

# The Woman at the Window

by Aimee Hester

The weather is hot, too humid for this time of year. There is no let-up even as the sky darkens. The town where they live is quiet with not many occupants so everyone knows everyone. Already the woman has had to turn down many invitations to dinner and get-togethers as they are not the type of people that mingle and talk to others, she thinks maybe she would have been or could have been if things were different.

Cooking is making it hellish. The woman stands at the sink, next to the kitchen window, sweat gathers across her forehead, a bead runs down the side of her face like a tear, she wipes it away with the back of her hand. She tidies as she goes, keeping the house as pristine as he likes it. The fridge has no postcards or pictures of holidays that they or others have been on. She would have liked some happy memories to reminisce over, something hanging off the fridge to remind her of carefree times. She looks out as car lights turn towards the house, the tyres whipping up the dust as the car pulls up to a stop. That was one of the many conditions when they started viewing houses 18 months ago, privacy, a long drive away from the road and others. It does not stop the woman looking out and catching other people in the road going about their normal day, waving their family good-bye, kissing hellos and hugs between friends.

The woman inhaled deeply and repeated inhale, exhale and closed her eyes for a moment as though to gather her thoughts. She pinched the top of her nose to try and ease the headache that she had had all day, since the argument. Her mood is sombre but determined. It needed to be discussed further but how and when? It was never the right time.

She turns and picks up the knife, it catches the light, she wipes it on a towel and brings it down to slice into the tomato on the counter, its blood red contents spilling out across the work top. The car door slams shut. The pan is simmering on the hob, threatening to boil over, preempting the atmosphere. The woman cleans the work top and wrings the cloth out, her hands are perfectly manicured and not a line or wrinkle in sight. Hands give a lot away about their owners but as with everything else, her hands did not tell much of a story, no work as such and now just trying to keep everything tidy and under wraps.

She notices the date on the calendar is circled in red, no forgetting the date even if she had wanted to. Today's date so prominent amid reminders for insignificant things. The woman reaches for the wine and pours a glass and drinks it down in one, pours another and takes a slow sip. She has no preference on wine, it was recommended to her by the person in the shop. Some are good with steak, some good with seafood. All the woman wanted was enough so she could forget her feelings.

The tension from her neck was releasing. He is in the house; his footsteps are moving along the hallway towards her. She remembers the times when his footsteps would make her excited to see him. She reaches across and tosses the sliced goods into the pan. He enters the room, still carrying his coat and laptop bag making his arms hang low like he is carrying all the weight of the world, she looks up, their eyes meet, steam rising between them from the pans, the pan lid start to simmer and shake, like the argument that is still raw from the morning. No words are spoken, no one wants to go first. They are both still, waiting. The clock ticking is the only noise, and this only emphasises with each tick that they no longer offer pleasantries when they see each other. He assumes now is not the time, he turns, walking away and leaves the room. The woman realises now is the perfect time, still holding the knife she starts to slowly follow him.

It is time to finish this conversation once and for all.