

Section 1. Study of art and cultural studies

<https://doi.org/10.29013/ESR-23-3.4-3-5>

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TRANSLATING AL-FUZAI'S 'PREDICAMENT'

Abstract

Khalil I. Al-Fuzai (1940) – is a contemporary writer from the Eastern Province of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He wrote several collections of stories that deal with a number of social issues. He also has many articles in magazines and newspapers. Dohal [2] wrote an article about Al-Fuzai entitled “Al-Fuzai: A Saudi Arabian Writer” and translated a number of his stories like: “No Rendezvous” (Dohal [3]), “Resolution” (Dohal [2]), and “The Passage of Time” (Dohal [2]).

The story ‘Predicament’ [1] is one of the stories of the collection *A Moment of Collapse and Other Stories* published by the Literary Club in Tabuk in the year 2000 AD. The story presents jealousy as a social topic that may affect family life. In addition to addressing the issue of tourism, it is important in renewing family morale [2].

Keywords: Al-Fuzai, Saudi, short story, Predicament.

Al-Fuzai's 'Predicament': A Short Story

El Mina Restaurant is one of the most important landmarks of Mohammedia [3] the Moroccan city of oil overlooking the ocean located in the middle of the road between Rabat and Casablanca. In this restaurant he and his wife like to have dinner whenever the opportunity arises. They are impressed by this Spanish-designed restaurant with its romantic atmosphere, delicious seafood, and mostly foreign customers.

She says while browsing the menu after they have settled in one of the corners of the restaurant near a window overlooking a garden filled with a variety of flowers, orange and olive bushes, and giant cedar trees. The lighting in the garden gives an atmosphere of peace and joy:

– I haven't called my mom in a week. Please remind me when we get back to the hotel.

She is drawn to those homes marked by drought and hardship, as she once described them. She carries her mother and brothers with her wherever she goes. This overwhelming belonging to others bothers him as does his talk about his family.

He never told her that he was annoyed by her concern for her family at times when he wished she would take more care of him he does consider her bright face her unique beauty her infinite delicacy Pay attention to the waiter as he stands by him, inquiring about their choice of food.

He stares at the menu He imagines that the letters have turned into columns of ants They move to the edges of the menu and then disappear until the menu

appears empty of writing. He throws it in panic and searches for the ants but does not find them, when he picks them up again, he finds the letters in their places. The urge to laugh attacks him, so he resists it. He asks the waiter to wait a few more minutes. He says:

– My mother my mother my family the phone (and then)?

And when she begins to resent, he hastens to say:

– Okay yes, thank you. When we get back to the hotel, I'll call her myself.

She is still preoccupied with examining the menu. Once again, the waiter comes to register their order. She dictates to him her choice, so the husband says:

– And I'm like her make the order for two.

Then he turns to his wife after the waiter has left and says:

– Why don't you speak People will think we're just a couple, how can I tell them that we're in love The paths of love have thrown them from the Far East to the Far West?

She smiles He feels joy overshadowing everything around him. The ceiling of the wooden restaurant seems far to the top, and the walls are long and turn green, and the grass growing between its cracks seems greener, while the restaurant floor turns pink.

He remembers that a few days ago he caused her to feel unjustified anxiety.

– Have you lost your tongue. Why don't you speak?

As if she pulled him out of the depths of grief, he says:

– It seems that I annoy you with my words whenever I try to win your favor. I am off the right, and I unintentionally commit foolishness.

As if she wanted to make it easy for him, she jokingly says:

– How sweet you are in this situation. You take off the veil of ambiguity, and you give up the role of cruelty, so you return to the way you are kind, gentle and clear.

He takes her hands, kisses them, and says:

– Please don't get me wrong. I'm trying to please you, but you're too sensitive;

– You are reckless, as well.

He tries to deduce from the tones of her voice whether she is joking with him or reminding him of one of his faults, but her voice seems neutral, so he assumes good faith which is the golden rule by which he deals with all people until proven otherwise and as long as opinions raised about which they do not agree, whether during their direct discussion Or through her weekly column that she writes in the magazine (The Woman), but he considers this difference of opinion as a sign of health in the marital relationship, especially since this difference ends up with persuasion in favor of one of the parties without sensitivity or feeling of injustice.

He asks her spontaneously:

– What do you mean when you say I'm too reckless?

Don't you know what I mean? Of course, you are not with me Since we sat, she almost devoured you with her eyes Surely you know her.

He feels as if she slapped him with her words, looking where she points with her head. There sits a man and a woman looking at them and talking in a whisper.

Do you mean that woman; she is with a man, and I don't think she's looking at me, but I think she's looking at you?

– Don't fool around. She looks at you. Will you tell me what your relationship with her is? Tell me if you know her.

The waiter starts to bring the food. Despite its appetite smell, his hand does not reach, because the surprise has paralyzed his thinking.

– Are you kidding?

With anger on her face:

– I am not joking and you always embarrass me in such situations.

He wants to absorb her anger and says jokingly:

– (As long as the moon is with me there is no need for the stars).

She does not listen to what he has said. His astonishment increases when he sees the woman leaving her companion and heading to where they are sitting, with a serious smile on her lips. He is apprehensive about the occurrence of an unforeseen consequence. His wife quickly wipes her tears and regains her appearance, as if it were the calm before the storm. Questions pour into his mind:

What does this woman want? What would his wife's reaction be if any conversation took place between him and this woman? What was this ominous hour that led him to this restaurant? How will the situation be handled if the situation develops while they are in a public place?

The woman gets closer. His heart is beating more, and his mind is getting more and more distracted, and it seems to him that the restaurant floor revolves around him alone. The woman gets closer his heart is beating more. And when she becomes close to them. She extends her hand. He thinks she will shake his hand, and this is the beginning of the disaster. But she goes past him to shake his wife's

hand, and clasps her hand warmly as she asks with childish joy:

– Are you the writer Kawthar Jaber?

The question is the last thing he has expected, as his wife is the famous writer in her country. He does not think that her fame has reached the Arab Maghreb. His wife answers, and the clouds of anger disappear from her skies:

– Yes. I am!

– This is one of the virtues of coincidence. My name is Aisha. I am a reader and admirer of everything you write. Especially your column in (Al Maraa) magazine. I have had your books through my brother who is sitting over there, and he works in your country Do you know? In fact, you are prettier than you look in the picture (your photo) that you publish with your articles.

His happiness is revealed through a smile, as he sees the pleasure on his wife's face. And he mutters clear words. But he wants to say:

– Didn't I say she's looking at you?

5/3/1997 AD [4]

Translator's Notes:

1. This narrative was adapted from the Arabic source: Al-Fuzai, Khalil. *A Moment of Collapse and Other Stories*. لحظة انهيار و قصص أخرى Tabouk: Tabouk Literary Club, 2000.– P. 49–59.
2. This introduction is intended to put the story in its context.
3. Such an ellipsis is found in the source and I keep it while translating the story.
4. 5/3/1997 AD: This date is found in the Arabic source; apparently it is the date of this piece of writing.

References:

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