

# STILL

We finally arrived at my cousin's in a remote town in Afghanistan; on arrival, we noticed blood stains splattered around the house and smashed glass and pottery. We were left astonished at what we saw. We searched every room like a SWAT team, and then we found my sick and frail cousin Mohammad hiding in the closet in the final room. He seemed frightened like he had seen a creepy ghost in a cheesy, romantic horror movie.

He was relieved it was just us, but under intense pressure, my dad and I asked him what was going on, and he told us something that would change our lives forever.

Mohammad, through tears, told us that the Taliban had bashed down the front door and ripped the house apart. His mom and sister had been unwillingly dragged away, knowing their end was soon. Mohammad's dad had been brutally stabbed in the back and carried to heaven. Tears swelled in my eyes at the thought of my dad being violently murdered. I felt helpless and terrified; most of all, rage filled my body like an overtaking tsunami.

After Mohammad and I had calmed down, I asked my dad a simple question about the Taliban.

He replied with two words that pierced my heart and would stay there for the rest of my life Race and Religion.