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## Murder victim's wife tells of love story turned wrenching tragedy

By **Victoria Gibson** Staff Reporter  
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Soroush Mahmudi once told his wife, Fareena, that if anything ever happened to her, he'd travel the lengths of the country to get answers.

When police announced Friday that they'd found Mahmudi's dismembered remains — a month after charging a man for his murder, and over two years after he vanished — her mind went reeling back to that moment, from the apartment they once shared. The Scarborough home still echoes with memories of 50-year-old Mahmudi, with much left untouched since his August 2015 disappearance.



Soroush Mahmudi had a "beautiful smile" and a "good heart," said his wife, Fareena Marezook. Alleged serial killer Bruce McArthur has been charged in Mahmudi's death. (SUPPLIED BY FAREENA MAREZOOK)

Along with her husband's remains, police said they also identified the remains of Skandaraj "Skanda" Navaratnam and have laid a new first-degree murder charge against Bruce McArthur, who faces five other first-degree murder charges.

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Fareena Marezook told the Star she used to doll herself up before Mahmudi came home from work. She wanted to look beautiful for him. Since he disappeared, she leaves her face bare.

"He, all the time, would talk about this lipstick," she remembered, her voice soft, gently turning the pages of a photo album she keeps beside her bed. In an image of them together, her lips are painted dark. The album is filled with images of Mahmudi, back to the couple's earliest days together.

"It was a beautiful smile he had. A good heart," Marezook said. "He loved me too much." He worked hard, too, she recalled, often waking up at 4 or 5 in the morning. Early one Saturday morning, he woke up before Marezook's son — who Mahmudi was a stepfather to. Mahmudi left him breakfast before going out the door. He never came home that day.

Police now believe that's when he was killed.

But for over two years, he was just missing. Mahmudi was last seen near Markham Rd. and Blakemanor Blvd., and no one knew what happened to him. Now, Marezook is bombarded by news about his brutal killing.

In a voice choked with emotion, she wondered how anyone could kill "this beautiful guy" with a "good heart."

Bruce McArthur, who was charged in late January with Mahmudi's murder, has been charged with murder in the deaths of five other men to date, many of whom frequented Toronto's Gay Village, some leading "double lives" to do so.

When asked if she knew anything about her husband visiting the Gay Village, Marezook said she didn't. She had kept up hope since he disappeared that he would come back. She didn't know where he would have gone. It's unclear how Mahmudi and McArthur met.



Family photo of murder victim Soroush Mahmudi, kept by his wife in an album beside her bed, shows him fishing near their old house in Barrie. (FAMILY PHOTO)

These days, her apartment is a solace from the throngs of cameras often waiting outside the door. Inside, she can weep in privacy for the husband she's been hoping for over two years will return. She opened the door hesitantly on Friday, asking at first if there were cameras.

Without any, her demeanour softened. Inside, she talked of a love story turned wrenching tragedy. Mahmudi was from Iran, and Marezook from Sri Lanka. They met in Canada, introduced by a friend. They were together 12 years before he disappeared.

"I miss him, you know?" she said, tears welling in her eyes. "How would I forget him? I can't forget him."

Mahmudi had purchased all the furniture in their apartment — an intimate space, flooded with light in the centre. They moved there after living in Barrie, a home listed on 2014 bankruptcy documents filed in Toronto. Despite that, Marezook remembers Mahmudi — listed on those documents as a professional painter — happily taking her out shopping, and buying her nice clothes.

She pointed to all the spaces where Mahmudi's memory lingers. A slow cooker sits on their kitchen stovetop, which she said was used to make a kind of soft beef that he liked.

"He liked good food," she said, remembering Mahmudi wandering in the door after a day of work with specific cheeses or other foods in hand, and starting to cook. He liked to cook his own way, Marezook remembered.

Police say Mahmudi was reported missing by family. Beyond his wife and stepson, Mahmudi came from a large family. "A very big, nice, beautiful family," Marezook added. He had three sisters and a brother in Iran, and would speak to his sister over the phone "all the time."

Both his parents, also in Iran, had died. Family photos on both sides are sprinkled through the album by Marezook's bed. Multiple photos show the couple together — quiet photos and jovial photos, clad in vibrant red the day they got engaged, or clasping hands and dancing on their wedding day. Mahmudi, she said, was the life of the party.

“He was happy with family. He was happy with my son,” she said. Every day since he disappeared, part of her waited for him to come back through the door. “One day he’s coming, one day he’s coming,” she recalled thinking.

And though his remains have now been found, and a murder charge has been laid in his death, she let a desperate wish float off her tongue in the quiet apartment. “I want him to come back,” she said, her voice shaking.

“I’ll never forget him.”

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