

The Big Heat

written by

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MUNIR (V.O.)
It was a hot Wednesday morning when
I found out.

FADE IN:

EXT. PARKING LOT, MOSQUE - MORNING

A hand throws a cigarette on the ground. It sizzles on the hot parking lot blacktop.

MUNIR (late 30s, South Asian) is attached to that hand. He cradles a bunch of folders under his arm and frowns at several middle-aged ARAB MEN smoking cigarettes under the shade of the mosque's roof.

MUNIR
Brothers, what have I told you
about smoking near the mosque?
Twenty feet away, please.

The men grumble and put out their cigarettes.

MUNIR (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, I know it's hot, but
that's the law.

Munir walks ahead to the front door of the small house converted into a mosque. He wipes sweat from his brow.

MUNIR (V.O.)
It was just...so unexpected.

A window of the mosque is open. Munir drops his folders.

MUNIR
What the...? Where's our air
conditioner?

Munir turns back and looks at the Arab Men.

MUNIR (CONT'D)
Where's the air conditioner?

The men grumble and shrug.

MUNIR (V.O.)
It was clear I had a mystery on my
hands. But how would I catch the
scumbags who did this? I needed a
stiff drink.

Munir walks into the mosque.

MUNIR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And by that, I meant an ice-cold
glass of milk.

INT. MOSQUE OFFICE - LATER

The office is small, with a cluttered desk and a mini fridge
in the corner. Munir takes a sip of milk and lets out a sigh.

MUNIR (V.O.)
I had no leads, nowhere to go, and
then she walked into my life...

The door opens. FATIMA (30s, wears a black face veil and long
black dress,) strolls into the room.

FATIMA
I heard about what happened...the
missing air conditioner. I thought
you might want to hear about what I
saw last night.

MUNIR (V.O.)
Maybe it was because I couldn't see
her face...maybe it was because she
had beautiful eyes...

Fatima's eyelids flutter.

MUNIR (V.O.) (CONT'D)
...but something about her was
mysterious.

MUNIR
Well, you gonna stand there or you
gonna tell me what you know?

FATIMA
Excuse me?

MUNIR
Sorry. Please sit down, sister
Fatima.

She sits at the chair across from his desk and crosses her
legs, then smooths out the wrinkles in her dress.

MUNIR (V.O.)
She was a classy dame, I knew that
much...but what would it take for
her to talk?

MUNIR

So. What do you know about the air conditioner?

FATIMA

I'm not saying anything until I get what I want.

MUNIR

And what's that?

Fatima leans in.

FATIMA

Mohammed gets off the Sunday school waiting list. Every year we sign up, and every year he's wait-listed.

MUNIR

That's because you always sign up too late.

Fatima crosses her arms.

FATIMA

Those are my conditions.

Munir looks her over and taps his fingers on his desk.

MUNIR (V.O.)

Fatima was asking me to do something wrong. To bump some nice kid already in Sunday School back on the wait-list and let her lousy kid in.

MUNIR

Forget your son, sister, don't you care about this mosque? No one will come if it's ninety degrees inside!

FATIMA

Not my problem. The women's section has never had an air conditioner.

MUNIR

We're working on that.

Fatima narrows her eyes at him.

MUNIR (V.O.)

God, she was tough.

MUNIR

Fine, your kid gets into Sunday School! Now what'd you see last night?

FATIMA

I was leaving the mosque around midnight when I heard a noise--like something heavy hit the pavement.

BEGIN FLASHBACK:

EXT. PARKING LOT, MOSQUE - NIGHT

A loud thud. The air conditioner's been pushed out of the mosque's window onto a blanket.

Fatima, on the way to her car, whips around at the sound.

FATIMA

Hey!

FATIMA (V.O.)

I saw a man grab the air conditioner and run, and one follow behind him.

In the shadows THIEF 1 picks up the air conditioner and runs.

THIEF 2 runs out the mosque's front door, grabs the blanket, and follows behind Thief 1.

Fatima runs after them, but stops when she sees a piece of paper has fallen out of Thief 2's pocket.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. OFFICE INSIDE MOSQUE - CONTINUOUS

Fatima pushes the paper across Munir's desk. It's an addressed envelope. Munir reads it.

MUNIR

From Jeffrey Davis of Orange, California to Daniel Davis of Kearney, Nebraska.

Munir puts down the envelope and shakes his head.

MUNIR (CONT'D)

Guess Jeff forgot to send his letter...

MUNIR (V.O.)
It was strange, but I trusted it. I
went after the bastard.

EXT. FRONT PORCH OF AN OLD BEAT UP HOUSE - DAY

Munir stands on a decrepit porch and bangs on the door. The sun beats down on him.

MUNIR (V.O.)
It was two hours before Friday
prayers. This was the only shot I
had at retrieving the air
conditioner and preventing sweaty
chaos.

JEFFREY DAVIS (in a wife beater, 40s, balding) opens the door.

MUNIR
Where the hell is the air
conditioner?

MUNIR (V.O.)
I didn't like to swear, but I'd
spent two days in my sauna of an
office and I was ticked off.

Jeffrey backs up in the doorway.

JEFFREY
What air conditioner? Who the hell
are you?

MUNIR (V.O.)
He could track me down later. I
didn't want to say.

MUNIR
I can't say. All I know is my
mosque's air conditioner is missing
and this was found at the scene of
the crime!

He thrusts the letter under Jeffrey's nose.

JEFFREY
Dammit! You have to understand--

MUNIR
Please, we have a service in two
hours, I need that air conditioner!

Jeffrey throws his hands in the air.

JEFFREY

Jeez, okay, okay, come in and you
can have it.

INT. JEFFREY'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

There's an OLD WOMAN asleep in a ragged antique chair. FOUR
ADORABLE LITTLE GIRLS play with building blocks on the rug.

JEFFREY

Money's a little tight right now,
and I just wanted something to keep
Grandma and the kids cool.

Munir looks around the room and softens.

MUNIR (V.O.)

First I let a lousy kid into Sunday
School, and now I had to take back
our air conditioner from a poor
man, an old woman, and adorable
kids?

Jeffrey unplugs the air conditioner and its whirring stops.
Old Woman jerks awake. Jeffrey hands it to Munir.

EXT. PARKING LOT OF A MOSQUE - LATER

Munir walks across the parking lot with the air conditioner,
triumphant.

MUNIR (V.O.)

I did what I had to do.

He approaches the window and sees a new, better air
conditioner installed.

MUNIR

What?!

Munir sets down the air conditioner he was holding.

The IMAM (40s, in traditional Muslim clothes) pokes his head
out of the mosque door.

IMAM

Munir, there you are!

MUNIR

How did we get a new air conditioner?

IMAM

Sister Fatima--you know Fatima-- donated one to the brother's section and one to to the sister's section, mash'Allah.

Munir clenches his fist and looks off in a rage.

MUNIR (V.O.)

That woman! She had completely taken advantage of the situation, making me track down the air conditioner when she knew she could afford to replace--

Imam heads back inside the mosque.

IMAM

I'm starting my sermon soon, are you coming, Munir?

MUNIR

Yes, I'll be there in a moment.

Munir gives the old air conditioner a once-over.

MUNIR (V.O.)

I had to make things right with Jeffrey.

INT. JEFFEREY'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

Jeffrey plugs the air conditioner back in and it begins to whir. Old Woman, still in her chair, falls asleep. The Little Girls return to playing with toys on the rug.

EXT. PARKING LOT, MOSQUE - LATER

Munir wipes the sweat off his brow and trudges back to the mosque.

MUNIR (V.O.)

I learned something important that day: you can never trust a dame.

INT. MOSQUE WOMEN'S SECTION - CONTINUOUS

Fatima holds her hands over the air conditioner and smiles as her face veil billows in the breeze.

FADE OUT

THE END.