marta said. “The landlord. He knows me. He’s been there. He can confirm—I’d never do something like that.”

The detective nodded slightly. “Daniel... yeah. He’s on my list too. Where can I find him?”

“He’s usually with his friends by the park lot when he’s not at the apartment,” she said. “I always saw him there on my way home.”

“Thank you, Marta,” he said, the words more like a thought than a goodbye. “Stay put. I might come back.”

He folded the note he’d been writing, slipped it into his coat, and started walking.

He walked out slowly, hands in his pockets.

“She was a bit off,” he muttered. “But let’s see if Daniel can confirm it.”

A slight smirk tugged at his face. “This is starting to feel like a case I might like.”

After some walking, he reached the park. Kids were running around, playing, their laughter mixing with the rustle of leaves. He scanned the area but didn’t see any group that matched what he had in mind. After a few more looks, he sat down on a bench, eyes drifting.

“Where is this Daniel and his pals?” he muttered.

His thoughts slipped. Marta’s trembling stuck in his mind. She didn’t seem like someone who’d crack that easily. Why was she shaking like that?

A loud laugh snapped him out of it. He turned.

“That must be them,” he thought. A group, just like Marta said.

He got up from the bench and started walking toward them.

He approached the group and said, “Which one of you is called Daniel?”

One of them stepped forward, raising his hand slightly. “Daniel, it’s me,” he said.

The others stayed quiet, just looking at the detective.

Daniel looked up with a smirk. “Aren’t you the famous detective?”

The others chimed in, nodding. “Yes, yes, I know him. He solved that complex case last time.”

Daniel stepped forward, his tone shifting. “What did I do wrong?”

Daniel led him back to the bench where they usually sat. He dropped down with a casual sigh, but the detective stayed standing, eyes fixed on him.

“How can you be laughing and having fun around,” the detective asked, “with everything that just happened?”

Daniel squinted up at him. “What do you mean by what just happened?”

“The lady,” the detective said, voice steady. “The one who lived in that luxury apartment you claim.”

“Oh, that.” Daniel’s tone shifted. “Yeah, it was devastating. What a nice lady... I didn’t really know her that well though. People call me the landlord, but it’s actually my father who owns the place. I just check in sometimes. He’s not around much.”

“So you lived in the floor above her?” the detective asked.

Daniel nodded. “Yeah, that’s right. Few floors up.”

The detective leaned in a bit, his tone casual but pointed. “You didn’t hear anything strange that night? Maybe footsteps... a scream... anything unusual?”

Daniel frowned. “No. Nothing. I was out for most of the night, came back late.”

The detective kept going, mixing in light questions with small, loaded ones. “And you’ve seen Marta around? She ever mention anything odd lately? Anyone visiting?”

Daniel shook his head slowly. “Not that I can think of. Why?”

The detective paused, then dropped it clean and direct. “You know Marta killed her, right?”

Daniel blinked. “Wait... what?”

The detective stared at him. “I just need to confirm that.”

Daniel raised his voice, “No no, it can’t be. It’s impossible. It doesn’t check out. And—plus, I know something that proves she didn’t do it. She can’t be a killer.”

The detective smiled and said, “What? What do you know? Tell me.”

Daniel replied, “Me and Marta were together last night, talking about private stuff. That’s how I came in late. I can confirm the time doesn’t match as people say.”

The detective said, “Late that night? It doesn’t feel right.”

Daniel said, “I swear it’s normal. This happens a lot. We talk a lot. I’m a social person—that’s why.” He stopped.

The detective said, "One confirms another and the other confirms the first. Seems like a plot. Maybe you killed her, not Marta. And Marta's too scared, so she sent me to you. Is that it?"

Daniel said, "No, it's not Marta. We're both innocent. And the lady was too kind she never did anything wrong. Why would anyone harm her? She was a good person. I'm sure you can find who actually did it. Someone who doesn't keep secrets."

The detective asked, "Who?"

Daniel answered, "Her doctor. She always went to him. He can tell you everything that happened recently."

The detective pressed, "How does that prove you're innocent? How?"

Daniel, a bit scared, said loudly, "Because I saw him with her that morning, downstairs, on my way out."

The detective said, "The doctor better tell me something good, or I'm coming for you, Daniel."

As Daniel started walking, his friends came running and circled around him.

The detective turned back once more and said, "And Daniel, don't go anywhere until this fog clears. I might need you, for better or worse."

He lit another cigarette and started walking away.

As he walks, the detective says, "I know where that doctor will be the hospital. Next destination."

the detective thinks, "Daniel and Marta, something is going on. I need this on my notes." He quickly writes it down.

Daniel says as they walk, "I swear, I'm innocent. Marta is too scared. The truth will come out."

They arrive at a small hospital, only a few elderly patients inside. The detective walks in and calls out at the front desk, "Nurse, nurse!"

A young nurse turns around and says, "Detective, is everything okay? Is there anyone hurt?"

The detective arrived at the hospital, a small place with only a few elderly patients inside. He walked in and called out at the front desk, "Nurse, nurse!"

A young nurse turned around and said, "Detective, is everything okay? Is there anyone hurt?"

"Everything is okay. Where is the main doctor at?" the detective asked.

The nurse said, "Oh, sorry, I got scared. The doctor isn't here today. He called in sick."

The detective smiled and said, "Isn't he a doctor? How does that work?"

The nurse smiled and said, "He might be testing a theory out. If you need him, you can find him on the second block from the station you know it, of course."

The detective nodded, "Thank you. Have a great day."

As he walked out, he muttered, "I need another route. I can't go in front of the station someone might see me."

He took another route, down the second road. As he walked, people glanced at him with knowing smiles. His pace quickened until he broke into a run toward the building where the doctor lived.

He knocked hard on the door and shouted, "Open up, doctor! It's me."

The door opened, and the doctor said, "What's this? I'm taking the day off."

Then he paused, surprised, and added, "Oh, detective! Are you sick? Are you okay? Come in."

He stepped inside and said, "Everything okay? Are you alright, doctor?"

The doctor replied, "Half and half, I must say."

The doctor sat down and said, "Sit down, detective."

But the detective shook his head and stayed standing.

The doctor asked, "So, what brings you here? Medicine or what?"

The detective threw the big bomb, smiling, "I'm here to take you to the station, that's all."

The doctor didn't smile at all. He said, "What? What are you talking about? You know I'm not okay with that kind of joke. I'm sick. Let's make this quick tell me the real reason."

You know one of your patients, right? The one you ended her life last night the one everyone thinks you're close with, the one you supported the most emotionally and physically?

The doctor stopped looking at the detective, put his head down, and said, "Oh... my day off reason... I already know then."

Tears welled up in his eyes, and he whispered, "Good woman... good woman."

The detective asked, "Why kill her?" and paused.

The doctor's tears turned into anger. "How dare you say that? How dare you!" he snapped, standing up and stepping toward him. "Stop. Stop. Stop, okay?"

The detective cut in, "You're just proving my point, Doc."

The doctor shook his head. "This is a lot to take in, you know. But I didn't kill her."

"I wouldn't kill a woman like her," the doctor said firmly. "A woman with a kind heart, loving and caring. The woman I met was someone you could call a best friend the kind of friend anyone can turn to in times of need. There's no woman like her in this town. I knew that, and I'm sure you knew it too."

"That bad friend of hers that snake killed her. I knew it. That woman has been going through a lot these past weeks. You know, she wasn't herself; she didn't talk to me like she used to. I knew something was wrong. And that other snake, her friend Clara I knew it had to be her. If anyone hurt her, it's Clara, that snake."

The detective remembered the list he had written from the table. "Clara? Why do you say that? Clara seems like a nice woman."

The doctor laughed loudly. "Nice? You don't know her. She's the worst I can't even say it outright. Let's just say she's bad for her and for everyone. I knew it was her because she started coming to the lady's house way more than usual. That behavior stood out to me I study the human brain and psychology. Believe me, your case is solved. It's her."

He sat down again, coughed a bit, and lowered his head.

The detective asked, "What about Daniel or Marta? One of them must have killed her all signs point to them."

The doctor replied, "Daniel couldn't even kill a bee; he'd run away. He's scared of needles. And Marta? She's clumsy she just couldn't do it."

He added, "Besides, I worked at the hospital all night. You can ask the nurse if you want. Just saying, not telling the famous detective how to do his job."

The doctor asked, "So I'm in the clear? I couldn't have done it not to her, never."

The detective replied, "Her friend do you see her? Where is she? I want to check if this lines up for both of you. What about her?"

The doctor said, "She should be around the apartment. She lives far, but I know she'll want to confirm the death. Maybe she's at that book club they always talked and gossiped there. Check that place. She'll be there for sure. Go find her... and lock her up before she poisons or kills anyone else."

The detective said, "Okay. But know you're not in the clear. Get some rest. If this doesn't go the way you said, I'll be back. For now, take care."

The doctor replied, "I'm sorry... I'm just overwhelmed with all this. That's why I shouted. I'm sorry."

The detective gave a small nod. "Alright. Take care," he said, then walked out.

Now, as he stepped outside, the detective's mind felt clearer his direction more certain.

He walked farther down the road, his steps firm now. The uncertainty was gone. One last name, one last mission.

"Clara... here I come," he muttered

### **Part 3 : all eyes on clara**

The detective was running pacing fast toward the book club, breath sharp, steps louder than the street's silence. He was excited, almost too excited, like the answer was finally within reach. It all felt too quick, too easy. Names he hadn't cleared still hung in the air, but Clara ,Clara kept pulling everything back to her. It didn't make full sense, but the feeling gripped him tight. He kept running, faster now, chasing the rush, chasing the truth until he stopped at the front of the book club, heart racing.

He took a breath one deep pull of air to slow his racing heart. Then he stepped forward, raised his hand, and knocked twice on the wooden door. A pause. He stepped back.

The door opened slowly. The old bookkeeper lady appeared, her eyes warm behind thick glasses. "How you doing?" she asked, voice soft and kind. "Come in. No need to knock books are for everyone, right?" She smiled, sweet and effortless.

"How you doing, ma'am?" he said, pausing for a second and looking directly at her. "Clara is she around? I need to speak with her. Sorry if I bothered you."

The old lady tilted her head. "Clara?"

"Yes, Clara. She's the friend of the woman who died last night. What a nice lady that one was sweet, always joyful. I really liked seeing her around." Her voice dropped, touched by sadness. "Awful, what happened to her. What kind of monster could do such a thing? I know Clara's been devastated. She hasn't come yet but she'll be here anytime soon. Now come inside."

She stepped aside and led him in.

He walked in and sat down at the nearest table. Pulling out his notebook, he laid it open on the desk.

"Reading?" the old lady asked with a soft smile.

The detective smiled, eyes still on his notebook. "Something like that," he said. "I'm reading human thoughts. It's amazing how it's got so many chapters... and yet somehow, it never sees what's right in front of it." He smirked.

The old lady chuckled. "I'm a reader too, you know. Been reading books every day for the past seventy years. And I believe the human brain is one of those books you can't finish. Always a new chapter... then another... and another."

Just then, the bell over the door jingled. A customer walked in. The old lady turned with a warm smile. "Nice reading time, my son," she said, and began to walk away.

Left alone, the detective leaned in. His eyes scanned the pages of his notes, flipping back and forth, trying to piece it all together. Faces, statements, connections. He got deep into his thoughts, the world around him slowly fading into the quiet rustle of paper.

For hours, he was lost in the paper. The lines blurred, but he kept digging clearing names, retracing steps. And no matter how many corners he turned, it all kept leading back to Clara. Why? The question pulsed in his mind, stubborn and loud. Then another followed. And another.

The bell rang again.

He looked up.

A woman entered, dressed in a long, elegant gown, a book clutched in one hand. Her steps were heavy you could hear her shoes from across the room. "Good morning," she said to the old lady, her voice calm and bright.

The detective shot up from his seat, like he was about to stop someone mid-escape.

"Good morning, sweetheart," the old lady greeted, her smile gentle. "I know it's early, but how are you holding up with everything?"

The old lady paused and said, "Hey there, that man's been looking for you, Clara."

Clara stopped mid-step, then slowly started walking toward the detective.

"Clara?" he called out.

She hesitated. "Yes... Who are you?"

Suddenly, recognition flashed in her eyes. She stopped completely. "You're the detective, right?"

Without warning, he charged forward.

She took a step back.

He followed close behind, voice sharp: "Stop right now!"

"I heard on my way here that my dear friend's body has already been taken to the morgue," Clara said, eyes narrowing. "And the station... it's strangely quiet. No one seems to be talking. So tell me why are you here with me, and not at the station where the case should be?"

"Why all the questions now?" the detective asked, eyes sharp. "And with everything you've said... I heard you live quite far from here, right?"

He stepped in front of her, blocking the way.

"Let's talk outside," he said.

Clara didn't hesitate. She followed him quickly, matching his pace.

Outside, the detective started walking down the street.

"Where are we going?" Clara asked.

"To the station," he said. "Let's end this. Is that what you want?"

Clara nodded. "Good. That's where you should be not out here in the street."

He smiled slightly. "Yes, but I like to work alone and win. So let me end this with victory: you in jail, and everything done right here."

Clara suddenly stopped. "Jail? Why? I'm the victim here."

"Victim?" the detective scoffed, turning to face her. "You're the victim?"

"Yes," Clara said, stepping forward, voice shaking. "I lost my dear friend. Someone took my only good friend. She was the only good thing in this town. How do you repay a good friend like that? Someone took my beautiful, kind friend..."

"Yes," the detective cut in, eyes locked on hers. "And that someone is you. Right?"

"Stop," Clara snapped. "What is this? Are you saying I killed her?"

"I didn't use those words," he said, smirking. "I said betrayed by a good friend."

The detective let out a short, cold laugh.

Clara's eyes darkened. Anger started to rise in her face it was clear, even in the way she held her breath.

"Did you kill her alone," the detective asked, his tone sharper now, "or was someone with you? How did it happen?"

Clara stepped forward, her voice tight. "You better stop right now and act like a normal person like a real detective."

"Do you know Marta?" he asked, ignoring her tone.

Clara blinked. "Marta? The maid? The one who cleans houses?"

"Yes," he said. "Was she involved?"

"Involved with what?" Clara snapped. "This is nonsense. I'm getting mad right now, so stop this."

She took a breath, trying to hold her voice steady. "Why don't you just tell me? Why are you saying I did it without actually pointing at me?"

The detective's eyes narrowed. "Alright then tell me what happened. Last night. Everything. And how did you even hear about it so quickly?"

"Well, last night I wasn't around," Clara said, her voice shaking. "I was at home. I got a bit sick... and I haven't seen her much this week. She seemed tired, frustrated. I think something was bothering her."

She looked down, holding the book tighter. "I only heard about it from others. And when I did... I was broken. I cried all morning. Then I decided to come here to honor her, with her favorite book." She held it out. "This was her favorite."

Tears welled up and began to fall.

The detective studied her. "But your eyes... they don't look like someone who cried all morning."

Clara looked up sharply, voice rising. "You detectives... you're not even human, are you? Can't you see I'm broken? I'm sad!"

"The doctor?" the detective said, watching her closely.

Clara froze for half a second. Then her voice sharpened. "That guy still calling himself a doctor? He should be ashamed of himself."

She looked away, eyes narrowing. "You know what... I was actually thinking about it. Maybe he killed her. Maybe he took my best friend from me."

She stopped mid-sentence too sudden, too sharp.

She paused. Her voice cracked just a bit.

**"She didn't even fight back, did she? Just... took it."**

The detective didn't move.

**"What did you just say?"**

Clara blinked. Too late. Her mouth stayed shut. Her eyes said everything.

The detective stepped closer.

**“You said she didn’t fight back. How would you know that?”**

Clara stammered, **“I-I just assumed... I mean, if someone broke in, there’d be ”**

**“There’d be signs. Yes. But there weren’t. Not even a moved chair.”**

His voice dropped.

**“You walked into that bookshop calm, steady. Not like someone who just heard her friend was stabbed through the heart.”**

Clara opened her mouth. Nothing came out.

Clara’s voice shook with fierce loyalty.

“I loved my friend. I think the doctor... you should find him. Arrest him. It’s him. I know it’s him now.”

She looked at the detective, eyes searching.

“Right? You’re saying it’s him too, right? Right? Right?”

The detective smirked.

“Sure. I’m just trying to find out. But you’re right everything points to the doctor. Don’t worry.”

He paused, voice low.

“But I might need you to help put him down. So stay close until I bring backup. This will be quick.”

Clara nodded without hesitation.

“Of course. Anything for my friend.”

#### **Part 4 : coda**

The detective started walking slowly now, everything finally clear in his mind. He reached a nearby phone and called the station.

“Everything’s under control,” he told his colleague. “I found it. It was quick and easy work, even if the case seemed mysterious.”

His colleague replied, “Good to hear. We’ve been waiting and covering for you here.”

The detective said, “I’ll report soon. Let me organize everything first.”

He hung up quickly, just like always.

Then he smiled finally and started walking home.

On his way, he felt calm. He smiled and waved to everyone he passed.

He stopped to buy his favorite drink and headed home. His house wasn't big, but it held every case he had worked so far.

He entered, sat at his big old desk, poured his drink, took a sip, and just relaxed, letting the day's weight fade away.

He put his notebook out and laid it perfectly on the desk, along with the files from his last case.

Before opening the notebook, he picked up the last case file, shaking slightly it was a copy of the original.

He started reminiscing. A woman's cry echoed in his mind.

Snapping back, he began flipping pages back and forth.

Then he stopped at a picture a man named Alazar, wearing prison clothes.

For a moment, the image blurred into the background. Alazar looked broken.

He stared at Alazar's photo longer than he should have, his eyes tracing every line on the worn prison clothes. Slowly, the past crept back sharp and vivid.

He saw Alazar running, desperate and frantic.

The scene shifted to a dim apartment where a young woman and a young man stood frozen over a bloodied body.

Suddenly, a familiar face from today appeared, merging with the memory.

The detective was pulled deeper into the recollection a woman crying uncontrollably, a man standing confused and helpless nearby.

Only the detective seemed to grasp the weight of it all.

As he tried to piece it together, the woman's voice pierced the silence shouting, "Stop! Stop! Wait!"

He heard the woman's desperate voice breaking through

"Lidiya... I know her. She knew me too. This was a total accident, not meant to be. Please, please..." Her sobs echoed, begging.

The detective paused and asked, "Lidiya? How do you know her?"

The woman's eyes widened. "Your wife, right? Your good wife. I knew her before she passed. Please..."

His gaze shifted first to Alazar, then the woman, then the lifeless body.

"Help me... for Lidiya's sake," she pleaded.

The detective shook his head, caught between doubt and sympathy, unsure what to do next.

Suddenly, the detective paused, remembering Lidiya's eyes through the crying woman's face. He stood still for a moment, then turned to Alazar.

Alazar finally spoke, his first words,

"I won't say anything. I just work as a personal assistant. I can call Daglase. He sent me. He's my supervisor."

The detective nodded slowly. "Go. Bring him here. Now."

Alazar hesitated, glancing at the woman, then at the body, but turned and left in a rush.

Minutes passed. The room was silent except for the faint sobbing of the woman. She wiped her eyes and stood straighter when the door creaked open again.

Alazar stepped back inside, this time with Daglase behind him.

Daglase looked older than expected, composed, and curious. He paused at the doorway, scanning the scene. His eyes met the detective's. "It's been a while."

"Yeah," the detective replied. "Didn't think we'd meet again like this."

Daglase looked at the body, then at Alazar, then finally at the woman who avoided his gaze.

The detective turned to Daglase. "I wasn't called here. You understand?"

There was a pause.

Daglase gave a slow nod. "Understood."

The detective pointed at Alazar. "He's the killer."

Silence filled the room.

Alazar stepped back, eyes wide. "No... I'm not. She she killed her! When I got here, the body was already there, I swear!"

He turned toward Daglase, desperate. "Tell him, Daglase. I wouldn't do anything like this... you know me..."

Everyone stood still.

Alazar kept talking, voice shaking. "Please, listen! I just followed orders. I didn't even know what was going on. I came in and she was already gone!"

No one answered. No one moved.

Then Alazar stopped. His breath caught. His face went pale.

He realized.

He was being framed.

The detective said, "Alazar, stop. You're young and have a good heart. I know this will pass. Let's just help the lady she needs it."

Alazar pleaded, "I've got a family. Stop, stop this!" and tried to run.

But Daglase grabbed him tightly.

The detective took out a handkerchief, picked up the knife and handed it to Alazar.

"Hold it," he said, pressing the blade lightly into Alazar's hand, letting a drop of blood fall.

Alazar froze. "Stop. This is nonsense."

The detective turned and walked away

Tears welled up in the detective's eyes, his vision blurred for a moment. Then, reality snapped back into focus.

The detective woke up and opened his notebook.

As he turned the page, memories flooded back knife, the lady's face, her fearful eyes. He remembered talking to her, how scared she was. The detective's mind blurred, caught between flashbacks and the present. Faces, cries, voices all mixed together, twisting reality and daydreams into one restless loop.

The detective suddenly froze. He sat still, not moving a muscle. The drink on his desk, the ticking clock, even the faint sounds around him all seemed to stop. Time held its breath as he sat locked in silence, caught in that moment.

Slowly, his hand moved to his pocket. He pulled out a folded piece of paper. Unfolding it carefully, his eyes fell on the words scrawled in a shaky hand.

"Thank you for killing me, detective. I deserve it.

I always saw you in the door, through my windows.  
I did wrong. You fixed it.

Thank you.

You fixed your mistake.

I know it was haunting you, and it is haunting both of us.”

He stared at the note, the weight of the words pressing down on him, a final reminder of the past he could never escape.