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## Salwa and the Fake Husband

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It was a hard day for me. I took a taxi and went to the court to provide you with the news about this case. I was sitting with the attendants in the hall of the court when two guards brought her to the cage. She remorsefully stood silent, facing the judge. The judge firstly listened to the prosecutor who made me dive in memories as he was speaking for along time. Then the judge asked the defense to talk. However, there was no lawyer to defend the woman. The attendants murmured and laughed for a while. As a result, the judge shouted at them and ordered them to keep silent. Suddenly, the woman broke that gloomy silence bravely, although she sounded to be fatigued.

“I don’t need a lawyer, sir.”

“But you should do.” said the judge.

“I don’t think so. I have a B.A. degree in Law. I think I am able to defend myself... I will tell you everything honestly, sir.”

The overweighed judge, who wore circular glasses shrugged and unconvincingly said, “Go ahead!”

“Thank you, sir. My name is Salwa. I am 26 years old. I was born in a small village far away from here. My father, Salem, brought my mother to Aden at the 1950s because of the hard life there under the ruling of Imam. Convinced that Aden can be a safe place for them, he came and my mother here where he worked as a teacher. He experienced the independence revolution in 1967 from the British colonizers. I cannot forget this revolution for he and my mother repetitively narrated to me how people were happy after removing the colonizers from Aden. I liked to listen to their memories in which happiness is mingled with blood. After along time of waiting, my mother was pregnant of me. The delight filled my father when my mother told him that she was pregnant. It seems that I was listening to their talks, even though I was still in my mother’s womb. As a young man cheerful to be a father for the first time, my father was so kind with my mother, cherishing her and carrying her sometimes. I realized this because I felt it, though I was not born yet. You may not believe it but I do.

I was born in 1975. In a time in which I expected there was no place for poverty. I was a baby and had nothing to do to assist my family. A few years later, I became the elder sister of two children, a boy and a girl.

I joined school and then secondary school. I studied at University of Aden. I had a B.A degree from Faculty of Law. After graduating, I searched for a job for two years but I could not get any, even in private companies. My father retired from his work and his wage was reduced to ten thousand Yemeni Rials. That amount of money was not enough to cover the expenses of the

family. My brother, Ali, is a university student. He spends at least five thousand Yemeni Rials monthly for handouts and transportation. My family's need of money led me to seek again and again for a job.

One day a gorgeous man came to my father. They both sat in the sitting room and I made a tea and asked Ali to offer it to the guest. In fact, I peered at them through the key-hole of the door. I saw that man, who was very proud of himself, giving my father an amount of money. My father was nodding his head, but I could hear nothing because they were speaking in a low voice. When the man had left, dad told my mother that the guest wanted to marry me. My father added "He is a rich guy."

"What about his family?" asked my mother.

"He is a businessman and his family is abroad."

"So when will he bring his family to meet and sit together in order to recite *al-Fatiha*?"

"I told you his family is abroad."

"So-o-o-o!"

"He said he wants to get married next week. Then he will take his wife and go abroad to his family. He gave me this money to buy gold for his bride, Salwa."

"But we need more time before the wedding ceremony."

"That's ridiculous! I told you he is a businessman. For him, time is money. "

My father and mother were like any girl's parents in my country; they wanted to marry me off; they wanted to see me happy with my husband; and they wanted to have grandchildren as well. In fact, I loved that man. We got married and traveled the next week. He took me to Sana'a to spend our honeymoon in one of the outlandish hotels in the capital city. I spent the best times of my life with him.

One morning in the hotel, I got up at nine o'clock as usual but he was not in bed; his clothes were not hung, and one of the bags had disappeared. I waited for him until evening but he did not come. I felt frightened, lost, and humiliated.

The manager of the hotel knocked frantically on the door. I was afraid. I wore my headscarf and opened the door. He said he wanted his money. I asked him to wait until my husband comes back but he laughed aloud and said; "What! Your husband! Do you think I am a fool!"

I looked for money in the bag, but I couldn't find it. Even my gold disappeared. Just then I realized that I was deceived by my husband. I told the manager my story and asked him to give me one more day to call my family and asked them for money.

"Please, don't call the police! I will call my father, and I promise you tomorrow he will bring the money."

"I want my money now."

He looked at me in a weird way and stretched his right hand toward mine.

"I will let you go if you forgive me."

"What? — What? — What do you mean? Why?"

"To let me sleep with you tonight and tomorrow you can leave."

I draw my hand away from his. My legs and hands were trembling. He added, “Oh darling, you don’t have any other choice. Your identity card is in my pocket. You will not leave the room until you agree. Or wait for the so-called ‘your husband’ ... ha .. ha .. ha.”

I was confused. I did not know what to do. I was very scared. Should I refuse or agree?

After a long time thinking, I uttered, “Okay, give me the identity card now.”

“Here it is. Now I will go to do some business and see you, darling, at eight o’clock tonight. Remember that you cannot run away because the door is closed and you cannot jump through the window as you are in the sixth floor ... Bye.”

When he left, I sat in the room weeping. I checked the window but I couldn’t jump because I was in the sixth floor. I prayed to God to assist me. I implored God to change my beautiful face into an ugly one. It was the first time I curse my own beauty. I loathed my life. I tried to kill myself but I couldn’t. I was not strong enough to do that. At last, I accepted my destiny.

It was exactly eight o’clock when the manager knocked on the door of the room.

“Who is it?”

“It is me, darling.”

“Don’t you have the key?”

“Yes, I do.”

“Why are you knocking then?”

“Just to listen to your soft voice, darling.”

He opened the door and came in. He walked forward towards me. I was so scared.

“Don’t touch me like that.”

“Sorry, darling. This is the first time I get to sleep with a beautiful lady.”

In the morning, when I got up he was asleep in bed. It was the first time I miss *Salat al-Fajr*. I collected my important things and went towards the door. The door was locked. Suddenly, I felt his hands on my shoulders from behind.

“Why are you in a hurry? It is still early.”

“You promised to release me in the morning.”

“Yes, I did; but how will you go to Aden without money? Listen, last night I realized that you are not a prostitute. I now believe your story.”

He put his right hand in his pocket and gave me three thousand Yemeni Rials.

“Take this money and go to the bus station! Please forgive me for what I did last night. I could not control myself.”

His eyes were full of tears. “I thought... I thought... you are...”

“I know what you want to say. You thought I am a whore... I am not... I am a well-educated woman but I was, as I told you, deceived by the man who married me and took me from my family to here.”

“What will you say to your family? Will you tell them about what we did last night? I hope you will not for it’s not good for your reputation.”

“What! My reputation! Do you think your tears will convince me that you are worried about me? I still remember how you behaved like an animal last night while I was crying. You

tore out my dress and threw me to bed... I want to forget what happened last night... You are a criminal like Said, my husband. You are both the same. However, there is no use talking now. I will not tell anybody and I hope you do the same.”

I left the hotel and took a taxi to the bus station. I went to Aden. When I reached my family's house, my mother was looking out of the window. She didn't know me for I looked different. I went towards the door and knocked on it. My mother opened the door and I embraced her. My eyes were brimming with tears. She embraced me tightly.

I told my family the whole story. But, I did not tell them about what the manager and I did that night in the hotel. My father felt guilty for he had trusted Said too much. He cried and cried until he collapsed. We took him to the hospital. He stayed there for three days. On the fourth day, his heart stopped and he died.

I lived with my family again. My brother, Ali, went to the court for the divorce procedures and told the judge about my husband. The judge was very kind. He told us that the same problem happened to some other Yemeni girls. However, he blamed my family for they married me off to an unknown man. But thank God that although Said was absent, I got divorced.

When my father died, my family became poorer than before. By hook or crook, I had to get a job. One day, my best friend, Amani, came to our house and told me she read an advertisement on a newspaper that a well-known company was looking for a secretary.

I wrote my CV, attended the interview, and I gave them copies of my certificates. Actually, I was very forthright with the manager; I told him that my English was not passable and my knowledge of computer was limited. I was disappointed because the qualifications of the other candidates were better than mine. However, I was chosen by the manager to work as his secretary. I was very glad when the company phoned me. I went to work and learned more about computer skills and attempted to improve my English. The company granted me some money to buy a new gown and headscarf for the job because mine were not new. The company was interesting, even though two ladies were disturbing me. When I looked at them, I found them staring at me. When I entered the office, they stopped talking as if they had seen the devil himself. Sometimes they giggled when I passed near them. However, the manager was very gentle, although he was sometimes an ambiguous man. He was always absent-minded. When I spoke to him, he just looked at me, uttering no word. I thought he had serious troubles in his business affairs!

One day, Mr. Khalid, the manager, asked me to type some important papers. However, the work was too much to finish in the normal work time; therefore, I had to continue to the evening. The employees left but I was still typing. Mr. Khalid called me and asked me to bring the papers, which I had completed, to his office. He gently asked me to sit down. I was amazed. He came closer and closer to me while he was reading the papers. He asked me to re-type a few papers that contained some mistakes. When I stretched my right hand to take them, he touched my fingers softly from behind the papers. I took the papers quickly to go but I was obstructed by his arms. I was a secretary, but he wanted me to be more than a secretary. He knelt in front of me kissing my hands. I kept silent for a while. The scene reminded me of the manager of the hotel. It was not Mr. Khalid I knew. It was the devil. I shouted and cried hoarsely. I shouted for help, but

the company was empty. He threw himself, like a naughty child, on my body. I defended myself viciously. I bit his ears and his nose. He slapped me. Just then, I surrendered, and gave him my body.

I went home, entered my room and closed the door behind me. I cried bitterly. Suddenly, my mother called me and asked me to answer the phone. Two women talked and laughed at me. I thought they had called a wrong number, but they knew my name.

“Who are you and what do you want?”

“How was it? Was it a good evening?” said the voice and the two giggled together. I recognized the voices. It was the voices of the two ladies who worked with me. I shouted, “So, what do you want now?” and I put the telephone down.

When I went to the office next day, I found the two ladies, Laila and Nojoum, laughing. They came to my office;

“How beautiful you are!” said Nojoum ridiculously.

“You are as white as the milk.” added Laila.

Nojoum sat on the desk and stretched her right hand to my headscarf. I shook my head and removed her hand. She said, “We know what happened yesterday in the office.”

I was astonished, because no one was in the company at that time.

“How did you know? Who told you?”

“Mr. Khalid told us.” said Nojoum.

“What! ... Mr. Khalid!”

I realize how stupid I was. I was working with very base people. I immediately remembered what had happened in the hotel and how my husband left me there. I remembered what the manager and I did in the hotel room. I remembered what Mr. Khalid and I did in his office. I have become a loose woman.

Laila and Nojoum convinced me to work with them and I did... Yes, I did... I didn't know how that had happened. I didn't even think about it. Anyway, I worked with them and I earned more money. I gave my family the money they needed, and my brother got the money he needed for his studies.

One night, I left my house and told my mother that I was going to visit Amani. In fact, I went to Laila and Nojoum. We met in a small house. We entered the house and I changed my clothes. A very rich man was waiting for me in the bedroom.

I entered the room and walked towards him. I was behind him. I placed my hands over his eyes. He said, “What is your name?”

The voice was familiar to me. I walked forward and faced him. I was astonished when I saw him. It was Said, the man I married. I caught his neck and tried to kill him. He fought back, beat me, and kicked me. I did not release him. He kicked me ferociously until I was bleeding from the mouth. He hurriedly fled and disappeared. When the neighbors heard the fight, they crowded to the house. Laila and Nojoum had run away before people came. I was alone bleeding. People entered the room but nobody took me to the hospital until the police came. I stayed in the hospital for three days, and then I was taken to prison.



That is my whole story, sir. I have told you every thing. I am fully guilty. I have brought shame to my family.” she finished talking and started crying.

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After some discussions between the judge and his assistants, the judge pronounced a five-year prison-sentence. Consequently, Salwa was taken to the women jail. Now give me the money you promised me!

“Take it, it is ten thousand Rials, as I promised you.” said Said to the man. The man left and Said got onto his car and left too.

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In prison, Salwa prayed most of her time. While praying, she cried too much. She always recited the *Quran*. She became very pious. She was sorry for what she had done. She always asked God to forgive her.

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The five years passed, and it was the night before Salwa leaves the prison. She prayed to God fervently. She slept at two o'clock. That night she had a strange dream. It was more like a nightmare.

*She was walking in a dark night, on a mountain. She was bitten by fierce beasts and stung by poisonous snakes. However, she continued walking until she reached its peak. She looked from the peak of the mountain over a green valley down below. Suddenly, her brother, Ali, appeared from behind the trees. She came towards him and opened her arms to embrace him. He came towards her too, but instead of embracing his sister, he pushed her into the valley. She fell and fell and fell. Ali heard a voice behind him. He turned, but it was too late. A fierce wolf roared and paced towards him. The wolf jumped, pounced on Ali, and devoured him. Salwa, fortunately, fell to a big tree. She was rescued by creatures that looked like human beings. She was in a green forest, and those creatures were serving her. They took her to a splendid palace which was surrounded by green gardens and there was a river flowing next to her palace. She slept in a room which was bigger than her family's house. It was clean and comfortable.*

Suddenly, the prison's guard shouted; “Salwa, Salwa. Wake up! Wake up!”

“Yes, what's up?”

“Get ready! You are leaving the jail this morning!”

She got up from her bed and took her clothes. Her eyes were full of tears. She was afraid of her family, her relatives, and even her neighbors. She felt sad. She walked unhurriedly towards the gate in which there were two policemen standing; one to its left and the other to its right. She walked out of the gate. Suddenly, she saw her younger brother, Ali, coming towards her. She felt extremely pleased. She stretched her arms and walked forward. Instead, he took a pistol from the pocket of his trousers and shot her. Shocked, she felt the bullet passing through her shoulder. When the two policemen, who were guarding the gate, heard the gunshot, they quickly took out their guns and shot Ali in the legs. Ali was still pointing his gun at Salwa. Salwa noticed that the policemen would shoot Ali again; she threw herself onto her brother. She shielded him; she bore three bullets. Blood flew from her body and splattered to Ali. He dropped the pistol and caught her. He cried; “*Ya'allah!*... What I have done!... What I have done!”

“I forgive you, Ali. God...knows...how...much...I...love...you.” She continued “Ask...mother...and...sister...to...forgive...me. I...brought...shame...to...family.” she gasped painfully.

Ali’s face was wet of tears. He could not even speak.

“Ask...mother...to...pray...for...me. Tell...her...I...wanted...to...see...her...but --.”

People crowded around. The ambulance came and took them to the hospital. The doctor at the hospital pronounced her dead.

Ali stayed in the hospital for two weeks. He recovered and the police released him when the inspector discovered that he was the murdered woman’s brother.

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