

## NIGHT CRAWLERS

By: Louie Vaughn

There was limited time remaining. The hands of the clock were unhurried with each gesture. A pair of eyes watched. Each minute dissipated until only seconds remained. They concluded. The desired hour had arrived. The evening was here. A man arose from a desk. He whistled through his lips. The whistling stopped. A cigarette hung from his lip. He took a deep drag and sighed. Outside of the building he noted the weather.

A jacket fell from his shoulders at the apartment. Loosening his tie and suspenders brought him closer to consolation. A beer was opened in the kitchen. A sports game played on the television. The favored team was struggling. They lost. The commercials commenced. The daylight grew dim. Darkness overtook the late afternoon skyline. The natural conditions were splendid. It was at this moment that he decided what to do next..

He exited. All without putting on the jacket, retying the tie, or retightening the suspenders. Another brisk walk led to another destination. The establishment was not busy. Perfect. Tonight was a weeknight. Perfect. The bartender poured a double-whiskey. Perfect. The liquor decreased the lofty weight of responsibility. Perfect. As the drink was engulfed a voice spoke. He turned around. Eyebrows darted to the ceiling. Perfect.

“Rasheed,” it said.

The voice rushed to where he stood.

“Camilla,” he said.

It never mattered whether it was Monday or Sunday.

She never lost her spark.

That is why she was so good to him.

“Megumi and Hakim,” she said, while ordering a drink, “should arrive.”

“Looking forward to it.”

“In another hour.”

“The restaurant is busy at this hour.”

“The restaurant slows at this hour.”

“Fair enough,” he said, while lighting a cigarette, “out late tonight, Camilla?”

“Needed to finish editorials for the magazine.”

He gazed at her as she spoke. She was fashionable as ever. She traveled where the lights shined. Any bar or club that hinted at vigor captivated her. Friends fluttered wherever she went. Wherever exciting moments sprang, she was nearby. It was during one of these moments that they met. It was in a club. They got to talking. Money problems were troubling her. Locating friends was challenging him. That was back then. When he moved here. He did not know anybody. Nobody understood him.

The money issues subsided. She introduced the city to him and then to Hakim and Megumi. After these issues were resolved, the city life was set. This group was all he needed. He was all they needed. From the countryside to the cityscape. This lifestyle was more than just convenient. In his small world, all was grand. While they waited, she spoke for forty-five minutes. He spoke for fifteen minutes. An hour passed, and then they saw them enter through the door. They rushed to greet each other with great earnestness.

“Hakim,” he said, “I am so happy you made it.”

“After the rush died, they allowed me to leave.”

“He wished he and his coworkers earned more money,” said Megumi.

“An honest man,” said Rasheed, “is always supportive of others, a drink to that.”

They drank to it.

When the glasses emptied they ordered another round of them.

It really got them talking.

“There were not that many patients at the hospital today,” said Megumi.

“Better to have less patients than more patients, less injuries and deaths,” said Rasheed.

They agreed and it remained at that.

Hakim suggested they visit another bar.

“It has a balcony,” he said.

“I love that place,” said Camilla.

Hakim understood the city well. He knew where to locate a grand time. He knew when it was time to move on. Hakim and Camilla reassured them on the way. It was worth the journey. They reached a set of steps. They went upward. They opened a door at the top. After ordering drinks, they went to the balcony. From where they stood, the boulevard revealed itself fully. It's an illustrious sight to gaze down upon. People were insects from where they stood.

“A 1,000,000 view,” said Hakim, “the priciest around the city.”

“A \$500,000 view,” said Rasheed, “we persist in a bijou city.”

“A fall from here,” said Megumi, “and into the next world.”

“A morbid standpoint,” said Camilla, “a vexing imagination.”

Megumi said another line and it was more horrid.

It was so honest it made them laugh.

Rasheed gazed further downward.

The calculations were correct and he was sure of it.

The view is worth \$500,000.

He was sure of it.

“Should have landed a job here,” said Hakim.

“It is what remains of us until each of us cascade apart,” said Megumi.

“Vogue in a fashionable sense,” said Camilla.

Their voices were so familiar. He did not care to gaze at them. As their faces spoke.

Between their words. He gazed downward more and more. It really was a splendid view. Not far off was the bar they had visited. The sun had set. Next to the bar, several blocks over, was a club. There was a line of people. Equal to the movements of a millipede. Each guest entered. Their legs shifting in unison. Step by step and so smooth and gentle. Despite it was a weekday the club was busy. Hakim stated it was the busiest club around. It was one of few clubs around.

The recommendation changed some things. It shifted how they viewed everything. He was confident of it. They would have been there if the suggestion had not been made. Dancing. They ordered another round. Drinking until the late hours arrived. When surrounded by friends time dissipates. The glasses were emptied a final time. They hugged and said their goodbyes. Hakim and Megumi went elsewhere. As he was leaving she stopped him. Asked if he wanted to go elsewhere. Together they went out the door.

“Not counting all the writing but it has been a busy day.”

“Time escaped us.”

“What a chore it is talking to people.”

“Depends on who is speaking.”

“So happy he recommended that bar. There was nobody else there. Except us.”

“Appreciate his decision. People cannot stand people at times.”

“After we have had enough of ourselves we cannot stand who we remain.”

“Appears the drinks have gotten those lips of yours talking.”

“Those drinks were swell.”

“Fair enough.”

“During another week, such as this night, we will find many more moments together.”

“I hope we do, Camilla, I hope we do.”

“There it is and it is somewhat busy.”

It was less busy than they assumed. Sangrias were ordered. Then she got to talking. Then he began to speak. The evening had loosened him up well. The conversation was thirty minutes of him and thirty minutes of her. She was full of energy. A lady radiant with luminescence. The lighting from the bar made her skin glisten. The skin was radiant and soft. He wanted to touch it. The closing hour neared. They needed to leave.

They saw them outside her place. Bundles of worms squirmed from underneath a garbage can. The sight repulsed him. She did not share this disgust. She spoke a set of words. Night Crawlers. It's all just a bunch of Night Crawlers. He was unsure what she meant. He needed to figure out what she meant. He was quite fatigued. She had flown upward. He was too queasy to notice her flight. She must have kissed his cheek. He was unsure of it.

He pondered it further at his apartment. He went to the fridge and grabbed a beer. The television was turned on. The channel broadcast replays of the game. The television was turned off. As he sat, he really thought about it. When he arose, he looked at a nearby window. Clinging to the outside of the glass was a moth. As he looked at the insect, he gazed down into the city. People were exiting a bar. He smiled. Because of what she had said. Perfect.