

He never came back

written by

Zakia Ahasniou

zakia\_ahasniou@hotmail.com  
+33 7 49 21 12 39

INT. HAYDAR'S ROOM. ALGIERS 1983 - BREAK OF DAWN

The empty room of an out-of-his-teen-phase teenager. It could be a prison cell if the windows had bars. HAYDAR (19 yrs) is tying his shoes, black leather, military combat boots. As he leans down, we can see the "Lew'is" label on his jeans and a couple of oil spots on his white tee.

INT. HAYDAR'S APPARTMENT. HALLWAY - CONTINUED

Haydar walks out of his bedroom and walks along a hallway paved with old, cracked yet colourful, ceramic. He tiptoes his way out but stops at a door when he feels a WHISPER and the sound of a page turning.

He sticks his hear on the door. A smirk appears on his face.

INT. HAYDAR'S APPARTMENT. LIVING ROOM- CONTINUED

TAKLIT (55yrs) SALIMA (26 yrs) and NAZIHA (17yrs) are sleeping on camping mattresses layed out on the floor in an overdecorated, kitsch, living room. RYM (13 yrs) is reading *The Count of Monte Cristo* with the faint light that comes through the window next to her roll-away bed.

RYM  
(whispering)  
and his whole appearance bespoke  
that calmness and resolution  
peculiar to men accustomed from  
their cradle to contend with  
danger.

The door opens abruptly. Rym panics and quickly, hides the book and pretends to be sleeping. Haydar stands in the door, looks straight at Rym. A beat.

Rym opens one eye. She sees her brother. Haydar smiles. She sends him a kiss.

HAYDAR  
(in arabic)  
Now sleep!

She closes both eyes. Haydar leaves.

EXT. A DINGY COFFEE HOUSE - DAWN

The bare essentials of a coffee shop. Chairs, incongruous, some tables, a bar and a coffee machine with a man, MUSTAFA (55yrs), short little man in a white shirt and an old black vest, who knows how to handle it. A dozen men are seated here and there, all listening to a barely audible radio.

They all look the same. Jeans, combat boots. Some in sneakers, some have blue shirts, or tees. Haydar is seated on patio furniture on the terrace. He is sipping his coffee slowly. He lights up a cigarette.

Mustafa comes out polishing a glass and stands behind Haydar, without attracting his attention. He looks at him a moment. He hits him behind the head.

HAYDAR

Aouch! What for?

Mustafa simply puts out his hand. Haydar looks through his pockets and hands the man the change he has.

HAYDAR

You know, one day I will leave this shitty place, and that day, you'll regret never having offered me a single shot of coffee in your life!

A smirk appears on Mustafa's face. He laughs and goes back in.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

A tatty road. Garbage litters the soil. Haydar rides a rundown scooter with MALIK, (22 yrs), a chubby and clumsy looking young man. They are riding quite dangerously in between cars, for fun. On the horizon, the sea shows a grey hue, with big industrial boats here and there.

They go through a tunnel and emerge on the other side. The streets are lined with palm trees and big houses with pools. Elegantly dressed folk walk about. The streets are clean and welcoming.

They turn into the alley of a luxurious department store, behind a dumpster.

EXT. IN FRONT OF AN UPSCALE DEPARTMENT STORE- DAY

Haydar is starrng at a VCR in the display of the store. The VCR is connected to a TV and a movie, *Stagecoach*, is presented on the screen. A security agent come out and stand close to the door. Haydar sees him and starts to pace, nonchalant.

Karim (34 yrs) a tall, thin yet muscular man, is looking at Haydar from across the street. He's somewhat elegant in a two piece suit and wearing aviator glasses. He imitates Haydar's paceing to cross the street and get right behind him.

KARIM

He won't get it, you know?

Haydar turns around quickly, panics slightly but stands still.

KARIM

The guard in front, he was warned a shady looking fat man came in with a big warm hoodie. You shouldn't think they are dumb.

HAYDAR

What do you want?

KARIM

What do you want? You want to make scrap money, here and there, taking major risks with your fat donkey friend or do you want to make a real change, while gaining a lot more.

HAYDAR

I'm not interested. Now fuck off!  
You'll draw attention.

KARIM

Oh you do that very well on your own.

Karim pulls Haydar's stained shirt with disgust.

HAYDAR

Fuck you!

Karim takes a paper out of his back pocket, flaunts it in front of Haydar's nose. Haydar tries to grab it but Karim pulls it back. He stuffs it in Haydar's pocket.

(CONTINUED)

Malik comes out running with a VCR underneath his hoodie. It's so obvious it's funny. The security guard tries to catch him but Malik makes a quick step to the right and the guard falls flat on the ground. Other security agents are coming out the door. Karim is LAUGHING. He walks slowly the opposite direction.

MALIK

Get to the scooter!

Haydar is confused. He looks at Karim and starts running towards the scooter. Both men manage to get to the scooter and flee the scene. The security agents stop running and slowly heads back to the store.

INT. ALGIERS UNIVERSITY - DAY

The austere interiors of a building that contends for more than it will ever be. Haydar roams the hallway. He counts the money he just made. A couple of bills. He lights up a cigarette.

He walks up to a classroom. The door is closed. The lecture is ongoing. He puts the money away and looks through the window at PROFESSOR TELLASI (50 yrs) a tall, european graying man with, it seems, a constant smirk on his face. He looks at Haydar and, with a head bob, allows Haydar.

Haydar walks into the empty auditorium and sits a couple of rows in the back.

PROFESSOR TELLASI

No books, no pencils?

Haydar taps the side of his forehead with the tip of his finger. Everything is there.

PROFESSOR TELLASI

(ironic)

Right. I should be glad you are here. Anywho, let's sum up our great debate on microorganisms for Mr. Harouch, shall we?

EXT. AN ABANDONED PRIMARY SCHOOL - NIGHT

Haydar walks up to the school. He takes out the paper Karim handed him earlier. He's confused about the address but they match. He walks inside.

INT. A DISSAFECTED CLASS ROOM - NIGHT

Desks and chairs in every corner, stacked away in disorder. A dozen men are seated in a disorganized circle, on kid's chairs, some on small desks.

Haydar is in a corner, standing.

Everyone is hiding behind a pair of sunglasses. Raybans. But if we look closely, it's written Reyben\*. Haydar's face is uncovered.

He's trying to make sense, from afar, of a bunch of paper clippings pinned to a board. There are some pictures, some mock up MSDS cards.

Karim is seated, feet up, also behind his aviators. A man, SLIMANE (30 yrs) ex military, muscles but no brains, is next to the board.

SLIMANE

You get in, take your time. Pick the elements. We don't need quantity, just quality. Aim for the jewelry. Easier to sell through Europe. Lighter.

A picture of Professor Tellasi is pinned to the board.

EXT. AN ABANDONED PRIMARY SCHOOL - NIGHT

A man exit, makes sure no one is snooping around. He goes his way.

Another man heads out.

Then another. All casting the same look over their shoulder.

EXT. A DINGY COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Haydar parks his bike across from the coffee shop. Karim is seated at his table, talking indistinctly with Mustafa. Haydar walks towards him as Mustafa goes in.

HAYDAR

I'm not doing this.

KARIM

And I was just about to let you in on your special part in this.

(CONTINUED)

HAYDAR

I know what my special part is. And  
I don't want in.

KARIM

Where do you live, Haydar?

HAYDAR

What is it to you?

KARIM

I'll bet you live in a one bedroom  
apartment, with your mother and  
siblings. I'll bet your dad is  
dead, because he did what he was  
told. I'll bet you steal VCRs to  
bring bread on the table and you  
hope going to school will make your  
life all better, at one point.

Haydar sits down.

KARIM

I'm no prophet, Haydar. I know this  
because it is the same for everyone  
in this dump of a country! Every  
man who thinks they are worth  
something. And then, all of a  
sudden, worth makes no more sense.  
It means nothing anymore. You want  
to leave this place? I'm telling  
you we can make this country great,  
and ours again!

He lights up a cigarette. Haydar is all ears.

KARIM

Where do you think he lives?

HAYDAR

I know he lives in Hydra.

KARIM

What do you think his house is  
like?

HAYDAR

It's a nice apartment, two floors.  
In a nice building... in a...

KARIM

Nice neighbourhood with nice  
gigantic palm trees and probably a  
pool in the back.

(CONTINUED)

HAYDAR  
There is a pool.

KARIM  
Idiots! They have the sea but they  
prefer swimming in chlorine!

INT. ALGIERS UNIVERSITY. AN AUDITORIUM - DAY

Haydar is in a big auditorium where a woman is teaching statistics. Today, he is taking notes. A bell RINGS. Class is dismissed. He hurries out of the classroom.

CUT TO:

INT. ALGIERS UNIVERSITY. HALLWAY - DAY

Haydar is looking for someone. He walks quickly, carrying an old backpack. He sees Professor Tellasi outside in the courtyard, talking with two other men.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNIVERSITY COURTYARD - DAY

Haydar walks up to Professor Tellasi. He interrupts the ongoing discussion.

HAYDAR  
Professor Tellasi. May I speak with  
you for a second?

CUT TO:

EXT. A NICE NEIGHBOURHOOD - DAY

Luxurious palm trees line the path leading to an apartment complex. Haydar is walking along side Professor Tellasi towards the apartment complex. Haydar notices a man he had seen at the gathering, leaning on a palm tree.

INT. PROFESSOR TELLASSI'S APARTMENT BUILDING, ALGIERS - DUSK

Tellasi pushes the door to his apartment. Haydar follows him in and drops his bag on the floor in the hallway. He leans on the wall.

(CONTINUED)



HAYDAR  
I can wait here.

PROFESSOR TELLASI  
Don't be ridiculous. It'll take a  
minute. Come in, have a seat.

Professor Tellasi goes inside. Haydar slowly picks up his bag and drags himself inside while Tellasi puts away the books lying on his coffee table and couch.

Haydar crosses the room and observes the apartment, the high bookshelves, the desk covered in draft papers. He gets to one of the windows, the only one with wide open curtains.

He looks outside the window. In the distance, he sees IDRIS (20s) strong looking guy with fake aviators, sitting on a bench. Idris is wearing a blue armband. They make eye contact.

PROFESSOR TELLASI  
Chemistry is very interesting,  
you'll see. Even if you don't end  
up making a career out of it, it  
changes your way of seeing  
things... the world.

HAYDAR  
Ok.

PROFESSOR TELLASI  
Are you ok?

HAYDAR  
Yes. Why?

PROFESSOR TELLASI  
You seem nervous. You want coffee?

HAYDAR  
Really... I have to be somewhere.

PROFESSOR TELLASI  
Yes, of course.

He starts looking for a textbook.

PROFESSOR TELLASI  
Everybody here is always in a  
hurry, yet nobody seems to be going  
nowhere.

(CONTINUED)

Haydar starts inspecting the room without budging from his spot. He is impressed by the number of books. His gaze stops on stacks of videocassettes on the floor.

HAYDAR

Where do you get the movies?

PROFESSOR TELLASI

I'm sorry?

HAYDAR

You have a smuggler?

PROFESSOR TELLASI

No. No. I have a friend in  
England... he brought them when he  
came to visit.

HAYDAR

They don't deserve a fancy spot in  
your fancy shelves?

Tellasi stops and stares at Haydar who sustains his look.

PROFESSOR TELLASI

I'm sorting them...

Haydar lowers his defying stare.

PROFESSOR TELLASI

(change of tone)

Well, I guess the book is in my  
office... upstairs.

HAYDAR

Really... if it's too much  
trouble...

PROFESSOR TELLASI

Two minutes! Have a seat.

Tellasi goes up a staircase and disappears in the hallway. Haydar waits a second. The sound of Tellasi's footsteps fades away. Haydar runs to a window with shut curtains. He unlocks the latch and shuts the curtains.

He goes back to the previous window and looks outside. Idris is no longer on the bench. Haydar gets anxious. He sees another young man with the same armband rushing towards the entrance of the apartment complex.

(CONTINUED)

PROFESSOR TELLASI (O.S.)  
You know, if you keep at it, you  
could get some scholarships and  
head to a school in England. It  
would help, having a degree from  
there, to do something with your  
life...

Haydar panics and runs towards the couch. On his way, he  
stumbles on the pile of VHS. They spread across the floor.  
He starts picking them up, but Tellasi's footsteps get  
louder and louder. He freezes with the movie "Stagecoach" in  
hands. He takes a good look at it and nervously dumps it in  
his bag and heads for the door.

He runs down the staircase. IDRIS and the other young man  
walk calmly up the stairs.

HAYDAR  
What? Are you idiots? He's still in  
there!

IDRIS  
You wimpy bastard! Just get out of  
here!

HAYDAR  
That's not the plan! Get out!  
You'll screw this up!

IDRIS  
Take it up with the General.

The two men keep walking up. Haydar freezes on the spot and  
listens to the noisy commotion starting upstairs.

PROFESSOR TELLASI (O.S.)  
Mr. Harouch? Haydar! Who are you?  
What do you think you are doing?  
Get out of my home!

Haydar rushes outside. He runs erratically as far as he can  
from the building. About a hundred meters away, he stops to  
catch his breath.

MULTIPLE GUNSHOTS. Haydar freezes. Every part of his body  
wants to run back to Telassi. He stands still. Silence. He  
can't even turn his head.

The COMMOTION outside reaches his ears. He runs. He'll  
never stop running.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. A DINGY COFFEE HOUSE - NIGHT

A bunch of men are gathered inside the dingy coffee shop, listening to a radio broadcast of a soccer game. Karim is sipping a short espresso on the terrace, hidden behind his fake aviator glasses. Haydar urgently sits next to him.

HAYDAR

I'm done.

Karim doesn't even acknowledge his presence. He slowly takes out of his pocket a pack of tobacco and rolling paper.

HAYDAR

It's over. Don't ask me anything anymore! That was uncalled for! You lied to me!

Karim lowers his glasses slightly and looks at Haydar a moment. He pushes back his glasses and starts rolling his cigarette.

HAYDAR

Are you listening to me?! I'm done!

KARIM

You weren't even started.

Karim laughs.

HAYDAR

You lied to me! I would never have led you to his place if...

KARIM

Don't give yourself so much credit, son. We can find these bastards on our own.

The men inside shout their frustration in unison.

KARIM

If you can't stomach what we do...

HAYDAR

I stomach your shit! Doesn't mean...

KARIM

Then go cry to your mama! And let me enjoy the match.

A goal is scored. The soccer fans start chanting an anthem. Haydar jumps out of his seat. He takes off.

(CONTINUED)

KARIM

There is a name for people like  
you... like your father...

Haydar violently grabs his jaw.

HAYDAR

You don't know my father!

KARIM (IN ENGLISH)

Dicksuckers.

Three men with blue armbands catch Haydar and throw him out of reach. He falls to the ground. They gather around him and start kicking him. Passersby cast a curious glance at the scene and go their way.

Karim slowly gets up and joins his men. They stop.

KARIM

Don't come crying to me when you're  
tired of sucking settler's dick.

INT. HAYDAR'S APPARTMENT - NIGHT

Haydar storms into the dark apartment. He rushes to his room.

Rym comes out of the washroom. She walks down the hall and stops in the door frame.

RYM

The hell are you doing this late?

Haydar is savagely searching through the drawers of a big dresser in which he pulls out women's and men's clothing, books and kitchen apparel, depending on the drawer he is rageing through.

All of a sudden, he stops moving. He pulls out a gun. Rym, scared, runs to the living room.

RYM (O.S.)

Mom! Haydar is taking dad's gun!

Haydar looks at it. Charges it. He sticks it in his pants and covers it with his vest. He heads to the door, leaving his mess behind.

TAKLIT (55 yrs) an big woman in a long night gown rushes out of the livingroom.

(CONTINUED)

TAKLIT

Haydar?! What are you doing? Where  
are you going?

Haydar looks at his mother but can't speak. He kisses her forehead. Her sobing increases. Through the door frame, Haydar can see Naziha and Salima holding on to each other under their blankets. Rym is crying too. Haydar exits the apartment.