

The Red Painter

Written By

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INT. CLASSROOM - EARLY MORNING - PAKISTAN

Children run around the classroom, teasing and bullying each other. AZEEM a quiet and introverted boy, sits at his desk gazing out of the window and smiling. The camera pans over to what Azeem is looking at and we see the beautiful nature outside and two birds singing on a tree to one another.

Azeem has a daydream that a bird and a squirrel stare at each other for a long time and then they embrace.

He is awoken from his day dream by the SCHOOLTEACHER, a soft spoken gentle woman wearing a white button up and large glasses, calling his name.

SCHOOLTEACHER

Azeem! Azeem please pay attention
it is your turn to present.

Azeem snaps out of it and walks to the front of the classroom.

Classroom mumbles and whisper in their seats. Azeem looks over at the teacher.

SCHOOLTEACHER

Quit down class, Azeem has the
floor.

The classroom becomes silent.

AZEEM

(holds up his painting) This is my
painting. Here are the trees and
the sky and this is the city over
here (he points to each thing as he
announces it) . And if you look
closely there is a bird and a sq..

Azeem is interrupted by a classmate who shouts out.

CLASSMATE

WHY IS EVERYTHING RED??

The class breaks out into small chuckles and whispers.

SCHOOLTEACHER

Quiet down everyone. Azeem go
on...continue. Why is your entire
painting in red?

(CONTINUED)

AZEEM

Well I like red. Our hearts are red and on valentines day everything is decorated in red. It is the ultimate symbol of love. It is also bold and it is daring and it is unafraid. I painted the squirrel and the bird red and the sky and the trees and the city because...well...in my painting everything is at peace and everything loves everything, you see? the sky loves the grass and the bird loves the squirrel and the red clouds love the red earth and the red city is covered in love. This is my happy world. Thank you.

Everyone in the classroom stares at Azeem and there is long silence. The class then bursts into laughter and Azeem's face alters from a pleased look to one of confusion and embarrassment. The Schoolteacher continues to stare at Azeem as if she has not even heard the roar of laughter and taunting now coming from her students. She looks at Azeem with a deeply impressed and touched look and then snaps out of it and stands up.

SCHOOLTEACHER

Azeem this is an excellent piece of art. Maybe your classmates need to be painted in red a little bit too huh? (she jokes as she places her hand on Azeem's shoulder and moves him back toward his seat). Ok class, quiet down. Next to present will be...

The schoolteacher's voice fades as Azeem walks back to his seat.

THE SCREEN READS

13 YEARS LATER

INT. PAINT STORE - MIDDAY - AMERICA

Azeem walks down the aisles of the store dropping several large cans of red paint into the cart. The camera stays on the red paint as it drops into the cart.

Azeem hands the cash to the clerk and takes his bags of paint.

EXT. CITY - MIDDAY

He walks out of the store and whistles as he walks down the city street. He buys a large loaf of bread and hands it to the homeless man leaned up against the trash and gazes over to a blank space on a city wall that he begins to admire.

Azeem opens up his paint and begins to paint [U+0645][U+062D][U+0628][U+062A] , which is arabic for love.

The homeless man eats his bread as he enjoys the view of Azeem painting. Azeem goes on to paint arabic symbols and pictures of food and feasting. He turns around often to get the approval of the homeless man, who although scarcely understands what Azeem is painting, smiles in favor and knowing that it is art of a good hearted person.

Azeem goes throughout the city painting his red symbols all over the place, dancing and enjoying nature and laughing with children who approve his paintings.

INT. KITCHEN AZEEM'S HOUSE - MORNING

RAAHIMA, Azeem's mother, a short dark-haired woman, prepares breakfast for Azeem who sits at the table reading the daily newspaper.

RAAHIMA

Did you read the second article?
It's terrible what they did to that young man.

AZEEM

(taking a sip from his mug) reading it now. I don't understand how the officer didn't get indicted.

Raahima is now standing against the counter looking at Azeem as if she has something else that's been on her mind.

RAAHIMA

You have to be careful out there Azeem. I know you love your painting and I would never want to take that away from you but...

AZEEM

(interrupts and puts the paper down) But what mother? We've been over this. I'll be fine. But I'm not going to stop painting. It is what I love, it is all I have.

(CONTINUED)

RAAHIMA

I just worry about you son.

AZEEM

I'll be fine mom. Relax. You worry too much.

Azeem kisses his mother on the forehead, grabs the toast, and runs out the door. The camera pans back to the worrying face of Raahima who leans up against the sink. She throws the dishtowel onto the counter and gazes out the window in deep thought and worry.

INT. SUV CAR PARKED IN BUSY CITY - EVENING

We are now viewing Azeem through the lens of DETECTIVE PHILLIPS'S binoculars. Azeem is being watched from the inside of a black SUV out of a slightly rolled down window. Azeem is seen walking and whistling down the busy city street with his paint supplies at his hip, eating an apple.

As Detective Phillips peers through the binoculars we simultaneously hear the calls of several complaints that have been called into the agency.

VOICEOVER

(southern accent) Hello. This is Darlene Johnson. Me and my husband and 3 kids have lived here for over 20 years now, right off of Delaney Rd and Im calling to report the suspicious activity of a young arab lookin man who keeps painting these red symbols, I think they're in his language or something. I'm not sure but I pay good money to feel safe in my community and quite frankly we don't know who this man is or where he came from. For all I know he could be a very dangerous man.

(different woman) Hi, my name is Samantha Cohan and I own the bakery down on Roberts Avenue. I'm calling to report the questionable and possibly threatening behavior of a man about 5'9, muslim looking, he keeps leaving these mysterious paintings around town all in red paint and some sort of coded language. He came out of nowhere and looks like he could be a dangerous man. I hope your

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

VOICEOVER (cont'd)
headquarters are staying on top of
it because these days you never
know. I would hate to have a
terrorist right under our nose the
entire time and so we shouldn't
overlook this.

Detective Phillips reclines back into the seat of the dark SUV. The car pulls off.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. CITY - MIDDAY

Azeem paints on the wall of a building.

Two black SUV's pull up to Azeem as he walks down the road with his painting sac lugging over his shoulder. The cars pull up beside him and a black sac is placed over his head as two agents get out and push him into the vehicle.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. BASEMENT OF CIA (INTERROGATION HEADQUATERS) - DAYTIME

Azeem is escorted by two men down steps and through several high security gates that require codes as they go through them. He is taken into a small room with no windows and a mirror on the wall where CIA agents can see and hear him on the other side of it. Azeem is seated at the table and left alone.

DETECTIVE PHILLIPS is a tall older white man with a long mustache that curls on each end. He keeps a pipe in his mouth and pulls it out whenever he speaks. He sits with his legs crossed and has several honorary golden badge on his suit.

Detective Phillips stares carefully at Azeem from the one-sided window stroking one side of his curled mustaches he goes to enter the room. He removes the sac from Azeem's face and sits across from Azeem, crossing one leg over the other.

DETECTIVE PHILLIPS
Let me be clear. My job is to keep
this country safe from terror and
to prevent bad things from
happening on this beloved soil
known as The United States of
America and the greatest country in
the world. So. I will give you a
chance which most people in your

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DETECTIVE PHILLIPS (cont'd)
situation don't get. You tell me
who sent you and sign this paper
which states you will never paint
another thing in this city again or
I will be forced to reveal less
friendly options.

AZEEM
I am not a terrorist.

DETECTIVE PHILLIPS
I don't think you're hearing me
Azeem. We have all the information
we need to arrest you right here
and right now. If you wont tell me
who sent you tell me why you do
these red paintings all over the
city.

AZEEM
Red is my favorite color. Red is
good if you know it as good.

DETECTIVE PHILLIPS
No? i'll tell u what red is. Red
means blood. it means war. it means
get scared. And the lovely folk of
America well you see they just
don't take too kindly to that sort
of threat. So I'll ask you once
more. WHO SENT YOU?

AZEEM
I AM NOT A TERRORIST. You know
nothing.

Detective Phillips sits back and puts his pipe back into his
mouth. He squints carefully looking into Azeem's eyes and
then pulls himself extremely close to Azeem.

DETECTIVE PHILLIPS
I know enough to know your filthy
"art" better stop spreading itself
around my got damn city. or you'll
be a dead man.

Azeem sinks back into his seat in disbelief. He looks as if
his spirit is on the verge of being broken. He shakes his
head and says nothing else.

INT. AZEEM'S ROOM - NIGHT

Azeem lays in bed, not being able to sleep, tossing and turning. He has a nightmare about a squirrel and bird staring at each other for a long time and then the squirrel hisses and turns into a monster who eats the bird whole.

He wakes up startled.

EXT. STREETS OF CITY - MIDDAY

Azeem finishes up a painting and walks down the busy city street. At the end of the street he sees several police cars and black SUV's with their guns out all aiming in his direction. He holds firmly to his black duffle bag.

DETECTIVE PHILLIPS

(lifts up his microphone and speaks clearly) Azeem. You've been warned. Drop your supplies and get on the ground.

Azeem looks around at the crowds of people now coming out of their stores and homes to see what is happening.

AZEEM

I AM NOT A TERRORIST. I AM NOT A TERRORIST.

DETECTIVE PHILLIPS

AZEEM! DROP YOUR BAG! EMPTY YOUR HANDS NOW AND GET ON THE GROUND.

AZEEM

I WILL NOT! I AM NOT A TERRORIST!
ALL I HAVE IN THIS BAG IS MY PSINT
AND BRUSHES, A BIT OF FOOD. I AM
N...

Azeem is shot in the center of his head and falls to the ground.

Live footage of what is going on is now being seen on the television of Azeem's mother who sits in the kitchen sobbing and screaming at the tv.

(Back to Azeem's body laying dead in the street) The buckets of red paint have fallen to the ground with his body and red paint swirls down the street like a stream of blood from a gunshot wound.

THE SCREEN READS

50 YEARS LATER

INT. ART GALLERY - MIDDAY

A couple walks and gazes into the famous work of Azeem that is hung throughout the Gallery.

Azeem's famous all red painting hangs in the room of a child, we zoom out all through a large house to realize it is the white house. Zoom through the house into the conference room with the president and staff sending drones into Pakistan.