

Runaway Papers

Very Short Stories and Thoughts

*Small
stories.
A larger
silence.*

Kamal Ahmed Dawa

— کمال أحمد ضوا —

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Thoughts
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A Tear with a Glimmer of Hope

With the dawn of a beautiful April
day, we set off with

A group from the vibrant and
wonderful Cultural Association
team, surrounded by

Clouds to the east and west,
anticipating a rainy day to wash away
Our rusted hearts. We entered Homs
al-Adiya, and saw ruined and empty
houses

On both sides of the road and deep
within the neighborhoods, like a knife
piercing

the depths of the entrails. From
Qatifa, we headed west and uphill on
a winding road
Like a black snake slithering across a
barren hill. We arrived at Saydnaya
(the hunting of the gazelle) and the
Monastery of Our Lady, the place
where
the gazelle that Justinian intended to
hunt stood, and was transformed
into a white woman, a treasure like a
silver tower, second only to the
Church of the Holy Sepulchre in
Jerusalem. We headed north to
Maaloula (the entrance) and crossed
the gorge
that Saint Mar Taqal opened

with her white and tender hands,
fleeing from the oppression of her
father and his soldiers. We continued
to Mar Sarkis and Bakhos and drank
the wine of
.love and peace

We arrived in Yabroud (the high, cold
place), opposite to the east, Jroud
(the low, warm place). From there,
we went to Wadi Qrina (Qrinaia), the
spring goddess. We rested at the Ain
Koshel restaurant. We encountered
young women in the bloom of youth
and saw the sarcophagi (ancient
stone tombs), and a lake where
boats once plied its surface and
vacationers chatted on its banks. But
it dried up in the 1990s, just as our

eyes and veins dried up due to the digging of wells and the greed of its inhabitants. Finally, we visited the Church of Saints Helena and Constantine, one of the ten most important churches in the world. We returned with joy filling the depths of our grieving hearts, hoping for .brighter and sweeter days to come

In the Land of Exile

In the land of exile, the flower of the town's
youth gathers on an artificial turf field,
suitable for their bare feet, accustomed to
mud, sand, oak trees, willows, and the
.scent of thyme and linden

To play against the Arab team from the
youth of Suwaida, the town of Sultan Pasha
.al-Atrash

Despite all the harsh conditions and the
struggle to earn a living and bring peace of
mind to themselves and their families, the
Masyaf team triumphed over the Arab team,
and joy filled the place, along with hope for
another victory against the remaining
.teams

A Barren Homeland

After an absence of more than a year, due to unforeseen circumstances and the accumulated dust of lean years, I visited the town overlooking us with its towering castle and its cracked soil, thirsty for water and pasture. I entered the house, embraced everyone, and was overjoyed to see them. After changing into my nightclothes, I asked for my slippers, which were on the shelf that lowered a step with the arrival of each groom. But this time, both the slippers and the shelf were gone, and I felt a pang of regret and sorrow

I woke up early the next morning, as usual, and sat alone on the beach. I remembered the days when she would arrive with a plate

of fruit, a radiant smile, a beautiful presence, and the tenderness of a dear sister. You were always the first to arrive, with my boundless love for the young women, offering a sip of affection. We missed you, dear little sister, so generous and kind, with a heart as pure as snow and
,dew

and like a rain cloud in the heart of summer.
Wishing you a new life filled with joy and
happiness in your new home, Dima Al-
Sakub

:You were to us

A warm embrace overflowing with love and
tenderness

A healing balm that soothes the wounds of
.time

A proud homeland that defies humiliation
.and degradation

A Day in Old Damascus

The fog envelops Damascus in a white cloak, embroidered and adorned with the fragrance of jasmine and frangipani. I wrap myself in its folds, searching for warmth and .longing for bygone days

My journey begins in Sarouja, the first district built outside the walls of Old Damascus, named after Sarim al-Din Sarouja, the Mamluk commander during the reign of Prince Saif al-Din Tankiz. From there, I proceed to the Hamidiyya Souq, passing through (al-Thawra Street, al-Sinjaqdar Street, and the Citadel), which was built during the reign of Sultan Abdul .Hamid I

At its end lie the remains of the Temple of Jupiter and the Umayyad Mosque, which houses the shrine of John the Baptist (or Prophet Yahya) and the shrine of the head of .Hussein, the martyr of Karbala

Behind the mosque, near Bab Jiron, is the Noufara Café, whose waters, flowing from the Yazid River, once rose to a height of five meters. Now, it stands lifeless. From there, I continue to al-Qaymariyya and the Anbar Office, which has now become the Straight Street, stretching from Bab Sharqi to Bab al-Jabiyah. I stopped by the Qanawat neighborhood, a district founded by wealthy Damascenes after their population .increased

And then to Marjeh Square (Martyrs' Square), in the center of which stands a

telegraph pole topped by the Yıldız Palace,
 .made of pure bronze

And at the Rawda Café, next to Salhiyeh, a
 meeting place for intellectuals and the
weary, I rested with a warm cup of tea, fond
 .memories, and deferred dreams

Memories and Dreams

After twenty years in the Citadel prison, he
returned to his beautiful, peaceful village,
which suffered from water scarcity and
.utter darkness

His wife greeted him with overwhelming joy,
a cigarette in her hand. She had become
addicted to smoking during his long and
arduous absence, which had led to her
contracting pneumonia. It was as if that
cigarette was a way to compensate for her
.longing for a passionate kiss from his lips

In the evening, they went to the café to drink
a glass of cold beer, hoping it would quench
.the burning desire for a warm reunion

He had only one ear; the other had been
damaged by a cruel blow, a strange twist of
.fate

And she had only one eye; the other had
been extinguished by the burning tears and
.the long wait

She was one step ahead of him because
she was a regular at the café and everyone
knew her, while he wasn't used to it
because he was busy with reading and
...writing and

So they drank until they were drunk, and left
burdened with painful memories of the past
and hope for a brighter tomorrow that would
.bring back smiles and the sparkle of life

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From the Nights of Autumn

On a dark and still night, one of the
beautiful and tranquil nights of autumn, the
moon was full and radiant, and its
companion, Saturn, the pearl of the sky,
was with the giant Jupiter protecting them
.from afar

And in the distant horizon, Sirius, Orion,
Andromeda, Cassiopeia, and the Pleiades
,with its seven stars

.and the soaring Eagle

As the moon and Saturn conversed and
whispered to each other in their clear night
journey, voices and moans rose from the

depths of the earth and the heart of the
world, the cradle of Christ, passing through
ancient Syria and its seven gates, and the
.lands of Sumer, Babylon, and Assyria

Two tears fell from the sky, extinguishing the
flames of a raging fire, watering parched
land, and quenching the thirst of a grieving
.mother

And they rested on the bed of morning and
fell asleep with the arrival of a new day, a
day of hope and life.l

A Beautiful Dream

His warm, welcoming home opens its doors after nine o'clock at night, and visitors arrive in succession, each according to their own time and longing for a warm gathering that unites them in love. They gather around the table like a wreath of myrtle and basil, in the center of which sits a bowl of tabbouleh and appetizers prepared by his warm, loving, and loyal hands. The glasses clink and gleam, reflecting the purity and sincerity of their hearts. Each of us has our own crystal plate, spoon, and fork, and our conversation is filled with memories, longing, successive disappointments, and .hopes for a country deeply wounded

He played a pivotal role in hosting the first sculpture symposium, where they worked like a beehive, flitting like butterflies among their beautiful sculptures. But alas, the sculptures found no venues or exhibition spaces to display them, and they vanished like dust in the wind, some buried in the earth like our shattered dreams. He had the honor of establishing the first cultural center in Spain, and he was an extraordinary ambassador in spirit, conscience, and humanity

His letters would arrive in the mornings, fragrant with the scent of his beautiful flowers and roses, touching the very core of our weary hearts. Translated into Spanish, they reflected the magic of Granada and the splendor of the Alhambra Palace

His name, Rifaat, perfectly embodies
.loftiness and nobility

To the chirping of birds and the warm
autumn sun that gently caressed my soul, I
.awoke early, and it was a beautiful dream

The Lock and the Key

Stories and tales are told about the lock
that, through time, curled into a teardrop
shape, yearning and pang for the return of
.joy and happiness

And about the key that transformed into a
white horse, eagerly awaited by every
.longing lover and yearning mother

The lock's longing for the key is like the
tree's longing for a drop of dew in the early
.mornings

Behind the door, young girls, as fresh as
roses, wink and whisper, waiting for a

handsome young man to open the door
unexpectedly

And young men play, frolic, and drink until
they are drunk, then open the door and
leave it ajar to the winds coming from the
east

And the mischievous boys of the neighborhood steal glances through the keyhole and watch: Grandmother, her silk shawl draped over her face, etched with the lines of time, threshing wheat; Mother, lighting the fire and pounding the wood in preparation for cooking harissa; a little girl, flitting like a butterfly, stealing a kiss from her mother followed by a laugh; and a charming young woman in a short skirt, lounging on the sofa, sipping coffee and .reading a forbidden love story

And behind the closed door, a grieving
mother, seven lean years having passed,
:awaits the return of her seven children

Jasim and Yasmin

Aram and Domna

Furat and Zenobia

And Shahba, with her green eyes

Who perished because of drought, famine,
!!...and the absence of gravity

The Wise Man... The Tobacco and Unripe Grapes Vendor

I heard someone calling him "Wise Man...
Wise Man, give me a pack of cigarettes." He
handed it to him and returned to his straw
chair, sipping his coffee after taking a drag
on his hand-rolled cigarette. I asked him in
surprise, "Are you a wise man or a vendor?"
After a second drag on his thick cigarette,
:he told me his story

We were a beautiful family, overflowing "
with warmth, affection, love, and a deep
passion for our homeland and life. The voice
of Fairouz sang in the mornings, and Elias
Khader's voice resonated in the evenings.
Roses surrounded us like a jasmine wreath
adorning a bride on her wedding day. While

we were thus occupied, a captain appeared
from the unseen world and took me, the
humble servant, and my older brother on a
journey to the Sea of Darkness... We
battled the raging waves and the swimming
whales, and our journey lasted for more
".than ten years

We returned safely, but with heavy hearts.

My father had passed away without seeing
us, and my mother was ill with longing and
homesickness (I was related to her by blood
and spirit), and we were burdened with
.debts that nearly suffocated us

But fortunately, my older brother found
work because of his degree, and his wife
and daughter, who grew up yearning for us,
.welcomed him back

As for me, Ismail, whose destiny was to be the sacrifice of his father, Abraham, I was studying medicine, hoping to become a doctor—healing others while I myself was ill. But I couldn't complete my studies due to circumstances unknown to me, so I reluctantly took on this arduous and exhausting work, with a heavy heart and deep sorrow for a life that had passed, working day and night just to sustain myself .and find some solace

But the people of my beautiful town, which had defied the Romans, bestowed upon me the title of “wise man” despite my lack of a degree to display on the wall. Everyone calls out to me at the top of their lungs: Hakim... Hakim, give me a pack of .cigarettes

Black and White

His simple, warm house overlooks a barren
hill, resembling a doe asleep in a slumber,
.alert to the approach of any harmful animal

His name is Maher, meaning pure, but he is
skilled at seizing misery and hardship. The
dewy tan of his face reflects the color of
local wheat, and the blackness of his eyes
reflects the whiteness of his heart. His back
is burdened and bent by overwhelming
circumstances, despite his towering
.stature

His daughter, Rita, with her graceful figure,
carries a rifle whose bullets are roses and
.myrtle

Fate decreed that he would depart this
world with a sudden, sharp hemorrhage, in
.days of utter darkness and blackness

And that was in the wet autumn of
September, when a yellow leaf, like braided
.gold, fell

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The cold has come to our home

The cold has come to our home and the
warmth has gone

And the boy has disappeared from his
mother's embrace

And the young man, in the prime of his
youth, has gone to ruin

And the girl received nothing from love but
cruelty

And the mother's hand is on her heart and
the other is for her mother

And the father is holding back a tear for the
days of his youth

And the old woman's hands are
outstretched... towards the sky

And the old man's hand is on his cheek and
his eye is on the desert

Where were we and where have we ended
up, O friends of loyalty

Ishtar of Fertility

Ishtar of Fertility and Generosity

Al-Khansa and her four martyred sisters

Beautiful Helen

Faithful Penelope

Martyr Hypatia

My beloved mother

My compassionate sister

My loving wife

My awaited daughter

Radiant hopes

A Damascene rose

To all the women of earth and heaven

May Paradise and the highest abode be hers

Masyafi Reflections

Masyafi Reflections

.With humiliation... I reject it

.With passion... I accept it

.With prayer... I affirm my monotheism

.With supplication... I am a being

.With conscience... I am humane

.With war... I am a leader

.With peace... I am a weapon

.With thought... I am secular

.With action... I am liberal

.With tongue... I am an Arab

One eye

One eye is not enough

to see lightning

And one ear is not enough

to hear knocks

And one hand is not enough

to clap

And one leg is not enough

for the road

And one lung is not enough

to inhale

And one scream is not enough

for labor

And only one mouth is enough

to speak

For the Arabs, one point

And for the West, two points