



# **Gulf University for Science and Technology**

School of Art

## **Translation Project**

*(حمام الدار – أحجية ابن أزرق)*

"Hamman Al Dar – The Riddle of Ibn Azrag"

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# 1. Introduction

## A. Source Text Analysis

The novel I choose for this translation project is called Hammam Al Dar: The Riddle of Ibn Azrag حمام الدار أحجية ابن أزرق by Saud Alsanousi, who is a Kuwaiti novelist and journalist. I chose to translate 30 and a half pages of the first section of this novel, which was published in 2017. The novel is made of two parts that total 182 pages with few pictures that represents the subsections of the novel. The first section of the novel depicts a novelist with more than 30 years literary experience who struggles in completing a script of a novel he created. So, he illustrates to the reader the events of the incomplete script in five different mornings about an old guy called Erzal Ibn Azrag who lives in an apartment. The first section of Alsanousi's novel, which refers to the morning of Erzal is full of unsolved riddles and mysteries represented by script's referral to old Erzal's past via his diary. The second part of the novel is about how the script was completed by replaying the five mornings with a little tweak to the events played out by a different guy called Minwal. The pasts of Minwal are used as the key to resolving the riddles and mysteries presented by the first half of the story. Alsanousi's novel presented somewhat of a challenge to the readers for they need to read it more than once in order to make complete sense of what is going on. Some critics even called this style of writing a novel as unique (Elshair & Husam 2021).

## B. Aim

What led me to choose this kind of translation genre being literature is because I adore literary works like stories, novels, TV shows and any work that falls under literature. Furthermore, I would like for those who love riddles, mysteries and like reading to get a taste of all three of them in a novel.

# 2. Framework of Translation

Due to the nature of the novel, I have chosen to use the translation theory called Domestication and Foreignization coined by the American translator Lawrence Venuti in 1995. This theory has two parts Domestication and Foreignization. Domestication is to replace the cultural elements and

values of the Source Text (ST) by the cultural elements and values of the Target Text (TT) during translation (Yang 2010, P.78). This means the translation will be smooth and clear because it is devoid of the foreignness of the ST in TT (Yang 2010, P.78). Foreignization is to keep the cultural elements and values of the source text in the target text when translating it (Yang 2010, P.78). It is a form of resistance against the cultural aspects of the target text (Yang 2010, P.78).

### 3. Analysis of Data (Target Text)

My translation was mostly based on the Domestication approach, while Foreignization was used to translate few things. The name of the characters presented in the novel were kept as is using the foreignization approach to the translation:

(عرزال) → Erzal ‘the protagonist’, (منيرة) → Muneera ‘the wife of Erzal in the mornings of the script and wife of the narrator of the novel’, (أزرق) → Azrag ‘the father of Erzal’, (بصيرة) → Baseera ‘Azrag’s grandmother and Erzal’s great grandmother’, (غادي) → Gady ‘one of the seven pigeons Azrag owns’ and the first to arrive from the long travel, (سفار) → Safaar ‘one of the seven pigeons Azrag owns and one of the pigeons’ group to return from the long travel’, (عواد) → Awaad ‘a pigeon owned by Azrag and one of those who returned from the long travel’, (رابحة) → Rabeha ‘one of the seven pigeon owned by Azrag and one of those pigeons’ group that returned from the long travel’, (رحال) → Rahal ‘one of the youngest pigeons owned by Azrag who got lost on his way from the long travel’, (زينة) → Zaina ‘a young pigeon like Rahal owned by Azrag and who got lost on her way from the long travel’ and (فيروز) → Fayrooz ‘A pigeon, who is the mother of aforementioned six pigeons, owned by Azrag and also the pigeon sitting on the window sill of old Erzal’s apartment’. The reason I chose to keep the name as they are in the TT because the Arabic name Azrag is symbolic and it is used in several instances to emphasize the hate the protagonist has to his father ‘Azrag’ through linking it to anything that has to do with the color ‘blue’ which is the translation of the word Azrag. Baseera is also another name kept as is in the TT because it means ‘a female person who can see or someone who knows hidden things’ but in the Novel she is blind even though she knows few things unknown to the protagonist. So, if I were to domesticate the names of the characters then the symbolism and meaning of certain contexts will be lost to the readers of the TT. The translation will be regarded as inconsistent if I kept Azrag’s and Baseera’s names foreignized and domesticated the rest of the names.

Other elements of the translation that adopted the foreignization approach were the following:

(حمام) → Hammam, (الدار) → Al Dar and (ابن) → Ibn. The actual translations of those words are ‘Pigeons’, ‘House’ and ‘son of’ respectively and it was provided in a footnote in the TT. The reason for such an approach to the translation is because I wanted the translation of the title to be short and consistent because it contains two transliterated character names.

The rest of the translation of this novel is based on the domestication approach to translate accurate meanings of words, short phrases and long Arabic sentences. Some sentences were tweaked by recreating them a bit so that the meaning is clarified for the TT audience. The following are examples of words that have multiple meanings in Arabic but only the one that accurately transfer the meaning of the ST into the TT using domestication was chosen:

The ST Arabic word العهد from the phrase العهد القديم was translated into ‘The Old Era’. This phrase is considered the title of the first part of the novel (Alsanousi, 2017). The word العهد in Arabic has more than one meaning in English; it can be ‘Testament’ or it can mean ‘Era’. The issue with using the former meaning instead of the latter is that the TT audience may believe that the phrase ‘The Old Testament’ refer to the bible. Therefore, to avoid this complication, which is a result of literal translation, I opted for the second option being the word ‘Era’. Another example of an Arabic word that has multiple meanings in English is ‘ساعة تأمل’ from the phrase ‘ساعة تأمل’ (Alsanousi, 2017). The tricky part about this word is that it can mean ‘time’ or ‘one hour’. I chose to the word ‘time’ because this is the actual meaning that the ST refers to not ‘1 hour’, where the protagonist would spend a long time pondering about his script. Thus, the accurate translation would be ‘A pondering time’ not ‘A 1 hour of pondering’.

There were certain phrases that where domesticated because the English meaning of them is wrong and inappropriate:

The Arabic phrase النص اللقيط produces two different meanings one of them is inappropriate & inaccurate and the other one is the correct one (Alsanousi, 2017). The word لقيط in Arabic refers to an abandoned child; one who is the result of a forbidden relationship and the other word نص can mean ‘text’ or ‘script’. When the two words are combined then you end up with inaccurate translation ‘Bastard Text or Bastard Script’ both are incorrect. By looking at the context of the

novel then the accurate term for the word لقيط is ‘abandoned’ and the accurate term for the word نص is ‘script’ because ‘script’ is a word that describes a writing for novels but ‘text’ means any kind of writing. Thus, based on domestication theory I chose the translation that produced clarity and appropriateness for the TT readers which is ‘The Abandoned Text’.

Another similar phrase to the previous one is فتاة مغناج, which means in Arabic a female who excites a man using her voice or body movement (Alsanousi, 2017). The English translation of such a phrase would cause misunderstanding. As a result, I domesticated the Arabic phrase into ‘a loving young girl’ to avoid the promiscuous meaning of the word and provide intelligibility to the TT readers. So far what is discussed is the translation of words and phrases. However, the translation done to ST sentences involved breaking a long sentence down, tweaking the meaning of the ST sentence by somewhat recreating the sentence in TT or simplifying the sentence to the reader. The following sentence is an example of simplified translation (regular domestication):

The Arabic sentence “لم أكن لأنتبه إلى غياب انتابني أثناء الكتابة لولا ارتفاع الأذان من المسجد القريب من بيتي” was translated into the target text by rearranging the syntax of the ST to fit the TT and avoid literal translation (Alsanousi, 2017). Furthermore, I domesticated the phrase ‘ارتفاع الأذان من المسجد’ into ‘sound of the mosque’ because the TT audience are not familiar with the Islamic culture of the ST. Consequently, I ended up with the following translation “If it was not for the sound of the mosque next to my house, I would not have known about how much time has passed”. This section of the commentary will present an of example of a long Arabic sentence broken down into two and another one that was carefully tweaked meaning-wise:

Based on domestication theory the long Arabic sentence “أنا لا أزعم ما يزعمه بعض الكُتَّاب حول ما يشبهه “ الماورائيات التي يحدثون عنها، كأن يردون أصل كتاباتهم إلى وحي أو إلهام، متوسلين مزاعمهم أن تمنح نصوصهم الفارغة حالة ”زائفة تبهر قارئاً محتملاً، لكنني كنت أكتب وحسب” was split into two in the TT (Alsanousi, 2017). The reason for splitting the sentence because of what is called a run-on, where two complete sentences is fused together. English does not favor run-on sentences. Another thing about this long sentence is that this part ‘متوسلين مزاعمهم أن تمنح نصوصهم الفارغة حالة زائفة تبهر قارئاً محتملاً’ was simplified into ‘begging their oracle to bless their writings to impress a potential reader’, because English is not an expressive language like Arabic and to simplify the meaning to the TT audience. As a result, I produced the following translation “I was just writing unlike those pretenders who claim that their

writings originate from some form of revelations, begging their oracle to bless their writings to impress a potential reader”.

The ST sentence “كل من عاش في الدار يصير من أهلها، حمام الدار لا يغيب أفعى الدار لاتخون” was carefully translated using the domestication theory (Alsanousi, 2017). The meaning of the word ‘الدار’ was translated in to ‘house’ not the other meaning to it which ‘room’ for accuracy, while ‘حمام’ and ‘أفعى’ were translated into one word ‘members’. The reason for this careful domestication is because this sentence, which is considered a saying, is repeated a lot across different contexts in the novel and to clarify it to the TT readers. Therefore, the complete translation of it is ‘Whoever lived in this house becomes a part of its family, the members will always come back to it even if they leave it and they will never betray each other’.

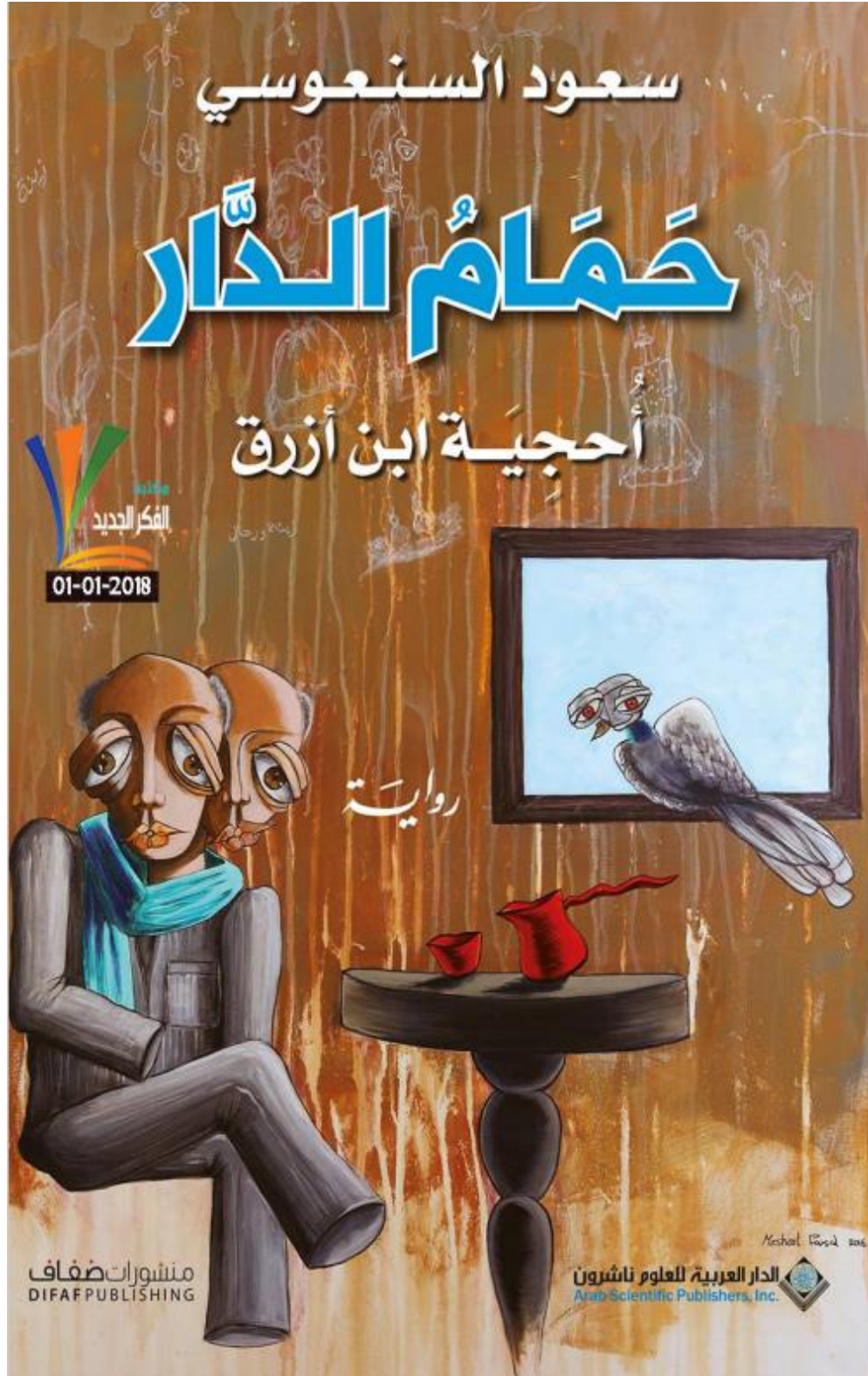
#### **4. Conclusion**

This text presented somewhat of a challenge because it is literary text (specifically a novel) and it contains some cultural references that required careful translation. Another thing with this translation is that a specific sentence required precise translation. The reason for this is because it is used in multiple contexts, which required the words that make them up fit these different contexts without the need to change them.

## Glossary

No.	Term	Translation
1	زفرة حرى	Sorrowful sigh
2	تلثم	Kiss
3	صقيلة	Glossy
4	دببت استخدامها	Always use
5	أفيتني	Just happened
6	الشخوص	Characters
7	دكة النافذة	Window sill
8	مغناج	A loving young girl
9	عنوة	Arrogance
10	مذعنه	Compliance

Source Text



# العهد القديم

صباحات عزّال بن أزرَق

## كَلِمَة

.. تعدّى الخمسين من عُمره، عاشَ منها عشرين عاماً

خاليّة من أيّ أحداث، حتى فاجأته ذات يوم حمّامة!

باتريك زوسكيند

قَبْلَ سَاعَةٍ تَأْمُلْ

## «إلى هنا يكفي هذا الهراء!»

يكفي هذا العبث والإصرار على كتابة ما لن يكتب. لا شيء  
يُجبرني على مواصلة الكتابة. لا شيء. على الكاتب أن يتواضع أمام  
عجزه أحياناً، وأن يكف عن المحاولة.

أنا في غرفة المكتب منذ الصّباح، أشكو لزوجتي التي أشتاق  
ضيقَ صدري وحيرتي في أمري. أسندُ جيني إلى كفي اليسرى والوخزُ  
في كفي اليمنى لا يزال. عيناى على أوراقٍ بين مرفقي، فوق سطح  
مكتبي، تحمّلُ مخطوطَ نصّ احترتُ في أمره. تمسّخُ زوجتي على  
كتفي. تهبطُ كفها، مروراً بذراعي، وصولاً إلى كفي اليمنى تمسّخُ  
على الضمادة الطبية برفق.

«ما زلتَ تشعرُ بالآلم الحرق؟»

أطلقُ زفرةً حزّى والحرق في قلبي. ألصقُ رأسَ سبّابتي برأسِ  
إبهامي بحذر. أقرّبُهما إلى وجهي أنظرُ فيهما. أجيئها مُهوّناً:  
«ما دمتُ قادرًا على الإمساكِ بفرشاةٍ أو قلم..»

أهزُّ رأسي مُردفًا:

«..أنا بخير.»

تُلوّحُ لي بعلبةٍ مرهم الحروق. أنفضُّ رأسي:

«لا حاجة لي به منيرة!»

تبتسم. تترك الغلبة على طرف المكتب. تُسندُ كَفَّها على صلعتي.  
تمسحُ برفق. تذكُرني بثلاثِ عشرةِ رواية، وأكثر من ثمانين قِصَّة،  
وأربع مسرحياتٍ وفيلمين سينمائيين وعشرات اللوحات التشكيلية،  
أعمال أصابت من النجاحِ قدرًا وافزًا طيلة مشواري الأدبي والفني  
الذي جاوزَ الثلاثين عامًا. عيناَيَ على النَّصِّ لا تزالان. تهبطُ زوجتي  
بكفَّيها إلى كتفَيَّ تعصُرُهما في حين تضغطُ بإبهاميهما عضلات رقبتي:  
«يبدو أنك نسيت شيئًا ما!».

أردتُ رأسي جانبًا أنظرُ إليها مُستفهِمًا. ابتسمت. انحنيت تليثمُ  
وجنتي. نفخَ طيِّبها الذي أُحِبُّ وأفتقد:  
«إنه يومٌ استثنائي.. حضّر نفسك لاحتفل هذا المساء».  
أطلقتُ تنهيدةً ولم أحرِ جوابًا. قرصت موضعَ قُبَلتها في وجنتي  
قبل أن تنصرف:

«حبيبي! هي ليست المرّة الأولى! دُرجك السُّفلي يُغصُّ  
بمخطوطاتٍ مؤجلة وفي المرسم عشرات اللوحات قيد الإنجاز!».  
هي لا تفهم. هذا النَّصُّ شأنٌ آخر. ليس لما تركته فيه، بل لما  
تركةُ فيّ. أردتُ أن أشرحَ لها، لكنني مثلها لا أفهم. انصرفتُ عن كُلِّ  
شيءٍ مساءً أمس، وفي الفجر وضعتُ ورقةً بيضاء صقيلةً كغلافٍ فوق  
الصفحة الأولى من المخطوط النَّاقص، ورقة من أوراقٍ فاخرة مطبوعٌ  
في زاويتها السُّفلى يسارًا كلمة «مشروع رواية»، ذُيِّتُ استخدامها  
كتعويذة وفألٍ حَسَنٍ مع بداية كلِّ عملٍ أشرعُ في كتابته. أمسكتُ  
بالقلمُ أخطُ عنوانًا مؤقتًا في الأسفل: نصُّ لقيط!  
لا أدري ما الذي صرفني عن كُلِّ مشاريعي الكتابية المؤجلة.

وجدتني مُنصرفاً إلى شخصيةٍ جاءت من لا أدري، أجبرتني على كتابة شيءٍ منها على سبيلِ العودةِ إليها لاحقاً. شخصيةٌ لا أفهمها أخذتني صوبها وأبعدتني عن كُلِّ شيءٍ. فتحتُ ورقةً بيضاءً جديدةً لأدوّن أفكارِي حول هذا الذي تسَلَّلَ إلى رأسي فجأةً. وجدتني ألهُتُ في الكتابة؛ شخصٌ مضطربٌ اسمه عززال بن أزرق! حتى الاسم غير مألوفٍ لا أدري من أين جاء. أنا لا أملك تصوّراً حول ما كتبت. لا الزمن معروفٌ بالنسبة لي ولا المكان ولا الشُخوص التي تُحيط بالبطل. بطل؟! الكلمةُ ذاتها تمنحُ صاحبها قيمةً أشكُّ في وجودها! ألفيتني أكتب وحسب. أكتبُ عمّا لا أعرف. أكتبُ بكفِّ مُلتهمية. أنا لا أزعمُ ما يزعمه بعضُ الكُتّاب حول ما يشبه الماورائيات التي يتحدثون عنها، كأن يردّون أصلَ كتاباتهم إلى وحيٍ أو إلهامٍ، متوسلين مزاعمهم أن تمنحُ نصوصهم الفارغة هالةً زائفةً تُبهرُ قارئاً مُحتملاً، لكنني كنتُ أكتبُ وحسب. أكتبُ وفقاً لدافعٍ أجهله. أكتبُ لأدرك مشهد انتحار تلك الشخصية، وحينما اقتربتُ منه لم أقوَ على قتلها! شرعتُ في الكتابة قبل غروب يومٍ أمس. خرجتُ بنصٍّ غير مكتملٍ كُتِبَ دقيقةً واحدة. نسيتُ تماماً التهَابَ كُفِّي. لم أكن لأنبه إلى غيابِ انتابني أثناء الكتابة لولا ارتفاع الأذان من المسجدِ القريبِ من بيتي. التفّتُ إلى النافذةِ وإذ بالظلام يلوّنُ ما وراءها. كم ليثُ أكتب؟! ختم المؤذنُ نداءه فيما يُشبه رداً على سُؤالي. الصلاةُ خيرٌ من النّوم. تنبّهتُ. صلاة الفجر! نظرتُ إلى ساعةِ الحائط غير مُصدّق. كنتُ غائِباً تمام الغيابِ لاثنتي عشرة ساعة! رحّتُ أتلفتُ في غرفةِ المكتبِ كأنني لم أكن فيها طيلة ساعاتِ الكتابة. أسمعُ وجيبَ قلبي في أُذُنِي. من أين جاء سِرّه السّرِدِ هذا؟ أنا أضيعُ وقتاً من المفترض

جديدة، أن أفرغ نفسي لساعة تأمل، أمضيها متربعا على مقعدي وراء المكتب، صامتا مغمض العينين أتفكر بتفاصيل النص غير المكتوبة، حتى إنني أوغل في تأملي سفرا إلى موطن كتبه، أو استحضارا للشخوص في مكنتي. أطلب منها الجلوس على المقاعد أمامي، أو نتحلق جميعنا في جلسة أرضية. أنفحص ملامحها متوترة في حضرتي. أمنحها سمات وملامح لم تكن موجودة في مخيلتي قبلا، أزيل شامة من وجنة عجوز متصايبية، أرسمها أسفل شفة فتاة مغناج تُثيرني كتابتها، أمنح غلظة لصوت شيخ تهبه توارنا يشبه شخصيته، أقبل لسان ثرارة أبتليها بتأناة تحد من ثررتها، وأخصي مفتول عضلات أكسر عتوه وغروره بجسده! أفرغ من تشكيل الشخصيات فيما هي تمثل أمامي مذعنة. أحادثها. أستميلها للحديث عن نفسها. أستجوبها في أي شيء داخل النص أو حتى خارجه. أتعرفها أكثر. أدفعها لفتح حوارات فيما بينها. أستنطق إحداها بما يُزعج الأخرى، لعلني بالاستفزاز أنال بُغيتي، وأكون في موضع المتفرج، عسى أن تُبهنني انفعالاتها وحواراتها إلى مساحة أغفلتها أثناء الكتابة المتعشرة، أبنّي فيها جسرا أمده إلى صفحة جديدة.

هذا ما أعتزمه مع تلك الشخصية الوليدة توًا. أعني قبل اثنتي عشرة ساعة. لعلني أعود إلى المخطوط المتعثر بعد ساعة وأنا أعرف شيئا عن عِرزال بن أزرق.. أي شيء يُعينني على إنهاء قصته بقتله انتحارا من نافذة غرفته الباردة، ليتتهي النص الذي كُتب بكف محروقة، أو لتكتمل بقية الشخصيات النص من دونه.

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**مشروع رواية**  
**«نص لقيط»**

17



صباحٌ أوّل

19

«.. ثم أطبق أسنانه على طرف ثوبه وراح يركض كالمجنون!».

انتفض عِرزال في سريره كأنما مسَّهُ برق. أبقى جفنيه مُطبّقين. يستعطف كابوسه الأزرق الدائم، يستمهله قبل أن ينتهي به رايضًا مثل مجنون، يحاول إبقاءه لعلّه يمنحه رؤية من يُحب. يستشعر نبض قلبه في صدغيه. يهدأ. يتلاشى طعم الملح في فيه. يُمعن التفكير. يتلع ريقه بصعوبة وهو يمسح قطرات عرق نضحتها صلعتة. على هذا النحو يستفيق عِرزال بن أزرق كلّ يوم منذ أمس.

يفتح عينيه يتحاشى النظر إلى السقف. يلتفت صوب النافذة. الحمامة قريبة من هنا، أو أنها سوف تكون، بعد غياب صباحي لا يطول. تعود حتمًا إلى الدكة البارزة أسفل نافذة غرفته، في شقته الخرساء المطلّة على البحر، والتي يسكنها منذ حوالي ثلاثين سنة وقت زواجه وفقًا لمذكراته. دكة النافذة تُشبه شرفة صغيرة مفتوحة على العالم. الحمامة دائمًا في الجوار فيما يُشبه وجودًا أزلّيًا، منذ يوم لم يعد يتذكّره. لعلّه يتذكّر وقتنا ألفت فيه وجودها، في البدايات، حينما كانت تحط على الدكة، ضخمة بلهاء. تهبط في ثقل بين زراير تتحرك في خفة وفواخت رشيقة لا تنفك تدير رؤوسها إزاء أي نامة تصدر عن الشارع. وحدها تبدو في عالم آخر. عيناها الدائرتان الحمراءوان بلون الياقوت، والنقطتان السوداءوان في مُتصفهما لا تُفصحان إلام



وجّههُ صوب الجنوبِ ساهِمًا، يحسبُ الوقتَ يتناهُهُ قَلَقٌ. يتحرّى عودة حماماته السّت التي أطلقها عند الحدود الجنوبية فجرًا. كانت الرّيحُ شديدة في الصّحراء صباح يومنا ذاك. وأنا، صغيرًا، أثقُ بعودة زواجِل والدي. لا تعني لي الرّيحُ والمسافات شيئًا، ولا أحسبُ وقتًا لعودتها، لأنها حتمًا وإن تأخرت تعود. كلُّ من عاش في الدّار يصيرُ من أهلها؛ حمام الدّار لا يغيب وأفعى الدّار لا تخون، هذا ما قالته لي بصيرة قبل سنتين من يومنا ذاك، جدّة والدي، أو ربّما جدّة جدّته، لا أدري فهي قديمة جدًا، أزليّة، ساكنة في زاوية بهو البيت العربي القديم. ملتجفة سوادها، أسفل السّلم. لماذا أسفل السّلم؟ لم أسأل نفسي يومًا عن مواضع أشياء اعتدتها منذ مولدي، في بيتٍ عربيّ تطلُّ حُجراته الضيقة على بهوٍ داخلي غير مسقوف، بهو بصيرة التي لم أرها تفتحُ عينها يومًا، كأنما خيطٌ جفناها برموشها منذ الأزل. كانت هناك أبدًا، مثل حمامة الدّكّة. بصيرة لا تترك مرتبتها الإسفنجية حتى لو اضطرت لقضاء حاجتها، تقضيها حيث تجلس من دون اكتراثٍ كأنها تعطش، تتأب أو تبصق. شأنها شأن أثاث البيت وأدواته، لم يتغير مكانها قط؛ الفراش في غرفة النوم، الموقد في المطبخ، أخياش الرّز والعدس والشكّر في غرفة الكيل، وسائد الجلوس الأرضية العريضة في البهو، وبصيرة، بشابها السوداء، تلتصقُ بفراشها الأرضي أسفل السّلم كما لو أن ظهرها مدهونٌ بالفراء. لا أتذكّرُها في غير موضعها الأثير، تُغطّي نصفَ جسدها الشفلي بلحافٍ صوفيّ بُنيّ خشنٍ صيف شتاء. تُسندُ ظهرها إلى وسادة سماوية الرّزقة مهترئة تتوسطها بقعة صفراء. كنتُ صغيرًا جدًا لم أفكّر من تكون، لكن بعدما طرد والدي

كُلَّ العبيد الذين كان يشترِبهم من البيت، وبقيت هي، فهمتُ أن بصيرة من أهل الدار.

بصيرة جامدة على الدوام، نسي وجودها أحياناً، يحسبها الرائي مينةً لولا صوتُ تُصدِرُهُ بين دقيقة وأخرى، كأنما تُنبه إلى وجودها، حينما تجمعُ مخاطَ صدرها في حنجرتها تحضيراً لبصقةٍ تصوّبُها في قصعةٍ خزَفِيَّةٍ تربضُ على بساطٍ حصيرٍ إلى جوارها أبداً. لم تُخطئ هدفها قط. أُلْفَتْ إليها متحفّزاً في كلِّ مرّةٍ تُصدِرُ فيها حشرجةً حُنْجرتها قبلما تنحُمُ بلغمَ صدرها. أرفعُ غُرَّتِي الطويلة عن عيني. أنقلُ بصري مُبْهِلِقاً بين شفّتيها والقصعة. خخخ... أضيّقُ عيني أُمعِنُ النظر. تُحَرِّكُ فكّيها مُبرِطِمةً مثل نعجةٍ تلوّكُ برسيمًا. تفتأُ تُلصِقُ بصقتها في منتصفِ القصعة. أُلْوِحُ بقبضتي كأنما أحرزتُ فوزاً على صحي بلعبة الكريات الزجاجية في سَكِّتِنَا الثَّرَابِيَّةِ القديمة. أبتسمُ غائبا في ملايح العجوز: ماذا لو كُنْتُ مُبْصِرةً!؟

يطوّقُني شكّي كونها كفيفة. أجمعُ أقلامَ التلوين الخشبية أرسُمُ وجوهاً ضاحكةً، أُقَرِّبُ الورقةَ أمامَ وجهها، تبسمُ رغم إغماضِها. أُقَرِّبُ ورقةً جديدةً تحملُ وجوهاً مُكْفَهَرَةً، تعبسُ بوجهها. أخبر والدي برد فعل العجوز. يُفْلِتُ ضحكةً من أنفه. سوف تقتلك أوهامك يوماً! عِرْزَالِ

تململَ عِرْزَالِ الكهل في جلسيته يتحرى أوبةً تلك التي شغلته بحضورها وغيابها. يتأففُ يمرُّ عَيْنِيهِ يُمَشِّطُ تفاصيلَ غرفته، كأنما يراها مرّةً أولى. يطأطئُ ينظرُ إلى خشبِ الأَرْضِيَّةِ الدَّاكِنِ وقطعةٍ



السجاد الحمراء المهترئة الوحيدة. يدير رأسه يسارًا نحو سريره النحاسي ولحافه الصوفي البني القديم. يُدير جذعه ينظر إلى وراء ظهره، يرى إفريزًا خشبيًا في الجدار، يحيط كوة كان لها باب ذات يوم. يتملى في الجدار الأبيض المصفّر عن يمينه؛ صورتان لتوأمة توجعانه. يُغمض عينه على وجعه، يفتحهما حمراوان لامعتان على شقوق السقف متنهدًا. لو أنك تنطق! يهز رأسه محدقًا في دفتر مذكراته على الطاولة الصغيرة قرب السرير.

«صوت ما ليس له صوت»

كنت في السادسة يوم لمحت أفعى صغيرة، ثرايبه اللون مرقطة، تطل برأسها من شق الجدار في حوش الغنم في بيتنا القديم، تُخرج لي لسانها المشطور كأنما تُزغرد من دون صوت. أثرت دُعر الدجاجات بضراخي. ركضت إلى بصيرة أندش تحت لحافها مُتعدًا. طمأننتي العجوزُ بجملية سمعتها للمرة الأولى؛ حمام الدار لا يغيب وأفعى الدار لا تخون. انتفضت فرغًا يوم سمعت الصوت مبوحًا، كما لو أنه صدى لصوت لم أسمعه. حبتت مُسرعًا أبتعد عن فراشها وفزعني بجاوز ما داهمني أمام أفعى الجدار. نظرت إليها من وراء كتفي مُبحلقًا. يمه بصيرة! أدارت وجهها صوب القصعة الخزفية. خخخ-نف! لم يُصدقني والدي حينما أخبرته. يا ولد! بصيرة عمياء صماء خرساء. أمسكت بكم ثوبه أتوسله أن ينتظر حتى يُنصت إليها بنفسه. رحب أرجوها. يمه بصيرة يمه بصيرة! لم تُمهلني. صوتها في منتصف وجهي. خخخ-نف! قهقهه والدي. احذر غدر الأفاعي يا جبان! واصل

ضحكُهُ يرتقي السَّلْمَ إلى السَّطْحِ يتحرَّى أوبة حماماته التي اعتاد أن يُطلقها بعيداً.

بقي هاجسي من ظهور الأفعى مرّة أخرى يُفزِعني، رغم إيمان المعجّز بيركتها، والتسليم بأن لِكُلِّ بيتٍ أفعاهُ الوقتة، ورغم حكاياتٍ سمعتها عن أفعى دارٍ هاجمت لَصّاً تسلَّلَ إلى الدَّارِ خلسةً، وأخرى تهزُّ سريرَ رضيعٍ تُهدِّدهُ أثناء نومِ أمه.

أبي يُسمي هذه الأشياء خُرَافَات، أما أنا فأصدِّقُها حيناً وأنكرُها أحياناً.

### عِرْزَال

ها هي فيروز وقد حطَّت على دَكَّة نافذةِ غُرْفَةِ نومِ الكهل، تحملُ عوداً في منقارها. اللطخةُ الفيروزية في عنقها تبدو أكثر توهجاً مع ارتفاع الشَّمْس. هو يظنُّ أنه بسببِ لطختها تلك أسماها فيروز. بدالهُ الأمرُ غيبياً أن يُسمي كائناً لا يستطيع الاقتراب منه أو مناداته. منحتهُ التسمية شعوراً بالألفةِ يفتقده منذُ أمس. ألقت فيروز عودها على دَكَّة النافذة. أخذت تلتقط البذورَ قبل أن تدنو من عُشِّها غير مُكتَوِّل البناء، حملت عودها الجديد تدسُّه بين الأعوادِ والأسلاكِ والرِّيش والخيوط. استشعر عِرْزَال برداً ينسلُّ إلى عظامه. ترك مقعده. جرَّ خطواته ببطءٍ نحو المشجب في الزاوية. مدَّ يديه إلى شالٍ فيروزيٍّ وعيناه على الحمامةِ مخافة أن تطير. ألقي الشَّالَ فوق كتفيه بحذر. ثبَّت دُبُوساً في الشَّالِ أسفلَ عنقه بعد أن لفَّه بإحكام. جلسَ على مقعده ثانية، يحاول ألا يُبعدَ عينيه عن الحمامة. يُتابع مشيتها.

عُنُقها بين تطاولٍ وانكماش. زُرقة السَّماء تأخذه بعيدًا عن فيروز إلى  
أمس. تبتًا لك يا أزرق ماذا تُريد! يعقِدُ حاجبيه مُعاوِدًا إمعان نظره في  
الطائر الرّمادي.

### «انتظار أوبّة الثُّلث»

من سطح البيت، لمخ والدي نقطة سوداء في الأفق. خفق قلبي  
إزاء تحفّزه، يقف على أطراف أصابعه مشربب العُنُق. تركتُ السحّارة  
الخشبية التي أجلس عليها. أسدلتُ الثُّوب على ساقِي بعدما فككتُ  
رباط طرفه عن خاصرتي. سرتُ على مهل حافيتا أتزك آثار خطوي  
على أرض السطح المغبرة. يمنحني تهشم الذُّرق الجاف تحت قدمي  
شعورًا أحنّه. اقتربتُ من والدي أمسك جزءًا من ثوبه بيد، وبيدي  
الأخرى أرفع عن عيني غُرّتي. نظر إليّ باسِمًا، ثمّ عاودَ النظر إلى  
النقطة السوداء بهزُّ رأسه: غادي. لفظ الاسم بصوته الغليظ. صوته  
جليّ دائمًا بعكس صوت بصيرة الهامس المسحوح. أومأتُ برأسي  
أوافق قوله. غادي؛ الأول والأسرع دائمًا. رحتُ أعدُّ على أصابعي  
الصغيرة. بقي سفّار.. عوآد.. رابحة.. وزينة ورخّال. خطّ غادي  
على سطح القفص الكبير يتفقد دازه، قفص الحمامة الأم. اقتربتُ  
منه بحبور، أكور شفّتي أحاكي هديله. غروووغ غروووغ. أمسك  
والدي بوعاء الشعير يُمعن نظره جنوبًا. ظهرت بعيدًا ثلاث نقاط  
سوداء. بدا والدي قَلِقًا وهو ينثر الشعير لـ غادي في حين ينظر إلى  
الأفق وقت المغيب. متمم وهو يقف على أطراف أصابعه مشربب  
العُنُق. سفّار وعوآد ورابحة. أنا لا أعرف كيف لوالدي أن يتعرّف

حماماته وهي كالثنومات في كتف السماء وقت الغروب. أنا أتعرفها وقت تصوير قريبة بسبب ألوان حجلها التي تطوق قوائمها. هرر رأسه بأسف. لن يعودا. كنتُ أعرف أنه يقصد زينة ورخال، الأخوان غير الشقيقين للحمامات العائدة. هي المرة الأولى التي يُفلتتُها فيها بعيداً عند الحدود. صغيران، ربما أنهكهما التعب والعطش وجنون الريح. نزلتُ إلى البهو. مررتُ بصيرة في طريقي إلى حوش العنم. كزرتُ قول والدي. لن يعودا. همستُ بصيرة. حمام الدار لا يغيب. فاتني أن أراها وقت نطقت. استدرتُ بسرعة أنظر إليها بتوق. ماذا قلت؟ أجابني بصقّة في قضعتيها. نف!

### عرزال

ترك عرزال مقعده إلى المطبخ يتسلل مثل لص. سكب الماء الساخن فوق مسحوق القهوة. أحاط الكوب بكفيه يستمد دفتاً. أفل إلى مقعده في غرفة النوم. لم يجد الحمامة على الدكة. طارت لتجمع مزيداً من العيدان قبل أويتها، حمام الدار لا يغيب. ارتشف قليلاً من قهوته قبل أن يضع كوبه على طاولة صغيرة إلى جواره. حدق في النافذة وتلال الذرق على دكتيها. كان يُزعجه فزع الطيور في نافذته وهربها كلما انتبهت إلى دخوله الغرفة. وكان يغضب كلما دفعها الخوف إلى الفرار بعيداً. حتى يُطء حركته وحذره لم يجديا. صار يدخل غرفة نومه بظهره. جرت يوم أمس أن يلج الغرفة مُتقهقراً، متظاهراً بعدم انتباهه إلى طيور الدكة وراءه. ينظر إلى الزرايزير والفواخت والحمامة في المرأة أمامه. الغريب أنها لم تهزّب! تجفل

عند دخوله وحسب. تنكمش أعناقها. تترقب. توشك أن تطير لكنها لا تفعل. تكتفي بالنظر إلى ظهره متأهية. يجلس إلى مقعده مقابل المرأة، يراقب حركة الطيور وراء ظهره. تنظر إليه بحذر قبل أن تطمئن إلى سهوه عنها. يستدير برفق. تتطاير فزعة فور ما تقع عيناه عليها. يصرخ. جبانة! وحدها الحمامة الرمادية فيروز صارت أقل حذرا إذا ما التزم مكانه، فيما يشبه اتفاقا ضمنيًا، وراء المساحة بين النافذة والمقعد الخشبي.

«مناوشة شك ليقين»

نهضت قبيل الشروق. زعبت من ماء بثرنا المجنونة أتدوق قليله قبل الشرب. منحت البئر ماء مالحة في ذلك اليوم، سوف يكون يومًا صعبًا، هكذا كنا نلتئم طالع أيامنا نبوءة، إن جاء ماء البئر عذبًا استبشرنا خيرًا، وإن جاء مالحة عشنا يومنا في خوف. ركضت إلى الأعلى لعل زينة ورخال قد استدلا طريقًا إلى سطح الدار، دارهما. وجدت والدي وقد سبقني على غير دأبه. يقف بجسده الطويل يواجه الجنوب ساهمًا. لم يتبه لمجيئي. مررت نظري أعلى الأقفاص المفتوحة وداخلها. لا أثر. رفعت ثوبي أطوي طرفه أعقده حول خاصرتي. جلست فوق سحارتي الخشبية وراء والدي أرنو صوب الجنوب مثلما يفعل. أتحزى نقطتين سوداوين في الأفق. لا حمام بين زراير خاطفة ويمام يمسح الأرض بنظره بحثًا عن فئات. طال انتظارنا والدي في وقفته ثابت مثل نخلة، يمشط السماء بنظره بين ظلمة ونور. ألم تقل إنهما لن يعودا؟

انتفض حينما قطعْتُ شروده بسؤالي. تنبّه إليّ أجليس وراءه. استدار يلتفتُ بوجهٍ لا يحولُ تعبيرًا. أشارَ بسبّابه إلى رأسه. هذا يقول لن يعودا. هبطتُ سبّابه إلى صدره. وهذا يقول رُبما. صمتَ والدي قليلاً. تنهَّدَ قبل أن يُحدِّثَ نفسه. صغيران والمسافةُ طويلة والريحُ شديدة. رفعتُ ساقِيّ أترنُّعُ فوق السَّحَّارَةِ الخشبيةِ أهُمِّي نفسي لجلسةِ طويلة، أفكّرُ في كلام والدي. سارَ نحو السَّلَمِ. صحَّتُ به. بصيرة تقول.. صاحَ يُقَاطِعُنِي. بصيرة لا تقول! هبطَ السَّلَمُ من دون أن يلتفتَ إليّ. اختفى في الأسفل. جاء صوته مُرتفعًا. لا تنتظر، وحده الزاجلُ يعود، لم يكونا، لن يعودا!!

### عِرزال

تأخرت فيروز في رحلتها. مدَّ عِرزالُ عُقَّه يمسحُ ببصره دَكَّة النافذة، تراها اختفت في الزاوية موضع ما سوف تُصنِّعُه عُشًّا. لا شيء. انقبض صدره. أتراها عثرت على مكانٍ آخر تضعُ فيه بيضتيها؟ حطَّ بلبلٌ على سعفة النخلة. بدا مضطربًا كثير الالتفات. الطيورُ لا تُطيلُ البقاء على السَّعَفِ المزدحمِ بالخوص المطواع للريح. الريحُ على الأبواب، لو أنني أقتلَعُها وأضعُ مكانها سِدْرَةً قوية الأغصان تُغري الطيورَ بالبقاء مُدَّةً أطول؟ تنهَّدَ يهزُّ رأسه. ولكن النخلة من أهل الدَّار. لا يزال الطيرُ يلتفتُ قلقًا فوق السَّعْفَةِ غير المتزنة، يفتحُ جناحيه ويُطبِّقُهُما مُتردِّدًا يوشِكُ أن يُخلِّق. عينا عِرزال تخونانه تنظران إلى السماء. تهبطان إلى البحر. يُمرُّ ظهرُ إبهاميه أسفل عينيه يمسحُ دمعًا. يسمع صوتَ البلبلِ هامسًا. عِرزال! خَمَامُ الدَّارِ لا يغيب! يلتفتُ إلى

طير السعفة بسرعة. لا يجده في الجوار. يحكُّ صلته مستغربًا. تذكّر  
عزال فيروز التي طال غيابها. أتراها تاهت في السماء؟ هل ابتلعها  
الزرقعة هي الأخرى؟ ما كاد يُنهي تساؤله حتى ظهرت تحمِلُ ورقة  
شجرٍ يابسة، تصفّق جناحها هبوطاً إلى موضعها. دسّت مِنقارها بين  
الأعواد تُسوي عُشها قبل أن تطير ثانية.

### «مِنحة العَقْلِ وَمِحْنَتُهُ»

لم أفهم. لماذا أطلق والدي رَحَالَ وزينة جنوياً عند الحدود  
وهما ليسا مثل البقية، لماذا انتظر عودتهما ما لم يكونا؟! بقيتُ  
مُتربِّعاً على سحَّارتي الخشبية أنتظر، حائرًا بين الاثنين؛ أؤمنُ بما  
يقوله والدي وأرفضه، أكفُرُ بما تقوله بصيرة وأرغبه. هبطتُ الشلَمُ  
بعد ارتفاع الشَّمس. أفرغتُ قِضعةً بصيرة من بُصاقيها. أعدتها نظيفةً  
إلى مكانها الدائم وأنا أنظرُ إلى العجوز. جلستُ على الأرض فوق  
بساط الحصر إلى جانبها. رحتُ أسمعها وأنا أحدثُ نفسي. أزرق  
يقول وحده الزاجلُ يعود، وأنا أقول كما قالت بصيرة حمام الدَّار  
لا يغيب. كنتُ أبحلقُ في ثغرها لعلِّي أحظى برؤية حركة شفيتها  
وهي تنطق. سعلت العجوز. تحسرج الصَّبوتُ في حنجرتها. راحت  
تستجمع بلغمها، تُقلِّبه في فمها. مددتُ ساقِي. أزحتُ بِقَدَمِي القِضعةَ  
الخزفية أبعدُها عن موضعها الدائم بضعة أشبار. نقلتُ بصري بين  
شفتي العجوز وقضعتها. خخخ. نف. لم أستغرب حينما استقرت  
بصقة بصيرة في قُعر القِضعة!

عزال

نهضت تاركاً مقعده، يجرُّ خطاه إلى حمامه المؤجل بعد مراقبة  
 فيروز وشرب قهوته الصباحية. حمامه لا باب له. هو يكره الأبواب  
 الموصدة. يخاف ما تصوّره مخيلته وراءها. أفكها، أزيلها يزول ما  
 وراءها! هذا ما قرّره أمس. لا باب في مسكنه سوى باب الشقة  
 الرئيس. تجاوز عتبة الحمام دخولاً. وقف أمام المرأة يحدّق في  
 وجهه. كان رمادياً مثل منامته. جفناه مرتحيان على عينيه الشهلأوين.  
 انتزع دُبوس شالِه الفيروزي. أرخى الشال. مرّر ظاهر كفه على ذقنه.  
 تحسّس شعرة الأشيب النابت. غريب! كنت صغيراً يوم أمس! غار  
 رأسه بين كتفيه. قطّب حاجبيه. ألصق فكّه السفلي برفقه ونفخ صدره:  
 غرووغ غرووغ.

\* \* \*



صباخِ ثانِ

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«.. أخذَ يُلَوِّحُ بيديه. بصيخُ بهما: رَحَّال.. زينة! ثم أطبق أسنانه على طرفي ثوبه وراح يركضُ كالمجنون!».

كَوَّرَ جسدهُ تحتَ لحافِهِ. منامتهُ الرَّماديةُ تلتصقُ بجسدهِ المتعرقِ. أغمضَ عينيه بشِدَّةٍ يتظاهرُ بالنُّوم. هو لا يريدُ لهذا الكابوس أن ينتهي. هذا شيءٌ يُشبهُ الابتزاز! أن يصيرَ لِقَاؤُكَ بمن تُحب في إطارِ كابوسٍ؛ يعني أن تعقِدَ صداقةً مع كوابيسك بصفتها أحلامًا. نظرٌ إلى النافذة. فيروز رابضة في زاوية الدُّكَّة. مدَّ يدهُ إلى الطاولة الصُّغيرة قُرب سريره. تناول هاتفه فيما يُشبهُ فرضًا صباحيًا منذُ.. منذُ أمس. ألصقَ السَّماعةَ بأذنه. أشتاقُ للصغيرين. طليقته لا تريد أن تنسى. اركضُ يا جبان! ثم أفلتَ الخط. ركضَ عرزال إلى المطبخ يغلي الماء.

«فأقْدُ الشيء، قد يُعطيه»

أوشكت الشَّمسُ على المغيب. السَّماءُ تشوبها حُمرةٌ كثيفة، وأنا لا أزال أنتظر فوق سخَّارتي الخشبية. تململتُ في جلستي والسَّماءُ خالية إلا من نتف غيوم. نهضتُ أنفضُ العُبار عن ثوبي. مشيتُ نحو قفص الغائبين أدسُ كَفِّي في جيبي الثوب. الحمامةُ الأم، داخل سخَّارة خشبية غطاها الدُّرُقُ، ترقُدُ على فرخين جديدين تنظرُ إليَّ باحتراسٍ وغضبٍ لأنني تخلَّيتُ عن صغيرها في تيه الصُّحراء. مسكنةُ الحمامةُ

الأم، كأنما خُلِّقَت من أجل أن تفرخَ طيورًا تغيّب، وتعودُ بشرطِ غياب.  
 مددْتُ ذراعي أنوي أن أمسحَ بكفّي الصّغيرة على ظهرها أُعزّيها.  
 غاصت رقبُتها في صدرها تهدلُ مُغتازلة. غرووغ. كدتُ الأُمسُ  
 ظهرها لولا أن عاجلتني تضربُ كفّي بجناحها. كفّي قريبة ما زالت.  
 أناوُرُها. زعلانة؟ عاجلتني بضربةٍ أخرى أشد. سحبتُ ذراعي. لا  
 بأس. أمثا بصيرة تقول حمام الدّار لا يغيّب. ظلّت الحمامة تُراقبُ  
 كفّي العائِدة إلى داخل جيبِي. ابتسمتُ لها وقد هدأ خوفُها. حتى أنتِ  
 تُصدّقين أمثا بصيرة. غرووغ.

### عِرزال

دخلَ عُرفته بظهره حذرا. اقترب من النافذة متجاوزًا حدودَ اتفاقٍ  
 ضمنيّ مع فيروز. استدارَ ببطءٍ يواجه النافذة. انتفضت الحمامة. مشّت  
 إلى حافة الدكّة كاشفةً عن بيضتين في وسط العُش. أطلقت جناحيهما  
 للريح. جحظت عيناه وهو يُحدّق في العُش. أسندَ كفّيه إلى رأسه  
 فاغبرًا فمه على اتساعه. طيري يا جبانة! عيناه على العُش ما زالت.  
 كيف لها أن تترك بيضتيها على هذا النحو؟ كزّ على أسنانه غيظًا. فتح  
 النافذة غير مصدّق. نفحته ريحٌ باردة. أجفل. سوف تتجمد البيضتان!  
 قطع الغرفة جيئةً وذهابًا يقضيمُ أظفاره. حمامة غبية جبانة! ينظر إلى  
 النافذة وهو يركن في إحدى زوايا الغرفة. البيضتان في عُشهما من دون  
 فيروز. ضربت الأرض بقدميه مثل طفلٍ حانقٍ يتمسكُ بشيءٍ يوشك أن  
 يفقده. فيروز غير جديرة بكما! صرخ. تعالي، تعالي أرجوك من أجل..  
 من أجل الس...! وقفت على أطراف أصابعه ينظر إلى البيضتين. على

وجبه شبح ابتسامه كأنه توصل إلى شيء ما داخل رأسه. حثَّ خطوه إلى دكة النافذة. حمل البيضتين في كفه المرتعشة. دفء فيروز على قشرتهما لا يزال. حدقَ فيهما كأن بياض القشرة يشفُّ عمًا بداخلهما. كائنان في وضع جنينيّ وديعانٍ مُطمئنان. عرزال على وشك البكاء؛ لمعان عينيه، رعشة شفته السفلى واختلاج منخزيه. راح يجوب غرفته يُحدِّث نفسه. كفه مبسوطة تحت البيضتين. زينة ورخال! نعم، أنتما زينة ورخال! كان يحلم بمثل هذه اللحظة منذ أمسٍ طويل. هز رأسه يضحك. حمام الدار لا يغيب.

«زُرقة تفتح أبوابها على موعِدٍ مستحيل»

أندكُّرُ واليدي مُنحنيًا على قفص حماماته السّت في الصّحراء العارية قُرب الحدود، قفصُ نصف كُرويّ دقيق الأسلاك. كانت الريح شديدة تصفعُ أذني وتُبعدُ عُرتي عن جبيني. يفتحُ والدي باب القفص ويهشُّ على حماماته. تطيرُ الحمامات تباغًا. أنصتُ إلى صفق أجنحتها مع هجيج الريح. أنظرُ إليها واثقًا في عودتها إلى سطح البيت، رغم الريح الهائجة. راحت الحمامم تحومُ في سماننا الزرقاء قبل أن تُحدّد وجهتها شمالًا صوب المدينة. حلّق غادي أولاً، تبعه أشقاؤه سفار ثم عواد ورايحة بسرعة، في حين حطَّ الفرخان غير الشقيقين رخال وزينة على الأرض، أعرِفهما من صغر حجميهما ولوني ججليهما. لـ رخال ججلّ سماويّ الزرقة ولـ زينة ججلّ وردي. ارتبكتُ لرؤيتيهما على ذلك النحو، مُرتبكان يقتربان من القفص يلوذان به. صفق والدي. فتح ذراعيه يُفرّعهما يحثُّهما على اللحاق بالبقية. غيرا وجهتهما يسيران

بتعثرٍ إليّ عوضًا عن القفص. أقميتُ مُتلهِّفًا فاتحًا ذراعِي للحمامتين. شيء من قلق انتابني. بوّدي أن أعانقهما. ضرب والدي الأرض بقدميه وهو يصبح. تملكهُما الذُعر. غَيَّرا وجهتُهُما ثانيةً. يُحلّقان على ارتفاعٍ منخفضٍ ويحطّان على الأرض. زينة ورخّال يعرفان ما ينتظرنا في السّماء. هرع والدي وراءهما. يُصَفِّقُ بقوةٍ ثُمَّ يَدُسُّ إصبعين أسفل لسانه ويُصَفِّرُ. هربا إلى السّماء يحومان فوقنا قبل أن يطيرا في اتجاه المدينة أخيرًا. مكثتُ أنظر إليهما يُخَيِّلُ لي أنهما يلتفتان وراءهما، ينظران إليّ أثناء تحليقهما. أرسلتُ نظري وراءهما إلى أن ابتلعتهما الرُّزقة. كنتُ أرُدُّ في سِرِّي اسميهما، وأنا الذي أطلقتُ عليهما الاسمين في اليوم الرابع من خروجهما من بيضتَيْهما؛ زينة ورخّال.

عِرزال

تنبّه إلى البيضتين في كَفِّهِ وقد فقدنا دفء فيروز. ارتبك. أطبق كَفِّيه عليهما برفق. قرَّب كَفِّيه إلى شفتيه وأخذ ينفخُ ببطء. عبث! أعادهما إلى العُشِّ وأطبق زجاج النافذة. ظلَّ ينظرُ بعيدًا يبحثُ عن حمامته الجبّانة. لعلّها المرّة الأولى التي تبيضُ فيها! حمامةٌ غبية! هي لا تعرفُ ما في داخلِ البيضتين، لو أنها تدري لصفعت كَفِّي إذا ما مددتها نحوها عوضًا عن الهرب! البحرُ أمامه على مدّ البصر، عالي الموج. لأول مرّة منذُ أمسه لا يُبعد نظره عن البحر. يُحدّق في أمواجه بعينين حمراوين ناضحتين بالكراهية.

يغيب في ذكرى بدّت بعيدة، ليست أكيدة. كان بسرواله الأبيض الداخلي يقطرُ ماءً، محمولًا بين ذراعِي والديه، وأُمّه تصرخ

على رمال السّاحل، بعد أن خاض أزرق في الماء موغلاً في العمق حتى كتفّيه. همس بأذن الصّغير. جرب الغرق مرّة، تتعلم السّباحة. جرّب الغرق مرّات. ابتلع ماءً كثيرًا. أوشك أن يبكي. إذا بكيت سوف أتركك للغرق! ظلّ يضرب الماء بكفّيه. يُحرّك ساقيه في كلّ اتجاه. يقترب من أبيه يمدّ له ذراعيه. يتشبّث به يحوِّط عنقه. يدفعه أبوه بعيدًا عنه يُخَيِّره بين أن يموت غرقًا أو أن يصير رجلًا يُجيد السّباحة. املاً رثيك بالهواء حتى تطفو.. اسبح يا ولد ولا تبك. اسبح! لم يسبح. لم يُتقن السّباحة قط. لم يبك، لكنه كرة البحر.

أشاح بوجهه عن البحر هربًا من ذاكرته الزرقاء. حدّق في البيضتين الباردتين يتناهبه قلق. ابتعد عن النافذة بضع خطوات إلى الوراء. كيف يتحاشى الأزرق؟ كيف يتجنّب مواجهة فيروز، يُبقي الجبانة على دكّة النافذة، يختفي عنها ويكسب ثقتها إلى حين تفقس بيضتيها؟ رفع رأسه إلى أعلى الجدار. لو أن للنافذة ستارة؟ كان لهذه النافذة ستارة! أجهش.

#### «تَحَالُفُ الْأَضْدَادِ ضِدُّ قَلِيلِ حِيلَةٍ»

بلّلت دموعي اللّحاف فوق ساقبي بصيرة. لم يعودا! كنتُ مُغموض العينين لعلّها تنطق، تُطمئنني أنهما لن يطبلا الغياب. مسحّت على شعري. رفعتُ رأسي أنظرُ إليها. ملامحها هدوء وسلام. وجهها إلى سقفيها؛ باطن السّلم الذي يبعُد عن رأسها مسافة ذراعين، تبدو في عالمٍ آخر. صرّتُ أنظرُ إلى سقف بصيرة، يبدو قريبًا بعيدًا. يُمّنه بصيرة! خخخ. ضغطتُ على ساقها لعلّها تنطق. قولي شيئًا! أدارت رأسها.

نَفًا رَفَعَتْ وَجْهَهَا ثَانِيَةً إِلَى الْأَعْلَى حَيْثُ بَاطِنُ السَّلَامِ. أَمَسَكْتُ بِكُمْ  
 ثَوْبَهَا أَصْرُخُ. يُمُّهُ بَصِيرَةٌ! مَرَّ بِنَا وَالِدِي يَجْرُهُ صُرَاخِي. صَاحَ بِي. يَا  
 وَلِدًا! انْحَنِ إِلَى الْعَجُوزِ. رَاحَ يُصَفِّقُ بِكَفَيْهِ صَفَقَاتٍ مُتتَالِيَةً عِنْدَ أُذُنَيْهَا.  
 يَدِشُ إِصْبَعِيهِ تَحْتَ لِسَانِهِ يُصَفِّرُ. لَمْ يَهْتَرِ لِلْعَجُوزِ جَفْنًا. عَمِيَاءُ صَمَاءُ  
 خَرَسَاءُ! قَالَ لِي ثُمَّ أَشَارَ إِلَى رَأْسِهِ. يَا صَبِي! لَا عَقْلَ لَكَ! نَهَضْتُ  
 أَرَكُضُ إِلَى السَّطْحِ. أَدْرَكْتُ آخِرَ السَّلَامِ حِينَ جَاءَتَنِي صَوْتُ وَالِدِي.  
 أَبِكُ يَا وَلِدًا! أَبِكُ وَانْتَظِرْ مَا لَنْ يَعُودًا بِكَيْتٍ.. بِكَيْتٍ غِيَابِ زِينَةِ وَرَحَالِ،  
 وَصَمْتِ بَصِيرَةٍ، وَقَسْوَةِ وَالِدِي.

عِرْزَالِ

**Target Text**

**Hammam<sup>(1)</sup> Al Dar<sup>(2)</sup>  
The Riddle of Ibn<sup>(3)</sup> Azrag<sup>(4)</sup>**

A Novel By  
Saud Alsanousi

(1) Hammam: means 'pigeons'

(2) Al Dar: means 'the house'

(3) Ibn: means 'son of'.

(4) Azrag: one of the characters in the novel and it means the color 'blue'.

**The Old Era**  
**Erzal Ibn Azrag's Mornings**

**A word**

**...He lived for more than 50 years and 20 years of them  
were devoid of any events until a pigeon changed everything!**

**Patrick Süskind**

## **Before a Pondering Time**

**«Enough of this nonsense!»**

Enough of this persistence on writing that will not be written. There is nothing that compels me to keep on writing. NOTHING. Sometimes a writer should acknowledge his inability to write anything and stop trying.

I have been in the office since the morning complaining with a heavy heart to my wife whom I long for. I lean my cheek on the palm of my left hand as my right palm is still stinging. My eyes are fixated on papers lying between my elbows on my desk, which contain writings of a script I am confused about. My wife pats my shoulder. Then her patting hand moves down my shoulder, passing my arm, reaching my bandaged stinging right-palm and rubs it.

**«Do you still feel the pain of the burn?»**

I let out a sorrowful sigh and my heart is in pain. I carefully press the tip of my index finger and my thumb together. I draw them near my face and look at them. I answered her in a semi-relieved manner:

**«As long as I can hold a brush or a pen...»**

I shake my head in affirmation:

**«I am fine..»**

She waves the burn ointment packet at me. I shake my head:

**«I do not need it, Muneera!»**

She smiles and leaves the packet at the edge of the desk. She places her palm on my bald head rubbing it gently. She reminds me of thirteen novels, over eighty stories, four plays, two movies and dozens of artistic paintings all of which are regarded as my most successful works. Successful works that were produced in my literary and artistic journey of over thirty years. My eyes are still fixed on the script. My wife places both of her palms on my shoulders and squeezes them while both of her thumbs are pressing on my neck:

**«It seems you forgot something!»**

I turned my head towards her with an inquiring look on my face. She smiled. She leaned forward and kissed my cheek. I could smell her fresh breath:

**«Today is an exceptional day.. prep yourself so that we can celebrate».**

I sighed and did not answer her. She pinched me in the same area that she kissed before leaving:

**«My love! This is not the first time! Your lower drawer is full of unfinished scripts and your painting studio has dozens of unfinished paintings!».**

She does not understand. This script is unlike the rest. It is not because of what I wrote in it but the impact it has on me. I wanted to explain this to her but as confuse as her. I decided to stop thinking about the text and call it quits yesterday evening. Then early in the morning I placed a glossy white paper atop the first page of the incomplete script as a cover. A fine paper written in its bottom left corner the phrase <A Novel's Project>, which I always use as a good luck charm, whenever I begin a new writing work. I held the pen and I decided to write a temporary title at the bottom of the script's cover page called: <The Abandoned Script!>.

I do not know what pulled me away from my other postponed writing project.

I found myself drawn to a character that came out of the blue and forced me to write something about it so that I come back to it later. An incomprehensible character that pulled me towards it and away from everything else. I pulled out a new white paper to jot down my thoughts about this thing that suddenly sprung out into my mind. I found myself writing non-stop about a disturbed person named Erzal Ibn Azrag!. The name is unfamiliar to me, I do not know where it came from. I did not have a prior imagination about what I wrote. I do not know the time, place and the characters that surround the protagonist. A protagonist?! The word itself adds a doubtful value to the character!. I happened to be just writing without thinking. I write about something unknown. I write with a burnt palm. I was just writing unlike those pretenders who claim that their writings originate from some form of revelations, begging their oracle to bless their writings to impress a potential reader. I write for an unknown motive. I write to witness the suicide of that character, however, when I was about to write its suicide scene I could not do it!. I began writing yesterday before sunset and ended up with an incomplete script that was written in one sitting. I completely forgot about my burnt palm. If it was not for the sound of the mosque next to my house, I would not have known about how much time has passed. When I looked outside the window it was dark. How long was I writing for?! The answer to my question revealed itself when the sound of the mosque ended. I looked at the clock and was alarmed at the fact that I was writing for twelve straight hours! I was looking around the office as if I have not written inside it for hours. I hear my heartbeats in my ears, from where did this desire to write come from? I am supposed to spend time on my other projects instead of wasting it.

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I treaded inside my office back and forth thinking about what happened to me. I am not alright. There are a lot of characters to write about in my other postponed projects and Erzal Ibn Azrag is not one of them!. I washed my face and prepared a cup of a coffee. I returned to read ‘The Abandoned Script’ that was written without prior incentive. I tried digging deep in my mind to recall a distant memory about a previous situation or an old thought that I was saving for my next writing work. However, I could not remember anything. This script was written without incentive! What was it that I wanted to convey in my writing? And who is this boring character that I am writing about called Erzal Ibn Azrag?. My wife Muneera interrupted me as I was about to finish my sentence carrying the burn ointment.

Normally, I tend to have some idea about my novels’ characters before I write them down on a paper. Afterwards, I get to know them even more during the writing process as if they are telling me about themselves. The more pages I write about them the more they reveal about themselves. However, I know very little about this supposed protagonist that came into my mind before I started writing about him. He did not even reveal more about himself during the writing of his story. I tried to resume writing the script hoping that I would reach to an understanding. Anything that would explain to me the reason I was so indulged in writing about a character, I have no clue about. ‘The Abandoned Script’ is in the form of five chapters, which represent five mornings of an old, disturbed, strange and boring old man. He has almost no interest in anything except few insignificant and strange ones; reading mysterious diaries, prying on a pigeon nesting on a small-spaced window sill. He also dreams everyday which I can only see fragments of it and my imagination could not help me complete it. This character was supposed to commit suicide by throwing itself from the window, but for some unknown reason it does not. Usually, whenever I struggle in writing a script, I give myself a pondering time.

I spend it sitting crossed-legged on my chair behind my desk in silence while my eyes are shut. Thinking about the unwritten details of the script, to the point that I travel to a place I wrote about in my deep ponder or I summon the characters to my office. I ask them to sit on the seats in front of me or in a circle on the floor. I check their anxious expressions in my presence and give them features that were not present in my mind. For example, removing a mole from a crazy old woman's cheek and placing it under the lips of a loving young girl, which excites me to write about. Giving an old man a deep voice, which would give him level-headedness that suits his age, cursing a chatterbox with a stutter that would put a stop to her talks, and castrate a muscular man to destroy his arrogance and ego about his body!. I finish molding the characters while they present before me in compliance. I talk to them in order to get them to tell me about themselves and ask them questions about anything related to the script. I get to know them further by pushing them to converse with each other and even make one of them say something that would bother the other character. Perhaps this incitement would enable me to get what I want. Their reactions and conversations may enable me, as I assume the role of a spectator, to overcome the writer's block and continue writing 'The Abandoned Script'.

This is what I plan on doing with this mysterious new character that suddenly came to my mind twelve hours ago. Perhaps I may find something about Erzal Ibn Azrag if I come back to The Abandoned Script sometimes later. Anything that would enable me to end his tale by killing him through suicide in the form of throwing-himself from the window of his cold room. This would conclude the script, that was written with a burnt palm, or at the very least would enable the rest of the characters to add more to the plot of the script without him and avoid the issue of the script remaining incomplete.

*M.A*

## **A Novel's Project**

**«The Abandoned Script»**

**(11)**



**A First Morning**

**(12)**

**((...then he bit the side of his clothes and starting running like a madman!)).**

Erzal woke up frightened and shaking on his bed as if he heard the sound of thunder and kept his eyelids closed. He kept thinking about the everlasting 'blue' nightmare, patiently waiting for the part where he runs like a madman and attempting to hold on to it perhaps he can see his loved ones. He feels his heartbeats in his chest and calms down. The taste of salty sweats dissipates from his mouth. He ponders. He swallows his saliva with difficulty while wiping his sweaty bald head. Erzal Ibn Azrag wakes up every day in this state since yesterday.

Erzal opens his eyes and avoids looking at the ceiling. He turns towards the window. The pigeon is on her way to his home or at least she will be after a short morning departure. She will return to the window sill of his lonely apartment's room that overlooks the sea. An apartment, which he has been living in it for the past thirty years during the time of his marriage according to his diary. The window sill is a like a balcony opened to the world. The pigeon has always been living on the window sill since a day he cannot remember. Perhaps he remembers the time when he liked the pigeon's company, early in the days, when her goofy and big body would land on the window sill. She clumsily lands between other smaller birds that are startled by the faintest sound coming from the street. The pigeon is aloof and minding her business. You cannot tell which place her round red-like ruby eyes with a black dot in its center are looking at.

He likes looking at her. When she is compared to other pigeons she is special. Her body has a gloomy dark grey color and a bright turquoise color around her neck. She does not seem to care about anything just like Erzal as she is living her life without understanding anything.

He wakes up at the sunlight of every morning. His window is curtainless since the curtain was dropped by the twins in a morning he always believes it to be the morning of yesterday. He remembers when one of the twins apparently pulled hard on the curtain until it fell. He got upset on that morning and screamed at them. They got startled. They were standing still with the curtain lying on the floor between their feet. The boy says she did it and the girl says he did it. He remembers their accusing-little fingers pointing at each other. The man recalls a scene which is almost a memory. He sits in front of the canvas and uses his painting brush to add his final touches to it. The young twins run towards him. *Wow! It looks so cool daddy!*, when the twins begin kissing him the scene disappears. He scratches his bald head: *When was that? It was yesterday.* It matters not. What matters is the fact that the window must remain curtainless as a tribute to the young twins who allowed the entry of the sunlight into Erzal's cold room. Was the pigeon around on the window sill when the curtain fell? Perhaps, but when was that?

He rubs his eyes using the back of his hand. In his wakefulness he ignores questions, which came to his mind, about the occurrence of things he does not remember. He asks himself questions that begin with 'when' because he gets bothered about things that involves time. He only knows time as a past and the past is always 'yesterday'. Also, he only remembers a little bit of yesterday: *I was born yesterday. The pigeon landed on the window sill yesterday. The curtain fell yesterday.* He also phoned his ex-wife as soon as he woke up yesterday: *I miss the young twins.* She interrupts him as soon as she recognizes his voice: *run you coward!*

He yawns. He sits upright on his bed. He makes a phone call.

Nobody is picking up. He felt sad. He looks at the window, where the pigeon is at, with half shut eyes: *There is a chance she is not here!* He removes the blanket from his scrawny body. He runs in his dark grey pajamas towards his small kitchen to prepare his coffee. He left the water on the stove to boil and runs to open a closet in the hallway. An old newspaper with yellow pages falls between his feet. He picks it up and holds it close to his chest with his eyes shut, as if he is hugging it, before putting it back in the closet with his other stuff. He puts his hand in a plastic bag. He takes it out and brings it closer to his nose with barley in it. He sneezes and then smiles: *It smells like father!* He gets disturbed whenever he thinks of his father. He misses him but does not want to meet him. He misses many things that only come to his mind in the presence of something he dislikes. For example, when he gets a fever a gentle person's hand would touch his forehead to check for his temperature, then tucks him in a warm bed and prepares his favorite hot soup. He notices some movements outside his window which interrupts his nostalgia. It was the wind moving a palm tree frond. With a handful of barley, he quickly moves towards the window. He checks on the pigeon to see if she is there because he does not want to scare her. As soon as he opened the curtainless window cold air blows in his face. The palm tree in front of his window looks clean with wet fronds. *Did it rain while I was asleep?* He turned towards the blue sea in front of him, which stretches into the horizon. The tide is high. He closed his eyes to avoid anything that has to do with the word 'blue' which scares him. He took a deep breath which has a scent that he likes. It is the scent of old pigeon droppings, which reminded him of yesterday. He lowered his head and opened his eyes to look at the dusty and small window sill. He scattered the barley in his hand on the window sill next to the old pigeon droppings, a heap of dry sticks, feathers, threads, and fine wires. *This pigeon is about to lay an egg!* His face lit up but frowned when he raised his head and looked at the sea again. He raised his head even more and saw a clear sky.

He detests anything that has to do with the word 'blue'. He detests the sea, the sky and his father. The colors attributed to certain events from his memory bothers him. Erzal is like the color grey, which is gloomy and is not associated with any happy memories. He chose this color to represent his life, it is the color of the end, smoke, ashes, house rubble, a person's remains and nothingness. The old Erzal remembers himself as a child, when he was four or maybe five years old. His father was playing with him by tossing him in the air. His mother shouted at Azrag, fearing for her kid from falling: *Watch it Azrag...the kid will fall!*. Erzal the kid cried in terror. Azrag angrily shouted at his wife: *your son is a coward!*. He held little Erzal again and tossed him in the air disregarding Erzal's panic. Azrag said: *If you cry again I will throw you high up into the sky*. Erzal bit his lips and did not cry. However, he definitely hated the sky.

The old Erzal looked away from the clear sky. He closed the window and turned around slowly walking to his wooden chair. He then turned to face the window a few meters away. The smell of the bird droppings mixed with the dust of the window sill is lingering in his nose. It took him to a very far place, to yesterday. *An awful smell can be tolerated if it reminds you of a time you love*. He shook his head in affirmation. Your time does not necessarily have to be beautiful, what matters is that you were a part of it.

**((Waiting for what may or may not Return))**

I was eight years old, when I was sitting on a wooden box on the spacious roof of our old house with my shirt tucked in. while I was sitting on the box, I started looking between many big pigeon cages. The roof has the usual smell which is a mixture of dust, birds' droppings, and barley. I look at my father's anticipation before sunset.

He looks towards the south. He counts the hours and begins to worry. He is waiting for the return of his six pigeons that he released at the southern border early in the morning. The weather that morning in the desert was extremely windy. I, as a kid, do know that my father's pigeons will return. I do not care about the windy weather and the great distances the pigeons must cross. Furthermore, I do not count the hours for their return because they will return even if they are late. 'Whoever lived in this house becomes a part of its family, the members will always come back to it even if they leave it and they will never betray each other'; This is a saying that Baseera said to me two years ago before the pigeon situation occurred. She is my father's grandmother or perhaps great grandmother; I do not know because she is really old. She sits still in the corner of our old house lobby underneath the stairs wearing black clothes that covers most of her body. *Why is she sitting underneath the stairs?* I have never asked myself before about things that I grew up on seeing. Things that exist in an old house with small rooms that overlooks a roofless lobby. It is the lobby, where Baseera resides and whom I have never seen open her eyes before as if they were sewn together for a long time. Like the pigeon sitting on the window sill, she was always sitting underneath the stairs on a mattress in the lobby. Baseera never leaves her mattress not even to use the toilet. She would soil her clothes without batting an eye as if she is sneezing or yawning or spitting. Her spot has never changed like the house's furniture; the bed is in the bedroom, the stove is in the kitchen, the sacks of rice, lentils, and sugar are in the storage room, the wide floor sofas are in the lobby and Baseera is sitting on her mattress underneath the stairs. She always sits in her favorite spot, whether it is winter or summer, while half of her body is covered in a stiff and brown blanket. She leans her back on a tattered sky-blue pillow with a yellow stain in its middle.

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I was very young so I only knew who she was after my father kicked out all the slaves he owned, while she remained. I understood right then that she is part of the family. Bassera always sits still to the point that we sometimes forget she exists. Whoever sees her thinks that she is dead if it was not for a specific sound she makes occasionally to alert others about her existence. The sound she makes is when she spits out her accumulated chest mucus from her mouth into a ceramic bowl placed on a rug next to her. She always hits a bullseye. Whenever Baseera's throat rattles in preparation to spit out her mucus, I eagerly look at her. I push my long hair bangs upward to see clearly. I stare at her lips and the ceramic bowl. As she makes the sound of gathering mucus in her mouth, I look carefully at her lips. She moves her jaws like a sheep chewing on grass. *Ptooeey!* She spits out the mucus in the center of the bowl. I raise a fist of victory, when Baseera landed the spit in the center of the bowl, as if I have scored a goal against my friends during a football match in our old neighborhood. When I look at the old lady's features, I smile: *What if you could see!?*

I doubt she is blind. To test my doubts, I use wooden crayons to draw smiling faces on a paper. Then I place the paper in front of her face and Baseera smiles although her eyes are closed. I place another paper that has drawings of sulky faces in front of her face and she frowns. I tell my father about the old lady's reaction and he laughs: *your delusions will be your doom someday!*

### **Erzal**

The old Erzal is bored and is waiting for the return of the pigeon that keeps his mind busy in her all the time, while sitting in his room. He sighs and looks around at the details of his room as if it is his first time he has been in it. He lowers his head to look at the dark wooden floor and the tattered red carpet.

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Erzal turns his head leftward to look at his copper bed frame and old brown blanket made of wool. Then he looks over his shoulder to see a wooden frieze on the wall, which surrounds a skylight that used to have a hatch. On Erzal's right side there are two pictures of his twins hanged on a yellowish-white wall, which reminds him of a painful memory. He closes his eyes as he remembers the painful memory. He then opens them up with tears welling up in them and the white part turned red, while sighing and looking at the cracks of the roof. *If only you could talk!* He shakes his head in dissatisfaction, while looking at his diary on the nightstand.

((A Voice for Something that has no Voice))

I was six years old when I spotted a little brown snake covered in spots, that poked its head from a small crack in the wall of the sheep pen in our old house. It pulled out its forked tongue at me as if it was trying to make a sound. I screamed and freaked out the chickens. I bolted towards Baseera and hid under her blanket while trembling. The old lady calmed me down by uttering a sentence I have never heard before: *'The members will always come back to it even if they leave it and they will never betray each other'*. When I heard the husky voice, I stood up while being terrified. It was like an echo of a voice I have never heard before. I crawled away from Baseera. This new fear topples the one I had from the snake of the wall. I looked at her from over my shoulders. *Mother Baseera!* She turned her head towards the ceramic bowl and prepared to spit out some mucus. Then *Ptooeey!* She spat out the mucus, my father did not believe me when I told him about the voice: *Boy! Baseera is blind, deaf, and mute.* I begged him to wait and listen to her himself as I was holding onto his sleeve. I begged Baseera: *Mother Baseera!* She did not let me finish what I was about to say and decided to aim at my forehead. Then *Ptooeey!* Spat at me. My father laughed: *Hey you wimp beware from the treachery of others!.*

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He kept on laughing as he was going to the roof to wait for the return of his pigeons, which he regularly releases at a distant place. I was frightened of the lingering thought that the snake might reappear although the elderly women believe that snakes are blessed creatures. Also, they accept the fact that every house has a loyal snake living in it. Even after hearing stories about how a snake living in a house repelled a thief that snuck in and rocked a baby's crib to put him to sleep, I am still frightened. My father labels these stories as legends; however, I sometimes believe them and other times ignore them.

### **Erzal**

The pigeon Fayrooz, holding a straw in her beak, has just landed on the window sill of old Erzal's bedroom. As the sun rises, the bright turquoise color around her neck glows even more. Erzal thinks he named the pigeon – Fayrooz – after the turquoise color around her neck. He thought that it seemed stupid to name a creature that he cannot approach to or call out to it. The idea of naming the pigeon gave him a sense of affinity he has been missing since 'yesterday'. Fayrooz dropped the straw on the window sill and started picking up the seeds before getting closer to her incomplete nest. Then she picked up the dropped straw and started tucking it in the incomplete nest made of straws, wires, feathers and threads. Erzal felt extremely cold. He left his chair and walked slowly towards the clothes rail in the corner. While looking at the pigeon, he extended his hand to slowly take a turquoise shawl to avoid scaring her. He wore the shawl around his shoulders and pinned it below his neck using a pin. Erzal sat on his chair again while trying to keep his sight on the pigeon. He follows her movements and looks at the extension and contraction motion of her neck.

When Erzal looks at the blue sky his mind drifts away from Fayrooz to a distant memory; the memory of ‘yesterday’. *UGH, what do you want from me Azrag?* He frowns and resumes looking at the movements of gray Pigeon.

**((Waiting for the Return of the Pigeons))**

My father sighted a moving black dot in the horizon from the roof of our house. Looking at him being excited, while standing on the tip of his toes with his neck extending upward to have a better view, made my heart skip a beat. I got up from the wooden box and untucked my shirt. I carefully walked, barefooted, leaving behind me footprints on the dusty roof. It pleased me to hear the cracking sound of the old birds’ droppings as I tread upon them. I approached my father and held onto the side of his clothes with one hand, while I pushed my hair bangs aside with the other one. My father looked at me, while smiling, then he looked back at the moving black dot in the horizon and shook his head in affirmation: *It is Gady*. He uttered the name in a deep voice. His voice is always loud and clear unlike Baseera’s soft and husky voice. I confirmed what my father said with a nod. *Gady always comes first because he is the fastest*. Then I started counting on my little fingers the remaining pigeons. *We are only missing Saffar, Awaad, Rabeha, Zaina and Rahal*. Gady landed on the surface of the big cage, in which his mother pigeon lives in it, to check for his spot. I joyfully approached Gady with my lips rounded and mimicked his cooing: *Gruu Gruu*. My father was looking south, while holding the bowl of barley in his hand. Three faraway black dots appeared in the horizon. My father looked worried as he was feeding Gady some barley, while looking at the direction the pigeons are supposed to come from during sunset. He mumbled, while standing on the tip of his toes with his neck extended upward: *Saffar, Awaad and Rabeha*.

I do not know how can my father recognize his pigeons, while they are faraway in the sky during sunset. I can only identify them when they get closer by looking at their leg bands. My father shook his head in sadness: *They will not come back*. I knew he was talking about, the stepsiblings of the pigeons that returned, Zaina and Rahal. This is the first time he released them from a great distance such as the border. Perhaps the tiredness, thirst and strong winds prevented their return because they were tiny. I went back inside and passed by Baseera on my way to the sheep pen. I was repeating what my father said: *They will not come back*. Then Baseera whispered: *'The members will always come back to it even if they leave it'*. When she whispered the saying, I was not paying attention. So, I immediately turned towards her: *What did you say?*. She replied with, *Ptooeey!*, a spit in the center of her ceramic bowl.

### **Erzal**

The old Erzal left his chair and snuck into the kitchen like a thief. He prepared coffee for himself by mixing hot water with coffee powder. After that he held the cup using both of his hands and felt its warmth. Then he went back to his room to sit on the chair. Upon his return, he did not find the pigeon on the window sill. *She flew away to gather more straws before she coming back*, *'The members will always come back to it even if they leave it'*. He took a sip of coffee from the cup before placing it on a small table next to him. He stared at his window, which was covered in piles of birds' droppings. Erzal was annoyed and angry at the fact that the birds would get scared and fly away whenever he enters his room. Even when he enters it slowly, it does not work. Therefore, he started entering his room in reverse. 'Yesterday', he tried to enter his room with his back facing the window and pretended to not care about the birds sitting on the window sill behind him. Using the mirror placed in front of him, he would look at the birds' reflection.

The birds only flinched when he entered the room and did not fly away, oddly enough!. Their necks contracted, while they awaited Erzal's next move. They were about to fly away but they did not. So, the birds only kept on watching him with his back turned towards them in preparation to fly away if needed. Erzal sat on his chair, which was in front of the mirror and watched the birds' movements behind him. The Birds were carefully observing Erzal after which they dropped their guard down when they confirmed his inattention to them. He carefully turned around. The moment his eyes made contact with the birds they flew away in terror. He screamed: *You Cowards!*. The grey pigeon Fayrooz was the only bird that remained in her place unlike the rest of the birds. This would only happen if Erzal kept his distance between the window and his wooden chair.

**((The Clash of Doubt and Certainty))**

I woke up before sunrise and scooped a bit of water from our magical well to test the taste if water before I decided to drink from it. Our magical well's water was salty on that day, which meant it was going to be an ominous day. This is this way in which we lived out our days. If the well's water came out fresh we would rejoice, however, if it came out salty then we would despair for the rest of the day. I ran to the roof to see if Zaina and Rahal perhaps have made their way back home. When I got up there I found that my father had unusually arrived to the roof before me. He was standing there, as tall as he was, looking southward and did not notice my presence. I looked atop the open cages and inside them. However, I did not find the two little pigeons. I tucked my shirt in my pants and sat on top my wooden box behind my father. Then just like him, I looked southward. I was looking for two moving black dots in the horizon. There was no sign of the two pigeons amongst other birds that were flying in the sky or were scavenging for food. We waited for a long time, while my father was standing in the same position scanning the sky with his sight.

*Did you not say they will not come back?* He shuddered when my question interrupted his absent-mindedness. He noticed me sitting behind him. Using his index finger, he pointed to his head: *This part says they will not come back.* Then using the same finger, he pointed at his chest: *However, this part says maybe they will.* My father remained quiet for a little bit and sighed before he talked to himself: *They are tiny, the distance to cross is great and the wind is strong.* I changed my position on the wooden box in preparation for a deep pondering session after hearing what my father said. He walked towards the stairs then I called out to him: *Baseera says.* He interrupted me by yelling: *Baseera did not say anything!* then he went downstairs without looking back. When he was gone his voice appeared from downstairs: *Do not waste your time waiting because only a well-trained pigeon will return and so they will not return.*

### Erzal

It has been so long since Fayrooz's departure. The old Erzal poked his head out of the window to look at the window sill: *Is it possible that the pigeon is sitting in the corner, where the nest will be built?* There was nothing in the corner. So, Erzal got sad: *Could it be that she found another place to lay her two eggs?* A nightingale landed on a palm tree's frond and was nervously looking around. Birds do not perch on the fronds, which sways during a windy weather, for an extended period of time. *It is almost spring, had I replaced the palm tree with a buckthorn would the birds perch on it for an extended period of time?* Erzal sighed and nodded in disapproval: *but the palm tree is 'part of [this house's] family'.* The nightingale was still nervously looking around on the swaying frond; the bird is hesitantly folding its wings and extending them. After that, the nightingale was about to take off. Erzal's eyes were looking up into the sky. Then they were lowered down to look at the sea. He then wiped off tears using the back of his thumb and heard the whispering sound of the nightingale: *Erzal! 'The members will always come back to it even if they leave it'.*

Erzal quickly turned towards the nightingale but did not find it. He rubbed his bald head wondering what happened. He remembered the missing Fayrooz: *Is it possible she lost her way in the sky? Was she swallowed by the 'blue' sky too?*. As Erzal was wondering about her whereabouts, Fayrooz interrupted him by landing on the window sill carrying a dried leaf in her beak. She placed the dried leaf in her nest to continue building it before flying away.

**((The Gift of Mind and its Curse))**

I do not understand why did my father release Zaina and Rahal at the southern border, when they were not experienced like the rest of the pigeons?. Also, why was he waiting for their return on the roof if he knew they will not return?!. I was sitting on my wooden box cross-legged and waiting for the pigeons' return on the roof, while being confused about the two questions I posed. A part of me believed what my father said and the other part rejected it. I disbelieved Baseera's saying and at the same time I wanted it to come true. After the sun rose, I went downstairs and cleaned Baseera's ceramic bowl from her spits. Then I returned the clean bowl to its usual place next to Baseera, while my eyes were fixated on her. I sat next to her on a rug located on the floor. I made her listen to what I was saying to myself: *Azarg said that only a well-trained pigeon will return, however, I will say what Baseera said, which was 'The members will always come back to it even if they leave it'*. I gazed at her mouth after I talked to myself on the off chance that I can witness her lips moving if she says something. The old lady coughed and her throat began rattling in preparation to spit out. She accumulated the mucus in her mouth and was about to spit it out. I extended my legs to push the bowl a few inches further than its usual spot. After that, I patiently waited to see what will happen. Baseera spat the mucous out, *Ptooeey*, and unsurprisingly landed it inside the bowl!.

**Erzal**

The old Erzal got up from his chair to go to the bathroom after having a cup of coffee and watching Fayrooz. His bathroom has no door. He hates closed doors because he fears that his imagination might depict something awful behind them. *If I remove them then no more imagination about what is behind the door!* This is what he decided to do ‘yesterday’. His apartment has no doors except the front door. Erzal entered the bathroom and stood in front of the mirror to look at his face. His face was gloomy like the color of his grey pajama and his eyelids were droopy. He removed the pin of his turquoise shawl and loosened the shawl around his neck. Then he rubbed his chin with the back of his hand and felt his grey beard. *How strange! I was just a kid ‘yesterday’!* He withdrew his head between his shoulders and frowned his eyebrows. Then he lowered his jaw to his chest and puffed up his chest: *Gruu Gruu.*



A Second Morning

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**«..He started waiving his hands and calling out to them: RAHAL...ZAINA! then he bit the side of his clothes and starting running like a madman!»**

Erzal curled himself up underneath his blanket and his grey pajama was stuck to his sweaty body. He pretended to be sleeping by keeping his eyes closed voluntarily. He does not want this nightmare to end. *This is considered a blackmail!* To only be able to see your loved ones in a nightmare indicates that you are okay to call your nightmares a sweet dream. He looked at the window and saw Fayrooz sitting at edge of the window sill. He reached out his hand to the nightstand and picked up the phone as if it was a morning routine he performs since... 'yesterday'. He held the phone to his ears and said I miss the little ones. His ex-wife on the phone, unable to forget what he did: *run you coward!* Then she hung up. Erzal ran off to the kitchen to boil some water.

**«One who Lost Something may be Compensated»**

The sun was about to set, the sky was red and gloomy, and I was still waiting on the wooden box. There were only few clouds in the sky and I got bored of waiting. I got up from the wooden box and dusted off my clothes. Then I walked towards the cages of the two missing little pigeons, while my hands were in my pockets. The mother pigeon was sitting on two new squabs inside a cage covered in pigeon droppings. She was looking at me with caution and anger because I abandoned her two little babies in the desert.

The poor thing it is as if her job is to only produce pigeons that would go missing and never come back. I reached out my little hand to console the mother pigeon by rubbing her back. She withdrew her head in her chest and cooed in anger: *GRUU*. The pigeon slapped me with her wing when I was about to touch her back. My hand was still near the pigeon's body so I decided to give it another try: *Are you still upset?*. She slapped my hand even harder. Therefore, I pulled back my hand: *Do not worry, Baseera said 'The members will always come back to it even if they leave it'*. The mother pigeon kept on watching my hand as I was putting it back in my pocket. I smiled at her and she calmed down: *Even you believe Baseera, Gruu*.

### Erzal

The old Erzal carefully entered his room **in reverse** and got close to the window, where the pigeon Fayrooz was nesting. He slowly turned around to face the window and Fayrooz got startled. She walked away from the nest towards the edge of the window sill revealing two eggs and then she flew away. He gazed at the nest with astonishment, while both of his hands were on his cheeks and his jaw dropped to the floor. *Fly away you coward!* His eyes were still fixated on the nest. *How could she leave her two eggs like that?* He grinded his teeth in anger. Disbelieving what happened, he opened the window and got exposed to cold air. Then he flinched: *Those two eggs will freeze!* Erzal kept going back and forth in his room, while biting his nails. *You stupid and coward pigeon!* While standing in one of the room's corners, he looked at the window. The two eggs were in the nest, while Fayrooz was nowhere to be found. He stomped the ground like a furious kid who wants something. *Fayrooz does not deserve you two!* He screamed: *Come back, please come back for the...for the sake of your chil...!* He stood on his tiptoes and looked at the two eggs.

Erzal made a creepy smile on his face as if he came up with a bright idea. He quickly moved towards the window sill and scooped up the two eggs with his shivering hand. The two eggs were still enveloped in Fayrooz's warmth. He stared at the two eggs as if he can see inside them through the eggshells' whiteness. They contain two little meek creatures. Erzal was about to cry; his eyes welled up, his lower lip and nostrils quivered. He walked back and forth in his room while talking to himself. The two eggs were in his hand: *Zaina and Rahal! Yes, you two are Zaina and Rahal* He dreamed of this moment since a distant 'yesterday'. He nodded in confirmation and laughed: *'The members will always come back to it even if they leave it'*.

**«A Blueness that Opens its Gates to an Inevitable Fate»**

I remember my father bending down towards the cage of his six pigeons in the desert near the border. The cage was semi-circular and made of fine wires. The wind was extreme to the point that it would hit my face and brush my hair bangs from over my forehead. My father opened the cage door and shoed at his pigeons to get them to fly away. The pigeons flew away one by one. I listened to the flapping sound of their wings and the howling winds. I looked at them as they flew with confidence knowing that they will find their way back to the roof of our house although the wind was strong. The birds hovered over us in the blue sky before deciding to fly north towards the city. The first one to fly north was Gady followed immediately by his siblings Saffar, Awaad and Rabeha. However, the stepsiblings Rahal and Zaina landed on the ground. I knew it was them due to their tiny size and the leg bands' color. Rahal had a sky-blue leg band, whereas Zaina had a pink one. It irked me to see the little pigeons nervous and running towards the cage to shelter themselves. My father intercepted them by clapping his hands. Then he assumed a scarecrow pose to frighten them and get them to follow the rest of the pigeons.

The little pigeons changed their direction and walked clumsily towards me instead of the cage. I sat on the ground waiting for them with an open arm. I was a little worried and eager to hug them. My father stomped the ground and shouted. The little pigeons panicked and changed their direction again. They flew at a low altitude and fell to the ground. My father ran after them, clapped his hand hard and whistled at them by putting two fingers under his tongue. The little pigeons hovered over us in the sky before they finally flew north towards the city. I kept looking at them as they flew away. It seemed to me that they were looking back at me while they were flying. I traced their little bodies with my eyes as they were flying north until they disappeared into the blue sky. I repeated their names – the names that I gave them four days after they hatched – deep down inside of me; Zaina and Rahal.

### **Erzal.**

The old Erzal noticed that the warmth of Fayrooz **enveloping** the two eggs in his hand had disappeared. He panicked and gently wrapped his hands around them. He brought his hands to his lips and started blowing gently on the two eggs. *This is ridiculous!* He returned the eggs to the nest and closed his window. He kept looking off into distance for the coward mother pigeon. *Perhaps this is her first-time laying eggs! Stupid pigeon! She does not know what is inside the two eggs. If she knew she would have wing-slapped my hand if I reached it out towards her instead of flying away!* The sea in front of him stretches into the horizon and its waves are high. For the first time since ‘yesterday’ he kept looking at the sea; staring at the waves with red eyes full of hatred.

Erzal’s mind traveled back to a distant memory. He was, in his soaked white underpants, carried in his father’s arm.

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His mother was on the beach screaming, when Azrag entered the sea until the water level reached his shoulder. Azrag whispered into little Erzal's ears: *If you drown once then you will learn how to swim*. Erzal drowned more than once and swallowed a lot of water. Erzal was about to cry: *If you cry I will leave you to drown!*. Erzal kept smacking the water with his hands and was moving his legs in all direction. He got closer to his father and reached out his hands to him. Erzal held onto his father by wrapping his arms around Azrag's neck. His father pushed him away and presented Erzal with two options; either he drowns or turns into a man who knows how to swim. *Fill up your lungs with air so that you float...Swim boy and stop crying, swim!*. Erzal never swam and was never able to swim. He did not cry but he definitely hated the sea.

The old Erzal looked away from the sea trying to avoid remembering the 'blue' memory, which was the time from when he was about to drown. He worriedly gazed at the two cold eggs. He stepped a few feet away from the window. How can Erzal avoid anything that has to do with the color 'blue'?. How can he avoid facing Fayrooz, who is nesting on the window sill?. Does he need to earn her trust by not showing himself in front of her until her two eggs hatch?. Erzal raised his head up and looked above the window: *If this window had a curtain?* This window did have a curtain! He started crying.

**((The Alliance of the Opposed Disbelievers against the Helpless Believer))**

I soaked Baseera's blanket, that was covering her legs, with my tears. *They did not come back!* My eyes were closed shut. If I keep them closed, maybe she would talk and calm me down by saying that they will come back. She stroked my head. I raised my head to look at her. She looked calm and collected. Her face pointed upwards in the direction of the stair bottom she was sitting under, which was two inches away from her head. She appeared to be disconnected from the reality. I started looking at the roof above Baseera, which is the bottom of the stairs; it seemed close yet so far. *Mother Baseera!* She prepared to spit, while I squeezed her leg perhaps she would say something. *Say Something!* She turned her head then *Ptooeey!*. Then she raised her face upward again until it became near the stair-bottom.

I held onto the sleeve of her clothes and screamed: *MOTHER BASEERA!* My father came to us due to my scream. He yelled at me: *Boy!* and leaned down towards the old lady. He started clapping several times next to Baseera's ears and started whistling by putting his fingers under his tongue. The old lady did not bat an eye. *She is blind, deaf and mute!* He said that to me and pointed at his head: *Boy! Have you gone mad?!* I stood up and started bolting towards the roof of our house. Upon reaching the roof, I heard my father's voice: *Cry boy! And wait for what may not return!* I cried because of Rahal and Zaina's absence, Baseera's silence and my father's cruelty.

**Erzal.**

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