

# Epic of the Commander Dhat al-Himma

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## Introduction

THE FOLLOWING TEXT is extracted from the longest extant Arabic *sira* or epic, *Sirat al-amira Dhat al-Himma*, meaning “Epic of the Commander Dhat al-Himma.” The term *amira*, here translated “commander” can also be translated as “princess,” “warrior woman,” or “lady,” among other possibilities. It is a noun of feminine gender, and it signifies a title of respect and a position of authority. As for the name Dhat al-Himma, it could be translated very literally as “she of ambition,” or alternatively, “resolve,” “perseverance,” or “valor.” This is a nickname the heroine earns through success in her adventures. At birth, she was named Fatima, but as a hero, she became the *amira*, Dhat al-Himma. This is her story, her *sira*. This epic also contains the stories of many more people, but Dhat al-Himma stands out as the most prominent character in the epic. The excerpt published here is the coming-of-age portion of her story.

The events of *Sirat al-amira* take place from the late seventh through the ninth centuries, with allusions to later events of the tenth century. Composition of the epic began at an unspecified date, but Claudia Ott suggests between 1100 and 1143 in northern Syria.<sup>1</sup> The earliest confirmed references to *Sirat al-amira* occur in the twelfth century.<sup>2</sup> Claudia Ott

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1. Claudia Ott, *Metamorphosen des Epos: Sirat al-Mugabidin (Sirat al-Amira Dat al-Himma) zwischen Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit* (Leiden: Universiteit Leiden, 2003). She specifies post-Mirdasid northern Syria. The Mirdasid dynasty reigned from Aleppo 1024–1080. They were descended from the Bani Kilab tribe and shifted their loyalties back and forth between the Byzantines and the Arab Fatimids who ruled from Cairo.

2. Five references to support this dating: 1) Since stories of Dhat al-Himma and Battal (another hero of *Sirat al-amira*) are considered sources for the Byzantine epic *Digenis Akritas*, they are considered to have been known around the year 1000 in

identifies the first manuscript, dated 1430,<sup>3</sup> and the last of many handwritten copies, dated 1880.<sup>4</sup> Most extant versions are eighteenth- and nineteenth-century print and handwritten editions. In 1909, a man named Ali al-Maqanibi issued the definitive printed edition in Cairo. It was later reprinted in Beirut by the publishing house Al-Maktaba Al-Sha'biyya (since closed) in 1980. Scholars rely on this edition, whether the Cairo or the Beirut printing, although nothing is known of al-Maqanibi.<sup>5</sup> Scholarship on this epic includes a paraphrase and analysis (M. C. Lyons, *The Arabian Epic*, 1995), a dissertation analyzing the manuscripts (Claudia Ott, "Metamorphosen des Epos," 2003), a comparison of this

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northern Syria. Marius Canard, "Dhu 'l-Himma," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. Brill Online, <http://www.encyislam.brill.nl>. 2) Egyptian historian al-Kurti mentions *Ahadith al-Battal* (stories of al-Battal from *Sirat al-amira*) as known by 1160. Bridget Connelly, *Arab Folk Epic and Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 5. 3) Baghdadi physician and mathematician as-Samaw'al ibn Yahya 'l-Maghribi (d. 1174) wrote his spiritual autobiography around 1150. A Muslim convert from Judaism, he recalls that in his youth (age ten to thirteen), he enjoyed reading various stories. His favorites included stories of 'Antar, Dhat al-Himma and Alexander the Great. Dwight F. Reynolds, "Popular Prose in the Post-Classical Period." *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period*. ed. Roger Allen and D. S. Richards (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 254. 4) A Maghribi *shaykh* is said to have heard *al-Battal* (stories from *Sirat al-amira*) recited in Fatimid Cairo in 1279. Reported in anecdote from al-Mughulta'i in Dawud al-Antaki, *Tazyin al-aswaq* (Cairo: Bulaq, 1874), 55. 5) Historian Ibn Kathir (d. 1373) writes of fictional epics (referring to *Sirat al-amira* specifically) and inaccurate *siras* of prophet Muhammad, dismissing them both in the same statement. Reynolds "Popular Prose," 260.

3. Fragments in Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, MS arabe 3890 and Gotha, Landes- und Forschungsbibliothek, MS orient A 2545, 2546 and 2556. The colophon with the date, according to Ott, is given in Paris 3890, f. 88b.

4. London, British Library, OIOC, Or. 3146-3152, copied in Cairo on behalf of Albrecht Frh. Von Kremer.

5. 'Ali ibn Musā al- Maqānibī, *Sirat al-amira Dhāt al-Himma wa-waladibā 'Abd al-Wabbāb* [ . . . ], 7 vols. (Maktabat 'Abd al-Hamid Ahmad Hanafi, 1909; repr., Beirut: Al-Maktaba al-Thaqafiyya, 1980). Other scholars and I have only just begun comparing the Cairo and Beirut printings. There do not seem to be great differences, but this is an area for further research. The Beirut version was used for this publication.

epic with the Greek epic *Digenis Akritas* (Nabila Ibrahim, *Sirat al-amira Dhat al-Himma*, 1968), a character study (Hani al-'Amad, *Malmih al-shakhsiyya al-'arabiyya fi sirat al-amira Dhat al-Himma*, 1988), a general discussion (Shawki 'Abd al-Hakim, *Al-Amira Dhat al-Himma*, 1995), and articles and chapters by Remke Kruk and others. There is not yet any translation into English of more than short passages from this epic.

## Genre of the *Sira*

This epic developed as a cycle of stories celebrating the Bani Kilab<sup>6</sup> through the tribe's heroes and their adventures. The term *sira* has been variously rendered into English as "epic," a narrative of heroic journeys that cohere into the formation of a nation or community, originating from studies of ancient Greek narrative poetry; "saga," emphasizing its focus upon a heroic family, originating from study of Old Norse/Icelandic narrative poetry; and "romance," a narrative of adventures, misadventures, and aimless wanderings, originating from medieval European narrative poetry. The term *sira*, derived from a root meaning "to travel," refers to a life story, connoting an exemplary life. The original *sira*, which dates from the seventh century, is *Al-Sira al-nabawiyya*, accounts of the life of the Prophet Muhammad. By the eleventh century, usage of the term *sira*<sup>7</sup> came to include autobiographies and folk epics soon thereafter.<sup>8</sup> Ferial Ghazoul describes the *sira* as "the convergence of three

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6. Bani Kilab (Kilab bin Rabi'a bin 'Amir) was a tribe of the 'Amir bin Sa'sa'a group in Western Central Arabia at least as early as the sixth century. The tribe maintained peaceful relations with some neighboring tribes, despite intertribal tensions, while feuds persisted between Kilab and their allies and other tribes that bordered their region. The tribe advanced north-northwest, some settling in northern Syria and others on the far side of the Euphrates. *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., Brill Online, 2nd ed., s.v. "Kilab b. Rabi'a" and "'Amir b. Sa'sa'a," <https://referenceworks-brillonline-com>.

7. Singular *sira* becomes *sirat* in a compound title such as *Sirat al-amira Dhat al-Himma*. The plural in Arabic is *siyar*, but in this article I have used the plural *siras* for the purpose of accessibility for anglophone readers.

8. See Kristen Brustad et al., *Interpreting the Self: Autobiography in the Arabic Literary Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 39-40.

literary currents: the pre-Islamic Arabian war narratives (*Ayyām al-‘Arab*), the Persian royal epics, and the Judeo-Christian hagiographies.”<sup>9</sup> Certainly the *sira* genre developed within a multilingual context of popular literature.

It is also important to note that the *sira* genre developed in oral tradition, with handwritten manuscripts and then printed texts providing a reference point for storytellers who continued to entertain audiences with live performances through the twentieth century. The degree of consistency or difference between the various manuscripts and printed editions is a topic for further research. There are certainly shared plot points between different versions of the narrative, and this excerpt focuses on the beginning of the main character’s life story in this epic as it has developed over centuries. This translation relies exclusively on one single printed edition (see “The Edition” below). However, the translation is focused on the literary value of the text to entertain an audience because that is the primary aim in the *sira* genre: the creators of Arabic epics sought first to entertain. Secondary purposes included informing, preaching, recording history, or documenting famous legends.

*Siras* draw on historical events, although they are not to be considered conventional accounts of history. As Peter Heath observed, heroic cycles cover almost all of recorded pre-Islamic and Islamic history: early Persian history (*Story of Firuz Shah, Sirat Iskandar / Alexander the Great*); the Sassanid dynasty (*Story of Bahram Gur*); pre-Islamic South Arabian history (*Sirat al-Malik Sayf Ben Dhi Yazan*); pre-Islamic North Arabian history (*Sirat ‘Antar* and the *Story of al-Zir Salim*); early Islamic history (*Sirat Amir Hamza*); tribal feuds and holy wars of the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates (*Sirat al-Amira Dhat al-Himma, Ghazwat al-Arqaṭ, Al-Badr-Nar, Sirat ‘Ali al-Zaybaq, Sirat Sayf al-Tijan*); conquests of North Africa (*Sirat Bani Hilal*); and Fatimid and Mamluk history (*Sirat al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah, Sirat al-Malik al-Zahir Baybars, Sirat ‘Ali al-Zaybaq*).<sup>10</sup> Like ancient Greek epics, the *sira* combines historic persons

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9. Ferial Ghazoul, *Nocturnal Poetics: The Arabian Nights in Comparative Context* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 1996), 44.

10. Peter Heath, *The Thirsty Sword: Sirat ‘Antar and the Arabic Popular Epic* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1996), xv.

and events with imaginary characters and situations. Only one *sira* has an entirely imaginary setting: *Sirat Sayf al-Tijan*, according to M. C. Lyons.<sup>11</sup> However, a close second is *Sayf ben dhi Yazan*.<sup>12</sup>

The valorized past of the Arabic epic encompasses all communities. Heath describes *Sirat ‘Antar*’s “view of human society” as “cosmopolitan, because its conception of history is cosmic.”<sup>13</sup> *Sirat al-amira* also presents characters according to characteristics considered significant within a universal pattern that notes religious or cultural differences in passing, focusing character formation around such characteristics as consistent piety, physical strength, dazzling beauty, or cunning trickery. This “universal pattern of history” is a shared feature of *Sirat ‘Antar* and *Sirat al-amira*: in both epics, the protagonists help Byzantines against Franks, Arabs against Byzantines, and Arabs against Arabs.

Lyons adopts Viktor Shklovsky’s “linking” construction to describe the narrative structure of hero cycles (as opposed, for example, to the “framing” construction of *One Thousand and One Nights* or *The Arabian Nights*, titled in Arabic *Alf layla wa-layla*).<sup>14</sup> This construction links episodes of a hero’s life or of a hero’s clan. The numerous episodes of this epic read like a storyteller’s train of thought, frequently moving from one setting to another (with an effect similar to the “Meanwhile, back at the ranch” transition made popular in American storytelling). Minor resolution ends some, but not all, of the narrative’s sections of varied lengths. The flexibility of section lengths and endings enables storytellers to resolve conflict in the story or to leave the audience in suspense, according to their own discretion. The flexible form of story cycles enables narrators to tailor a storytelling session to the audience, often building on a standard episode several times. Lyons observes in his survey of Arabic epics that “The narrators’ technique of accumulating

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11. M. C. Lyons, *The Arabian Epic: Heroic and Oral Storytelling*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1:12. Lyons compiled a paraphrased collection of one dozen works in the *sira* genre into a three-volume set of texts with a taxonomical analysis.

12. Lena Jayyusi, *The Adventures of Sayf Ben Dhi Yazan: An Arab Folk Epic* (Cairo: American University Press in Cairo, 1996).

13. Heath *Thirsty Sword*, 162.

14. Lyons, *Arabian Epic*, 1:73.

disasters is exemplified in the *Sirat Dhat al-Himma*,” so this epic is particularly suspenseful.<sup>15</sup>

The *sira* consists of rhymed and unrhymed prose and poetry and includes features of spoken Arabic such as local pronunciation and vocabulary. Arabic epics were performed by and for common people and may include very base humor (such as a scene in *Sirat al-amira* in which a fleeing thief cannot wait to cross a dangerous stretch of land before dismounting his horse to urinate, and so gets eaten by wild beasts). The association of epic with refinement in Europe first appears in Torquato Tasso’s sixteenth-century *Discourses on the Heroic Poem*: “The poet should not touch those subjects that cannot be treated poetically and in which there is not place for fiction and artistry, and he should reject subjects too rude, to which he cannot add splendor.”<sup>16</sup> Arabic epics, thus differing in some respects from European notions of “epic,” still relate to human experiences and the daily lives of audience members through shared values and lasting literary qualities such as humor and suspense.

The *sira* genre allows for common language and humor. Nevertheless, the freedom of creating imaginary fiction precipitated some differences of opinion in medieval Islamic culture regarding its legality and prudence.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps this is why at every level, the popular narrative seeks religious legitimation to affirm its place in cultural heritage (not to belittle the functions of references to God to stimulate vocal participation).<sup>18</sup> The characters, performers, and books open with praise of God, thus establishing the *sira* as an art form beyond reproach in societies publicly guided by religion.

15. Lyons, 1:62.

16. Torquato Tasso, “From Discourses on the Heroic Poem,” *A Grammar of Literary Criticism: Essays in Definition of Vocabulary, Concepts, and Aims*, ed. Lawrence Sargent Hall (New York: Macmillan, 1965), 13.

17. See Seeger A. Bonebakker, “Some Medieval Views on Fantastic Stories,” *Quaderni di Studi Arabi* 10 (1992): 21-43. For attitudes towards popular literature, see Reynolds “Popular Prose,” 252-54.

18. In the context of performances that last hours on end, references to the prophet Muḥammad or to God help reintegrate the audience since they require appropriate responses. See Dwight Fletcher Reynolds, *Heroic Poets, Poetic Heroes: The Ethnography of Performance in an Arabic Oral Epic Tradition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995) 184.

The printed version on which this translation relies opens with a religious paragraph that includes quotations from the Quran, reflecting the oral tradition of opening storytelling performances with a religious reference or prayer. Then it names the famous heroes of Bani Kilab who feature in this epic and further provides a spurious *isnād* in order to fit into oral traditions that lay claim to authenticity by tracing a genealogy of narration:

The one[s] who narrated this amazing epic, and the strange, outlandish events it contains, [are] ‘Ali ibn Musa al-Maqanibi, Al-Mahzab ibn Bakr al-Mazini, Salih al-Ja‘fari, Yazid ibn ‘Ammar al-Muzani, ‘Abdullah ibn Wahb al-Yamani, ‘Awf ibn Fahd al-Fazari, Sa’d ibn Malik al-Tamimi, Ahmad al-Shimshati, Sabir al-Mara‘ashi, and Najd ibn Hisham al-‘Amiri...All said that there was no one among the Arabs in the time of the Umayyads, not even the elite people of Ma‘add ibn ‘Adnan, more brave, strong, capable, persevering, dangerous, knowledgeable, proud, wise, of a nobler genealogy, or stronger in battle than Bani Kilab.<sup>19</sup>

Immediately after describing the noble character of the Bani Kilab tribe, the narrator contrasts them with Bani Sulaym, who pride themselves on their great wealth. As we see in the below excerpt, these two tribes are vicious rivals. Yet the narrator presents a formidable foe with a measure of respect, and two enemies will team up in the face of a common threat.

Having located the opening setting in Yemen during the reign of

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19. My translation. Ma‘add ibn ‘Adnan is a mythic forefather in Arab genealogies. As for the authors or narrators named, Lane declared “none of them are at present known” (in nineteenth-century Cairo). Edward William Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (London: Alexander Gardner, 1895), 422. To this day, not a single one of the ten men listed in this genealogy has been verified in biographical literature. The only narrator mentioned throughout the text of this epic is Najd ibn Hisham, and he is qualified as *mu‘allif, sabib, musannif* (compiler, etc.). Even that attribution serves more to authenticate the text than to indicate its authorship. Claudia Ott hypothesizes that “The fact that [Najd ibn Hisham] descends from the Bani Kilab, just like the heroes of the Epic, is a probable reason for his ascribed authorship.” Ott, *Metamorphosen*, 42-45. I would like to thank Ulrich Marzolph for his personal communication regarding authorship of this epic.



‘Abd al-Malik ibn Marwan (685-705 CE), in a context of tribal competition, the narrator focuses on a series of heroes, beginning with the great-great-grandfather of Fatima/Dhat al-Himma.<sup>20</sup> Volume one of *Sirat al-amira* consists of at least three distinct sections. The first (pages 1-532) recounts the lives of heroes of Bani Kilab. Events of the first forty pages take place exclusively in the deserts of Yemen and Arabia, with the first mention of the caliphate occurring when Fatima’s grandfather Suhsah is summoned to Damascus because of an anticipated Byzantine attack.<sup>21</sup> The second section (pages 532-53) marks a shift in setting from the Arabian peninsula to the caliphal capitals of Damascus and Baghdad. The narrative departs from stories of Bani Kilab, relying instead on historical anecdotes regarding the transition from the Umayyad caliphate to the Abbasid period. The *sira* includes a distinctly anti-Umayyad flavor, focusing on the establishment of the Abbasid capital and the wonders of Baghdad, a city long celebrated in Arabic popular literature. The third section (pages 553-81) narrates Fatima’s departure from the desert as she leads the united Arab tribes to Baghdad and the start of her military career in response to the Byzantine incursions that the princess Malatya begins. She is soon married to her cousin and later gives birth to her son Abdelwahab who learns his skills of chivalry from her. Never does she withdraw from commanding troops and participating in feats of strength until she and her son retire together at the end of the *sira*. Fatima/Dhat al-Himma is the star of the show until the last line of the first volume. After the first volume, the focus of the episodes circulates among Fatima, her son Abdelwahab, members of their band of allies, and other heroes and villains throughout their world.

The passages of poetry in this epic fulfill several functions, most

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20. This epic may open in Yemen due to “Yemen’s preeminent role in ancient Arabian civilization and folklore.” Franz Rosenthal, “Muslim Social Values and Literary Criticism: Reflections of the Ḥadīth of Umm Zar’,” *Oriens* 34 (1994): 31-56, doi:10.2307/1580505.

21. Caliphate: The term “caliph” refers to the political authority figure of the Sunni Muslim community from the seventh to thirteenth centuries. It has historical roots in religious authority (from the early seventh century), but the caliphate in the period of this epic refers specifically to two political dynasties: the Umayyads (reigned 661-750 from Damascus) and the Abbasids (reigned 750-1258 from Baghdad).

notably to express emotions and to perform eloquence. During emotional scenes, characters may express themselves in poetry to gain the sympathy of the audience, similar to actors bursting into song in musicals. Many of the poems in this epic contribute to the action of the *sira*, though one of their most appealing characteristics is the ability to arouse emotions. Sometimes the poetry paraphrases the prose instead of adding new action. In such cases, poetry offers an artistic expression alternative to that of prose and proves effective for long dialogues or monologues. The poetry and prose do not differ in content, but in function. Poems can emphasize and enhance an event, and the narrative may also build up to particularly expressive poetry. Heroes may break into verse to give expression to internal turmoil and deep human emotions (such as grief, anger, love, battle rage, longing, triumph, and religious fervor). Through poetry, the audience glimpses characters’ inner selves, as speakers express the story as their own. Dwight Reynolds observes that “the emotional core of the epic tradition lies in the speeches of its heroes.”<sup>22</sup>

### Fatima as Epic Hero

Epic may be considered the story of a hero’s life cycle. The first stage in the hero’s life consists of exceptional birth, childhood, and development. Throughout childhood, the hero grows quickly and astonishes others by feats of strength. Fatima looks like a ten year old when she is only five.<sup>23</sup> Soon thereafter, she is captured during a raid and grows up as a prisoner of war in a foreign camp. There she and her nurse are assigned the task of herding camels and horses. In the fields, Fatima rides horses and teaches herself the arts of combat. She makes weapons out of sticks and reeds and learns methods of attack and defense.

The exploits of young heroes lead naturally to the second stage in the hero’s life: accomplishment as a warrior, a defender of his or her people. The young warrior presents a threat to social order and simultaneously defends the society. In this phase, the hero ventures out away from the familiarity and the structure of kin and society in order to prove his

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22. Reynolds, *Heroic Poets*, 163.

23. Maqanibi, *Sirat al-amira Dhat al-Himma*, 1:504.

or her physical strength and independence. In the case of Fatima, she departs from usual women's roles in order to conduct raids and lead warriors into battle even as she works for the benefit of her community.

As the warrior matures, his or her exploits lead increasingly toward a position of leadership and rulership in the third and final stage of the life cycle. Thus, social values of civilization gradually overcome the wild, chaotic nature of the heroic outsider. In her latter years, the power of the *amira* Dhat al-Himma expands and she becomes a respected authority. She does not abandon military missions until she and her son retire together to the Hijaz region in the Arabian Peninsula, where they pass away within months of one another in the final scenes of *Sirat al-amira*. She upholds communal values such as hospitality from an early age, and she comes to support the ruling order of society by uniting the Bedouin tribes of her region in the service of the caliph.<sup>24</sup>

### Performance Context

Claudia Ott has investigated the interactions of storyteller and audience through oral formulas and marginalia in manuscripts of *Sirat al-amira*.<sup>25</sup> The formulas appear in large letters, written in red ink, and they consist of the following: *qala al-rawi* (the storyteller said); *ya sada* (addresses to the audience); religious prayers; narrative formulas reminding audience of framework of the performance; and introductory and concluding formulas at the beginning and end of each section. While all these formulas are present in the manuscripts, many have been dropped in the printed editions. Ott also includes interesting remarks on the presence of readers' notes added in the margins of the manuscripts. Her study demonstrates the unique combination of orality and literacy present in *Sirat al-amira* and the *sira* genre.

Historical accounts of *sira* performances reveal a high level of

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24. Maqanibi, 1:556.

25. Claudia Ott, "From the Coffeehouse into the Manuscript: The Storyteller and His Audience in the Manuscripts of an Arabic Epic," *Oriente Moderno* 22 (83), no. 2 (2003): 443-51, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25817888>. Also see Ott, *Metamorphosen*, 79-83.

performer/audience interaction, consisting of ongoing, noninterruptive exclamations and anticipatory predictions.<sup>26</sup> In Egypt, whole factions form among people familiar with *Al-Sira al-hilaliyya* in support of favorite characters, causing rivalry similar to that between sports fans. When a Baghdad storyteller in the early twentieth century stopped his narration of *Al-Sira al-hilaliyya* with the hero in prison, an impatient listener (a man in his early fifties) waited for him outside his door and (holding a dagger) demanded the resolution to the scene. The storyteller accommodatingly opened his book and quietly read from where he left off. When the hero had escaped from prison, the listener caught his breath and returned to his home, thinking of the hero.<sup>27</sup>

The most recent account of traditional, public performances of *Sirat al-amira* occurs in a 1997 article by Remke Kruk and Claudia Ott, "In the Popular Manner': Sira-recitation in Marrakesh anno 1997."<sup>28</sup> The phrase "in the popular manner" comes from Edward William Lane's nineteenth-century description of 'Anatira, Cairo's performers of *Sirat 'Antar* and *Sirat al-amira*. He mentions that "a few years" previously they had also recited stories from *Alflayla wa-layla* (*One Thousand and One Nights*, also known as *The Arabian Nights*) and *Sirat Sayf ben dhi*

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26. Reynolds, *Heroic Poets*, 183-84.

27. Yunis Sa'id al-Baghdadi, "*Shaqawat*" *Baghdad fi al-'asr al-madi* (Baghdad: Matba'at As'ad, 1962), 33-35.

28. Kruk points out that while the phrase has been understood as "in colloquial Arabic," *siras* such as 'Antar were also recited in other registers of Arabic. The performance context and linguistic registers of Arabic allowed storytellers to gauge their audience and adjust their language in order to captivate the audience's attention. See Remke Kruk, "Sirat 'Antar ibn Shaddad," *Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006): 302-303. Remke Kruk and Claudia Ott, "In the Popular Manner': Sira-recitation in Marrakesh anno 1997," *Edebiyat* 10, no. 2 (1999): 183-97. Also see Kruk, "Sirat 'Antar" 302-3. Another 1990s *sira* storyteller, Abu Shadi, performed regularly at Café al-Nawfara in Damascus. His performances of *Sirat Baybars* and *Sirat 'Antar* were intended to revive the *sira*-storytelling tradition that was once so popular in Middle Eastern coffee houses. See T. Herzog, "Présentation de deux séances de hakawati et deux manuscrits de la *Sirat Baybars* recueillis en Syrie en 1994," *Mémoire de Maîtrise*, Marseille: Université d'Aix-en-Provence, 1994.

*Yazan*, and attributes their decreased performance to the “great scarcity of copies of these two works.”<sup>29</sup> Yet performances of *Sirat al-amira* continued despite Lane’s observation that “This work is even more scarce [in print] than any of those before mentioned.”<sup>30</sup> The *Anatira* read *Sirat ‘Antar* from the book, chanting the poetry and reading the prose “in the popular manner,” without any accompanying instruments (as opposed to performers of *Al-Sira al-bilaliyya*).<sup>31</sup> According to Lane, performances occurred in coffee shops throughout Egypt, especially evenings of religious festivals, affording “attractive and rational entertainments.”<sup>32</sup>

The 1997 performances witnessed by Remke Kruk and Claudia Ott took place in Dar al-Barud, a modest orchard park adjoining the minaret of the Kutubiyya mosque in Marrakesh. These daily *sira* performances began in the late afternoon, ending in time for *maghrib* (evening prayer). The storyteller, Si Milud (1936–2000), also a bookseller and a veteran soldier, learned his repertoire by listening to others. He performed in the same corner of the park for many years, where fifty to eighty men gathered to hear him. Though many Moroccan storytellers have recited narratives from memory alone, Si Milud read from books. However, he was thoroughly familiar with his repertoire, knowing much of it from memory. Most of his books were Cairo editions. Of the seven *siras* in his repertoire, the most popular (and thus most recited) were *Sirat ‘Antar* and *Sirat al-amira*. For more on the significance of the dichotomy between male audience and female protagonist, see “Gender” below.

## Borderlands

Fatima Dhat al-Himma is an ambiguous character since she does not embody the social ideal of a woman focused on her household (clearly favored by the caliph); neither does she share all the characteristics of

29. Lane, *Account of the Manners and Customs*, 421. For other historical accounts of *sira* performances, especially by European travelers, see Connelly, *Arab Folk Epic*, 5–7.

30. Lane, 421.

31. Lane, 421.

32. Lane, 397. For a twentieth-century testimony to *sira* performance in Egypt, see Taha Husayn, *Al-Ayyam* (Cairo: Matba‘at Amin ‘Abd al-Rahman, 1929), 21, 83.

great *sira* heroes because the great heroes of her caliber, both regarding her abilities and her prominence in the *sira*, are all male. The figurative masks that characters don and discard often contradict the loyalties they demonstrate through their actions. In a premodern setting, before passports and identity cards, disguise could be equated with treason or heresy.

There are two sets of border dynamics at work in *Sirat al-amira*: 1) the symbolic borderland of the hero as one who lies just outside of civilization; and 2) the political borderland between Arab and Byzantine territories. In the first sense, the events that occur in *Sirat al-amira* could take place in any location. The hero crosses boundaries, whether by disguise or by transgressing social custom. At this level, the hero oversteps standards based on age, gender, class, or civilized norms. In the second sense, the events of *Sirat al-amira* take on a particularity distinct to the Arab-Byzantine border and its culturally diverse populations. At this level, a rich variety of characters trespasses boundaries of language, religion, and communal identity. Even the events that occur far from this latter border take place at both levels due to the constant presence of both heroes and tensions between communities.

The setting of *Sirat al-amira Dhat al-Himma* shifts from Arabia and Iraq to Syria, Egypt, Byzantium, Morocco, Spain, and vaguely remote and imaginary locations. However, most of the action occurs in the border region between the Byzantine Empire and the Islamic caliphate. Narratives such as *Sirat al-amira*, not to mention a host of other popular stories of eastern Mediterranean border regions, originate in a historical context consisting of a variety of interactions, including, but not limited to, violence. Ouyang calls *Sirat al-amira* “the quintessential frontier epic.”<sup>33</sup> Border dynamics represent the widespread presence of differences within humanity. Communities may identify with the tensions of border life because they are under attack by invading forces (such as the Crusaders) or by foreign powers (such as colonial authorities), or are faced by unfamiliar ideas (whether within or between communities), or when encountering any different outlook. Frontier narratives appeal

33. Wen-Chin Ouyang, “Romancing the Epic: ‘Umar al-Nu‘man as Narrative of Empowerment,” *Arabic and Middle Eastern Literature* 3, no. 1 (2000): 5–18, 11.



broadly for many generations due to their creative presentation of human encounters and their ensuing drama.

The Arab and Byzantine administrations were the two most prominent powers in the region during the time portrayed in this narrative. Historian Michael Bonner writes:

The Arab-Byzantine frontier, like most pre-modern frontiers, consisted of a wide zone rather than a specific boundary line...

This frontier, like others, has been described as a place of mixing and fusion, a region where the residents on both sides had more in common with one another than with the people of their own hinterlands and capitals.<sup>34</sup>

This political in-between zone, like that of the land beyond cultivated fields, lies outside of dominant social structures and so provides a context of liminality.<sup>35</sup> The liminal border, compared with the rigid social structures of cities, provides an equalizing ground for brave and strong individuals to coexist in a territory of wary *communitas*, a pragmatic reliance upon oneself and others who prove themselves worthy. In a borderland setting, a shift in loyalties may affect the whole community. Some characters demonstrate particular ambiguity in their identities, often employing methods of disguise (for spying, attacking, escaping, etc.). Many characters maintain familiarity with foreign languages, while the experts in disguise draw on proficiency and fluency in a wide variety of languages such as Greek, Arabic, Berber, Turkish, Armenian, and Syriac. Linguistic knowledge also appears when characters translate for one another.

Characters frequently convert, changing their religion, and frequently revert, returning to their former religious identity. They may also masquerade as coreligionists, while serving rulers of the other side of the

34. Michael Bonner, ed., *Arab-Byzantine Relations in Early Islamic Times*, The Formation of the Classical Islamic World, vol. 8 (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), xxv, xxvii.

35. Liminality, from the Latin *limen* (threshold), indicates a space or time of transition. The term has entered academic discourse through the anthropological theories of Arnold van Gennep, *Les Rites de passage* (1909) and of Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969), among others.

border. Such radical manipulation of social categories reveals the playfulness of *sira* storytellers and the popular appeal of calling identities into question. Women and men may also disguise themselves as members of the opposite sex, especially women disguised as men while engaging in battle. Fatima does not technically disguise herself in this episode, although many of her opponents assume she is a man. *Sirat al-amira* calls into question the nature of truth and identity. In a premodern context, stories about changing identities highlight the porous nature of borders and point to the complexity of interactions between individuals, communities, and ideas of diverse cultural origins.

## Gender

As far as we know, this epic was composed and retold by male storytellers. The imaginary world and characters of this epic reflect the patriarchy and hegemonies present in social structures of the medieval Arab region. Nevertheless, the female identity of Fatima and other characters is significant. Their female gender constitutes a social drawback. Similar to the black identity of characters such as Abdelwahab or Antar, a female identity makes these characters vulnerable in a way that male characters are not.<sup>36</sup> The female identity may be hidden or disguised, or may be overridden by other marks of social power. This complexity of power and social relations reflects the historical reality of the storytellers and their audience.

*Sirat al-amira* highlights women warriors more than any other Arabic work.<sup>37</sup> Comparisons exist between women warriors in Arabic epics and their counterparts in other genres, such as Arabic historical sources. For example, Aliya Mustafa Mubarak identifies sixty-seven women who

36. For more about blackness, see Rachel Schine, "Conceiving the Pre-Modern Black-Arab Hero: On the Gendered Production of Racial Difference in *Sirat al-amirah dbat al-himmah*," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 48, no. 3 (2017): 298-326, doi:10.1163/1570064X-12341346. For more about social drawbacks and heroes, see Heath, *Thirsty Sword*, 70-72.

37. For more about women in Arabic epics, see Lyons, *Arabian Epic*, 1:109-18; and Remke Kruk, *The Warrior Women of Islam: Female Empowerment in Arabic Popular Literature* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014).

participated in wars fought by the prophet Muhammad including fighters, medical assistants, and morale supporters.<sup>38</sup> The woman warrior is also a shared character type among folk literatures across cultures.<sup>39</sup> Remke Kruk has written a series of articles on “warrior women” in *Sirat al-amira* and other Arabic epics. She identifies “the gallant female warrior” as a stock character of Arabic and neighboring cultures’ popular literature, appearing in Arabic epics as well as the Persian *Book of Kings*, the Turkish *Book of Dede Korkut*, and unnamed Byzantine works.

Kruk’s most recent book explains how the presence of women in epics connects to gender issues in their societies of origin: “the martial women do not represent the female angle in a male discourse, but embody the perceptions, anxieties and desires of men.”<sup>40</sup> Such anxieties include the social stigma of having only daughters, anxieties and risks of marriage and sexuality, and the fascination with the (sometimes sexual) appeal of domination and dominant women. This analysis complements and applies to many other literary contexts, including female characters in popular Arabic poetry or in classical Arabic literature, not to mention female characters in many non-Arabic sources.

Kruk reads *Sirat al-amira* as a collection of “warrior woman” stories, composed within and around the model of its eponymous heroine, and states that warrior women “are present in all the heroic cycles.”<sup>41</sup> She defines “warrior women” as women who “are trained in the chivalrous

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38. ‘Aliya Mustafa Mubarak, *Sababiyat mujabidat* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya; Casablanca: Maktabat al-Salam, n.d.).

39. For the other side of the historical Arab-Byzantine border, consider Maximo of Byzantine Anatolia in *Digenis Akritas*, available in accessible English translation: Denison Hull, trans., *Digenis Akritas: The Two-Blood Border Lord* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1972). For Fatima of Budim in the Balkans, see Milman Parry and Albert Lord, *Serbocroatian Heroic Songs*, vol. 1, *Novi Pazar: English Translations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1954), 53-89.

40. Kruk, *Warrior Women of Islam*, 225.

41. Remke Kruk, “Back to the Boudoir: Arabic versions of the *Sirat al-amir Hamza*, warrior princesses, and the *Sira*’s literary unity,” in “*Der muoz mir süezer worte jeben*”: *Liber amicorum für Norbert Voorwinden*, ed. Ludo Jongen and Sjaak Onderdelinden, *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur älteren Germanistik*, Bd. 48 (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997), 135.

arts of fighting and combat,” and brings attention to Sabine Schwab’s “Brunhilde-motif”: “the woman who consents to marry only the man who defeats her in combat.”<sup>42</sup> Among the numerous women in *Sirat al-amira* of which she writes are a Byzantine noblewoman and six Christian princesses, a “spirited Bedouin girl,” five Arab women, and a ferocious Georgian queen. Clearly physical valor is not a particularly male trait in *Sirat al-amira*, and the femininity of Princess Dhat al-Himma is not exceptional since there are many other strong female characters.

### Servanthood: Class Intersecting with Gender

The storyteller of this epic transports the audience to an imaginary historic world of great danger, especially for a young woman. Tribes regularly conduct raids on one another, with the loser forfeiting livestock, possessions, family members, and even one’s own freedom. The tribal system demands a life for a life, with the family of anyone wronged seeking retribution because their honor depends on it. Feuds between tribes can last generations, and weakness proves deadly. Fortunes change swiftly, with a patron and a client switching positions overnight. It is this society that shapes Fatima, and in which she succeeds and rises to a position of fame, fortune, and formidable reputation.

Fatima, like many epic heroes, is raised in seclusion from her people. She grows up with a secret identity, an unknown ancestry. Captured as a prisoner of war in a raid by an enemy tribe, she has a childhood characterized by the stigmas of orphanhood and servanthood. When Fatima is captured by the Bani Tayy, she abhors the ease with which her nurse Suda agrees to serve her new masters. She refuses to comply, saying: “I’m no slave-girl” (*Ma ana jariyya wa-la khadima*). This scene of Fatima’s indignant assertion of her dignity is also the first time the text mentions a facial covering. Fatima wears a burqa’ in defiance of her inferior social position, it may be implied; she covers her face according to the fashion of noblewomen, claiming that she serves no one but the Creator (*al-Bari*).<sup>43</sup> This epic mentions veiling practices only very rarely,

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42. Kruk, *Warrior Women of Islam*, 214, 217.

43. Maqanibi, *Sirat al-amira*, 1:506.

and veiling is a sign of nobility, a custom of the upper classes on both sides of the Arab-Byzantine border. Fatima's self-assertion through confident words, brave deeds, and adoption of upper-class veiling practices defies her low social status as she develops from a child to a warrior.

Despite Fatima's social setbacks, the heroine's pedigree asserts itself to her and to others. After she learns the identity of her father and her ancestry, Fatima reveals her true parentage to the tribe that captured and raised her in servitude. The first to respond to her announcement is her master, Harith. He says his soul told him that she was not a servant, and that were it not for his family, he would follow and serve her.<sup>44</sup> Just as Harith sensed the heroine's noble lineage, so Fatima and her father, when they face one another as unknown adversaries, find themselves sympathizing with one another and unable to harm one another. They later recognize one another and realize that their blood relation had impaired their combat skills. Similarly, when Fatima's mother first sees her grown daughter dressed as a man, she cannot recognize her and yet "blood moves to blood" (*fa-tabarraka al-dam ila al-dam*). She tells her husband that though she does not know the stranger, her blood moved to him. He says, "This is no boy. She's your daughter Fatima!"<sup>45</sup>

## Conclusion

*Sirat al-amira* testifies to the ambiguity of social divisions, particularly gender hierarchies, to the shared vicissitudes of human life and to the artistic and creative beauty of Arabic literature both oral and written. Sara Webber extends the frontier metaphor to draw attention to literary hierarchies and specifically "the borderland between folk and institutional or establishment . . . literatures and [how] the skirmishes that take place there can provide . . . new perspectives on the creative process and its product, and on the politics of canonization itself."<sup>46</sup> The literary borderland permits the mixing of popular and elite genres and motifs

44. Maqanibi, 1:522.

45. Maqanibi, 1:524.

46. Sabra J. Webber, "On Canonicity, Literacy, and Middle Eastern Folk Narrative," *Edebiyat* 4 (1993): 35.

in order to engage a variety of audiences for many generations. Like the heroes of its narrative, the epic *Sirat al-amira* straddles borders both social and geographical. Socially, the *sira* appeals to both lettered and unlettered audiences. Geographically, this *sira* likely reached audiences speaking Arabic, Greek, and other languages, and it continues to cross political boundaries to this day. From a baby girl who disappointed her father's hopes for political authority, and who seemed to him a dangerous burden, to a young prisoner of war, and finally a warrior and a commander, Fatima Dhat al-Himma and her heroic *sira* contribute a frequently neglected face to the gallery of medieval Arabic literature.



## The Edition

This edition is based on the 1980 Beirut printing of the original Maqanibi edition (Cairo, 1909), first known printed edition of *Sirat al-amira*.<sup>47</sup> The Arabic text has been prepared as it appears in this printing, except for a few emendations to correct spelling (which are indicated in notes).<sup>48</sup>

While this edition does not rely on any manuscripts versions of the epic, this open access digitized version of an eighteenth/nineteenth-century manuscript of *Sirat al-amira Dhat al-Himma* shows the conformity between this manuscript and the 1909 and 1980 printed editions used by twenty-first century scholars.<sup>49</sup>

<https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b110030718/f4.item>

47. Maqānibī, *Sirat al-amira Dhāt al-Himma wa-waladibā*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Al-Maktaba al-Thaqafiyya, 1980).

48. There are no translation rights to request because the publishing house closed and is thus impossible to contact, and nothing is known of Maqānibī or his estate.

49. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS Ar. 3840.

## The Translation

My guiding philosophy for this translation is to craft a readable and accessible story for a broad audience, especially undergraduate students, while providing a comprehensive, sense-for-sense translation of the text. In addition to making the text readable for its own sake, this translation also aims to contribute to the field of *sira* studies specifically, and to the humanities and social sciences generally. The length of this epic, even simply of the excerpt presented here, requires editing out some parts that are overly repetitive. Twentieth-century storytellers of Arabic epics had printed texts present (including the one used here), but they adjusted the narrative for their immediate audience.<sup>50</sup> This translation takes its cue from this tradition, transforming a literary text into a literary translation aimed at entertaining an audience. I aspire to retain the life of the text, including the details that I find important and interesting. For example, I take great care to include dialogue, translating the voices of the characters as much as possible. Yet in the process of bringing certain details (such as characterization) to the foreground, other details must necessarily fade into the background.<sup>51</sup> In order to focus on Fatima as the protagonist of this narrative, other characters in the epic must at times step out of the limelight.

Especially for those readers following the Arabic text, the style of this translation involves three kinds of changes based on this translator's biases and preferences. Emily Wilson, the first woman to translate Homer's *Odyssey* said, "I, like all translators, make choices, and those choices are informed by my experiences as a human being as well as a scholar."<sup>52</sup> The process of writing and revising this publication has made

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50. For more details, see Reynolds, *Heroic Poets*, and Kruk and Ott "In the Popular Manner" As mentioned in "Performance Context" above, the last live performance to my knowledge was in 2000.

51. I would like to thank the Editor and anonymous reviewer for providing proofreading and suggestions regarding the translation. In considering these comments, I grew more aware of my stylistic choices in this translation. I learned that I tend to reduce religious references, excessive gore, and patriarchal assumptions on the part of the narrator whenever these seem unnecessary to the narrative.

52. Alta L. Price, "Women Translating the Classics: Interview with Emily Wilson,

me more aware of my own biases and preferences in the choices I make as a translator. In a few instances, I have translated to resist patriarchal and dominant discourses in the voice of the omniscient narrator. Similarly, I have slightly reduced some of the religious nuances, removing a few references that seem irrelevant to the plot and characters of this story. In addition, I have removed about three descriptions of gratuitous violence, which I feel would be distracting to the modern reader.

The following translation is part of a larger book project that aims to present selected episodes of the life of Fatima/Dhat al-Himma to give readers easy access to this extensive epic's memorable characters and their fascinating world. The English language renderings of this epic that include the excerpt translated here are limited to the following:

- Paraphrase by M. C. Lyons in *The Arabian Epic*, vol. 3 (University of Cambridge Press, 1995).
- Summary by Remke Kruk in *The Warrior Women of Islam* (I.B. Tauris, 2014).
- Paraphrase by Shawqi Abd al-Hakim and Oaima Abou-Bakr, *Princess Dhat Al-Himma* (Prism Publications, 1995).

This chart provides a comparison of various renderings of the opening paragraph and a later section from this excerpt:

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Sholeh Wolpé, and Arshia Sattar," Words without Borders, No date listed, Available online <https://www.wordswithoutborders.org/dispatches/article/women-translating-the-classics-emily-wilson-sholeh-wolpe-arshia-sattar> .

Arabic Text	M. C. Lyons	R. Kruk	O. Abou-Bakr	This Translation (M. Magidow)
<p>كان بعد ذلك بايام جلسوا بين المشايخ الكرام فقال ظالم لمظلوم اعلم ان زوجتك وزوجتي حامل وانت امير وانا امير فاجعل الشرط بيننا ويشهدوا هؤلاء المشايخ علينا من جابت زوجته ولدا ذكرا كان الملك له والامارة من دون الآخر ويكون الامر والنهي في العرب له فقالوا مشايخ بني الوحيد وترضى انت بهذا الامر فقال اي والله العظيم وان جائنا ذكرين بقيت الامارة على حالها مشتركة بين الاثنين فشهدوا العرب بعد ان رضيووا بذلك الحد لانهم تربية البر وهزلهم جد</p>	<p>The brothers then agree that if only one of their wives gives birth to a son, the father is to be chief, while otherwise the chieftanship will be shared.</p>	<p>Dhat al-Himma's history starts with a conflict between her father Mazlum and his brother Zalim about the leadership of their tribe, the Banu Kilab. Both their wives are pregnant, and they decide that the one to whom a son is born will become chief."</p>	<p>Zalim had a boy named ... [This detail regarding the arrangement of authority based on the birth of an heir omitted entirely.]</p>	<p>All the tribal elders, gathered for the meeting, witnessed the two leaders come to an agreement. It had come to their attention that both of their wives were expecting, and so the two men made a pact in the interests of their people, according to the social codes of their band. Zalim said to Mazlum, "He whose wife has a son will become the chief of the clan, with authority over all the Arabs in our region." One of the elders asked Mazlum, "Do you agree to this?" "Yes," he replied, "And if we both have sons, then we will retain our shared leadership as it now stands." The elders nodded in acknowledgment that they had witnessed the agreement.</p>
<p>وكان السبب في غياب بني طي انهم قد اجتمعوا وساروا الى بني كلاب فتمخالفوا في الطريق وقد ساروا بجموعهم الى الحي فرأوه خالي من الشيوخ والشباب فهتكوا النساء والبنات وملكوا الهوداج والحلل وعادوا فرحين ببلوغ الامل وانقسموا قسمين وافترقوا فرقتين فرقة ساقط الجمال والعبيد والاماء وفي الجملة ام مرزوق والجارية فاطمة بنت مظلوم والفرقة الثانية ساروا بالحريم والصغار والبنات الاكابر وقد سار كل فريق منهم في طريق</p>	<p>... each side plunders the other's camp. The two bands meet on their way home and the Tayy are routed, but a group escorting prisoners, amongst whom is Fatima is now intercepted. [sic]</p>	<p>... Su'dā and the two children, Marzūq and Fātima, are abducted by another tribe, the Banū Tayy.</p>	<p>When Fatima was six years old, some Yemeni tribes, headed by Bani Tayy, made a raid on her father's and uncle's camps, and took her prisoner.</p>	<p>The warriors of Bani Tayy had been absent because they had set out earlier in the direction of the Bani Kilab lands. They had chosen a different route, and so the two armies had passed each other. When Bani Tayy reached the lands of Bani Kilab, and found the camps unprotected, they too divided up the people and livestock for themselves. They formed two groups: camels and servants in the first group (including Suda and Fatima, daughter of Mazlum), and women and children in the second group. Then the two groups set out on different paths, both agreeing to meet up in the lands of Bani Tayy.</p>



As these examples demonstrate, the translation presented here is more inclusive than any other rendering in English available to date. However, it is an abridgement and is not a word-for-word literal translation.<sup>53</sup> Since the excerpt printed here includes the original Arabic text, some readers will be able to compare the English and Arabic; however, the translation is not intended as an assist to parsing the Arabic.<sup>54</sup> All responsibility for errors in Arabic, English translation, and Introduction is my own.

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53. For those interested in the translation process of popular Arabic texts, Lena Jayyusi employs a technique for distinguishing between summarized sections (paraphrase) and translated sections (closer to word-for-word literal translation). In her translation of *The Adventures of Sayf Ben Dhi Yazan*, there are two different fonts, one for paraphrase and one for translation. In an early stage of translating *Sirat al-amira Dhat al-Himma*, I tried using this technique. However, I found it excessively challenging and constraining to have to keep to such a distinction. My most readable translations of this text result from a certain measure of freedom to select, reduce, summarize, and recreate in the interest of retaining the literary value of this entertaining text.

54. Students of Arabic can refer to the List of Characters preceding the English translation for transliteration of names with all diacritics present.

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Fatima, Warrior Woman  
*The Arabic Epic of Dhat al-Himma*

Cast of Principle Characters

*Fatima* (Arabic: Al-amīra Dhāt al-Himma) Primary hero of the epic also called the Fiend (dāhiyya)  
*Zalim* (Zālim) Fatima's uncle  
*Issam* (ʿIṣām) Fatima's aunt  
*Mazlum* (Maḏlūm) pronounced "Ma-zloom" Fatima's father  
*Salam* (Salām) Fatima's mother  
*Suda* (Su'dā) Serving woman, mother of Marzuq  
*Marzuq Son of Suda* Fatima's assistant  
*Harith* (Al-Ḥārith) Fatima's master, member of Bani Tayy  
*Jundaba* Fatima's great-grandfather

Before becoming Dhat al-Himma, the famed warrior woman, she was merely Fatima. First she had to endure some of the greatest challenges of her era. It happened like this.<sup>1</sup>

All the tribal elders of the Bani Kilab, gathered for the meeting, witnessed the two leaders come to an agreement. It had come to their attention that both of their wives were expecting, and so the two men made a pact in the interests of their people, according to the social codes of their band. Zalim said to Mazlum, "He whose wife has a son will become the chief of the clan, with authority over all the Arabs in our region."

One of the elders asked Mazlum, "Do you agree to this?"

"Yes," he replied, "And if we both have sons, then we will retain our

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1. These introductory sentences are by Melanie Magidow (i.e., not in the original Arabic). Source of remaining text: Maqanibi, *Sīrat al-amīra Dhāt al-Himma* 1:502-22.

Fatima, Warrior Woman  
*The Arabic Epic of Dhat al-Himma*  
Original Arabic Text<sup>1</sup>

قال الراوي: ولما ان كان بعد ذلك بايام جلسوا بين المشايخ الكرام فقال ظالم لمظلوم اعلم ان زوجتك وزوجتي حامل وانت امير وانا امير فاجعل الشرط بيننا ويشهدوا هؤلاء المشايخ علينا من جابت زوجته ولدا ذكرا كان الملك له والامارة من دون الآخر ويكون الامر والنهي في العرب له فقالوا مشايخ بني الوحيد وترضى انت بهذا الامر فقال اي والله العظيم وان جائنا ذكرين بقيت الامارة على حالها

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1. Source: Ali ibn Musa al-Maqanibi, *Sīrat al-amīra Dhāt al-Himma wa-waladība ʿAbd al-Wahhab*. vol. 1 (Beirut: Al-Maktaba al-Thaqafiyya, 1981), 502-22.

shared leadership as it now stands.” The elders nodded in acknowledgment that they had witnessed the agreement.

The two leaders returned to their wives and informed them of the agreement they had made. Each wife exclaimed, “I have no control over that! We’ll get whatever the Creator grants us.”

After a time, both women went into labor. Zalim’s wife Issam delivered a boy like a little chunk of the moon itself. Even as Zalim was beside himself with joy, he turned to an attendant and asked her to go check on his brother’s wife because he did not trust his brother. The attendant replied, “Surely not! How could he lie, when you are brothers?”

“Enough talk! Go to their place now. If you’re there, they won’t be able to hide anything, and yours is the word that I will believe. I’m relying on you.” The birthing attendant went to Mazlum’s house, but it so happened that she respected him more than Zalim. So when she entered the house, she told Mazlum why she had been sent by Zalim. Then she sat, waiting. After a time, Mazlum’s wife Salam gave birth to a girl as magnificent as the full moon, with strong arms, broad shoulders, and fine features. Salam was apprehensive about her husband’s reaction. Indeed, he was so disappointed that he told her she could dispose of the girl if she chose! That way he could announce that the child was a boy and had not survived. The nursing attendant intervened, “Don’t harm the little girl! If you want my opinion, let the serving women take care of her. Just provide for her, and we will raise her. Don’t deprive her from smelling the air of this world. She may make you proud someday, just as Mary, daughter of Imran, was part of God’s plan. As for me, I swear by the sacred Medina, I’ll tell everybody that Mazlum’s wife had a boy who didn’t survive, and we buried him. Zalim will believe me since I am from his household.”

Mazlum replied, “I accept your proposal; do as you see fit.” He called for a Turkish serving woman named Suda. She had worked as a servant for many prominent households and had proven herself trustworthy. She had an infant son named Marzuq, whom she was still nursing. Mazlum and Salam’s daughter was entrusted to her care, and she was warned to keep the newborn’s identity a secret.

Then the nurse returned to Zalim, saying, “Good news! Your brother’s wife had a son, but it died.”

مشاركة بين الاثنين فشهدوا العرب بعد ان رضوا بذلك الحد لانهم تربية البر وهزلهم جد هذا وقد عاد كل واحد منهما الى زوجته وقال لها ابصري كيف تعلمين فقد حصل من الامر ما هو كذا وكذا فقالت المرأة ما لي في هذا الامر تدبير لكن الذي يرزق به الخالق نحن به راضيين ولا نخالف امره .

قال الراوي : وبعد حين اخذ المرأتين الطلق باذن خالق الخلق فوضعت زوجة ظالم ولدا كأنه فلقة قمر ففرح واستبشر وقد سماه الحارث وقال للداية اذهبي وكوني في بيت اخي فاني أخاف ان يكتمون ما يرزقون عند الولادة من خوف الشهادة فقالت له دع عنك المناقفة والشين كيف يكون هذا وانتم اخوين فقال لها دعني عنك هذا الكلام واذهبي الى بيت اخي بسلام فانكي اذا حضرتي عندهم ما يقدرُوا يخفوا امرهم وانا ما أفق الا بكى ولا أعتد على احد سواكي فعندها ذهبت الداية الى بيت مظلوم وكانت تحبه اكثر من ظالم لما فيه من الدين والخير وجودة التمكين فلما دخلت قالت لمظلوم اعلم ان اخاك قد بعثني اليك لاجل كذا وكذا ثم انها جلست ساعة وزوجة مظلوم تطلق فولدت جارية كأنها البدر قوية السواعد والاطراف هائلة الاكتاف فوجعت على أمها الخمدة والغموم وقد فرغت من زوجها مظلوم وقال لها وعسى أخلي عن الامارة بحسن عبارة وان شئت قتلتها ونقول للعرب والسادات قد جئنا ولد ومات فقالت الداية يا قوم لا تفعلوا هذه الداهية وتدخلوا في خطيئة هذه الجارية واقبلوا رأبي واعطوها لبعض امائكم وأوهبوا شيئا من أموالكم حتى تربيها لكم ولا تتأسفوا عليها ان تشم الهوى في دار الدنيا وربما ان يكون لها سعادة تحمدوا عاقبتها لان الواحد المنان اسعد مريم ابنة عمران وقد جعلها زوجة النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم في الجنان واما انا فوحق المضطجع بيثرب انني أقول لسائر العرب ان زوجة مظلوم ولدت ولدا ذكرا ومات ودفناه ومات الذي مات وان ظالم يثق بقولي وانا امينته في قولي وفعلي .

قال الراوي : فقال لها مظلوم افعلي ما بدا لك فاني موافق لافعالك ثم انه استدعى بأمة له باذلة تركية قد خدمت الملوك والامراء بحسن اعتقاد ونية وهي يقال لها سعدى ولها ولد على الرضاع قد سمته مرزوق فسلموها اليها واوصوها بكتمان امرها ولا تطلع احدا على سرها هذا وقد عادت الداية الى ظالم وقالت له ابشر بالفرحات فان اخاك قد جابت زوجته ولدا ومات

“How is that good news?” he asked.

“Because you have the only living son. No one can contest your authority.”

“Ah yes, well, I would have taken charge somehow.”

Suda kept the secret of the newborn's identity. However, she also secretly took the newborn into her mother's tent. There Salam would cuddle and nurse her tiny daughter. She named her Fatima. Mazlum would not come near the baby and refused to see her because to him a girl child was only a burden. So Fatima grew, and when she was five, she looked old enough to pass for ten years old, and only her intelligence surpassed her beauty.

As Fatima grew and developed, her father's concern about his daughter grew.<sup>2</sup> He saw her as a liability because if she caused any scandal, it could ruin his reputation and the status of his family. Before he could act on this concern, news arrived that the Bani Tayy clan was on the move, uniting all their bands, and rallying the Arabs of Yemen. Bani Tayy intended to attack the Bani Kilab in retribution for the attack their grandfather Jundaba had carried out many years earlier.

Zalim exclaimed, “Bani Tayy just sentenced their own deaths! It will be their undoing. Who do they think we are?!” He called for Mazlum, informing him and saying, “Brother, we must meet them. We'll unite our bands too, and then we'll take them on, and leave the rest to God!”

Bani Kilab met in council with their allies, and then they set out together. Zalim led the troops of Bani Amir and Bani Kilab, and Mazlum led Bani Wahid. Together they rode out to the camps of Bani Tayy. When they arrived, the warriors of Bani Tayy were nowhere to be seen. There were only children, servants, and women. So they divided up the people and spoils of the Bani Tayy camp and returned to their own lands, driving the new herds in their wake.

The warriors of Bani Tayy had been absent because they had set out earlier in the direction of the Bani Kilab lands. They had chosen a different route, and so the two armies had passed each other. When Bani

فقال لها وما في هذا من البشارة فقالت له تكون أنت بالبنين وغيرك انفراد بلا ولد يذكرك ففرح بقولها وقال لها ما كان الشرط بيننا على الموت والحياة والا كنت قد اخذت الامارة دونه .

قال الراوي : هذا وقد واظبت ام مرزوق في رضاعة الجارية وسرها مكتوم وكانت سعدى تأتي بها الي امها سرا في الليل فترضعها وتحن عليها وقد سميتها فاطمة هذا وابوها مظلوم لا يقربها ولا يشتبهى ان يراها لان البنات مكروهة بين الرجال ولا سيما بازالة نعمة . هذا وفاطمة تتربى وتنشر والحق ينفذ فيها امره الي ان صار لها من العمر خمس سنين وهي في قدر من لها عشر سنين وقد أعطيت من الذكاء والافضال ما يزيد عن الحسن والجمال فسبحان من خلقها على هذا المثال .

قال الراوي : ولما ان دخلت في سادس سنة حمل ابوها همها وخاف من فضيحتها فيها وهي لا تظن ان لها أم غير سعدى وفي بعض الايام وصلت الاخبار الي ظالم ان بني طي قد جمعت قبائلها واستنجدت بعرب اليمن عن آخرها ويريدون ان يقصدون ارضكم ويغزوكم لاجل ما لهم من الدماء عليكم من عهد جدك جندبة فما ان سمع ظالم ذلك صعب عليه وقال لقد منت بني طي ان نفوسها بالتحال وهذا يكون سبب هلاكها من بين الرجال أتظن بني طي ان الصحصاح قد مات ثم أرسل الي خلف اخوه مظلوم فلما ان حضر أطلعه على ذلك فقال له يا اخي لا تغتم عند ملتقاهم ولا تحمل هم فنحن ايضا نجتمع ونلقاهم ونتوكل على الله عند ملتقاهم ثم انهم قد جمعوا بني كلاب وبني الوحيد وتشاوروا فاتفق رأيهم على السير اليهم وهم في ديارهم .

قال الراوي : فتجهزوا وساروا واما ظالم فانه قد سار وهو مقدم بني عامر وبني كلاب ومظلوم بعده مقدم على بني الوحيد وما زالوا سائرين وهم يقطعون البيداء الي ان وصلوا الي حي بني طي فوجدوه خالي من الفرسان ما فيه الا الاولاد والعبيد والنسوان والغلمان فتبادروا ونهبوا الاموال والحريم والعيال وقد ساقوا الجمال والمواشي بعدد الرمال ورجعوا قاصدين ديارهم والاطلال . قال الراوي : وكان السبب في غياب بني طي انهم قد اجتمعوا وساروا الي بني كلاب فتخالقوا في الطريق وقد ساروا بجمعهم الي الحي فأروه خالي من الشيوخ والشباب

2. The Arabic text says that Fatima's father grew concerned when she turned six, but the change makes it sound more realistic to contemporary readers.



Tayy reached the lands of Bani Kilab and found the camps unprotected, they too divided up the people and livestock for themselves. They formed two groups: camels and servants in the first group, including Suda and Fatima, daughter of Mazlum and Salam, and women and children in the second group. Then the two groups set out on different paths, both agreeing to meet up in the lands of Bani Tayy.

Thus Bani Kilab and Bani Tayy, together with many captives, finally met in the dark of night. The two clans attacked one another, screaming, struggling, and fighting. The men collided with the clashing of swords, and many wives became widows. The battle continued until morning light. Mazlum and Zalim both killed many of the Bani Tayy, felling warriors and freeing captives. In all the uproar, it gradually became clear that Bani Tayy had lost. Bani Kilab returned to their own lands, driving with them more wealth than they had ever had before. On their return, according to their custom, they divided up the spoils among those men who had distinguished themselves in the battle. Fatima's mother mourned her missing daughter, but Mazlum was relieved to be rid of his secret burden.

As for the Bani Tayy troop that had taken charge of the camels and servants from Bani Kilab, it arrived safely in the lands of Bani Tayy. Suda had with her Marzuq and Fatima, and everyone assumed that Fatima was Suda's daughter. The troops asked Suda, "What is your daughter's name? She does not look like you."

She replied, "She is my daughter, but her name might be difficult for you to pronounce. Name her as you see fit."

"We shall name her Shariha."

"As you wish. From this day forward, we are in your service."

Fatima had no patience for humiliation, and at this she hissed at Suda, "Stop talking like that! Or, by the pride of the great Arabs, and the truth of the One, I'll kill myself. I am no slave!" And she tugged a veil across her face because face veiling was not customary for servants. Even the sun could not see her face fully. "I will serve no one but the Creator! Surely our people will rescue us from this misfortune, and crush the Bani Tayy!" Crying, she switched to poetry:

فهتكوا النساء والبنات وملكوا الهوداج والحلل وعادوا فرحين ببلوغ الامل وانقسموا قسمين وافترقوا  
فرتين فرقة ساقى الجمال والعبيد والاماء وفي الجملة ام مرزوق والجارية فاطمة بنت مظلوم والفرقة  
الثانية ساروا بالحريم والصغار والبنات الاكابر وقد سار كل فريق منهم في طريق فالتقت بني كلاب  
ومظلوم وظالم في ظلام الليل ببني طي وتعاركوا وتصارخوا وتواقدوا وتكافحوا ودارت بينهم طاحون  
الحرب واختلف بينهم الطعن والكفاح وتصادم الابطال والرجال في الدجى وانقطع الامل والرجا  
وأرملت النساء وخسر من خسر وأسى كل خصم خصمه وقسى ومنى الشجاع نفسه بلعل وعسى  
وعملت الصوارم في الابدان والمعاصم وفترت المعاجم وأنسيت المكارم ونادت بني طي يا التارات  
الغظريف هذا ولم يزالوا الى ان اصبح الصباح فقاتل مظلوم وظالم في بني طي وقد قتلوا ابطالهم  
وخلصوا منهم اموالهم وعيالهم وانهزموا بني طي من المعمة ورجعت بنو كلاب تطلب ديارهم  
ومعهم من الاموال أضعاف ما أخذ لهم .

قال الراوي : ولما ان وصلوا الى الديار فقسموا الاموال بين الفرسان والشجعان ونزلوا في  
الاطوان ولقد حزنتم ام فاطمة على ابنتها لما ان فقدتها وأما مظلوم فانه خف عنه ما يجد من الهموم  
وقال مضت ابنتي ولم يعلم احدا ببليتي ولا عرفوا ان لي ولدا ولم يعزوني فيه الابد .  
قال الراوي : فهذا ما كان من هؤلاء .

واما ما كان من فرقة بني طي الذي سارت بالجمال والاماء والعبيد والرجال فانها سلمت  
وما زالت سائرة وهي طالبة ديارها ومعهم الاماء سعدى وفاطمة ومرزوق وهم يظنون انها بنتها فقالوا  
لها ما اسم ابنتك فانها غير خلقتك لانكي لستي لها بشبيهة فقالت لهم انها ابنتي ولكن ما لها اسم  
خفيف فسموها انتم ما تريدون ودعوها بما شئتم فقالوا نسئمها شريحة فقالت لهم الامر اليكم وانا  
وهي في جواركم اليوم فلما ان سمعت فاطمة ذلك ولم يكن لها صبر على الذل فقالت لسعدى  
أسكتني عن هذا الكلام والا وذمة العرب الاجواد وحق رافع السبع الشداد باعث من في القبور  
والاحاد قتلت نفسي بيدي لانني ما انا جارية ولا خادمة وكيف يجوز للعبد ان يخدم عبد مثله قال  
وكانت تشد البرقع على وجهها بخلاف زي الاماء فما كانت الشمس تراها ثم انها قالت لسعدى  
لئن رجعتي الى مثل هذا قتلت روحي وانا ما اخدم الا البارى جل وعلا ولا بد لقومنا ان يخلصونا  
من النوائب ويرمون بني طي بالمصائب ثم انها بكى وأنشدت تقول بعد الصلاة على طه الرسول :

We'll teach you, wolves in sheep's clothing!  
 If they don't bring us our mounts, tall and free,  
 By the Prophet, the Chosen One,  
 The best of people, a great mercy,  
 If they don't return us to our people,  
 Gracious and proper, an act of chivalry,  
 Then they'll see what our people are made of—  
 They'll teach them a lesson, or two or three!  
 For fate cannot dictate  
 Victory for the unjust, you see.

When the Bani Tayy heard her poetry, they said, “By the pride of the Arabs, what a brave and heroic girl!”

Fatima and Suda were allotted to a Bani Tayy troop leader named Harith bin Mushir, and they went to live on his land. He treated Fatima and Suda relatively well and set them the task of herding the camels and horses. Fatima kept to herself, riding the horses and learning the arts of war on her own—attack and retreat, lining up for battle, pursuit, defense, and charging. She made weapons from tree branches, leaves, and reeds. Whenever a camel stallion opposed her, she would shout intimidatingly at him and, clinging to the stallion's mate, she would direct him until he surrendered. The servants were impressed by her, but Fatima focused on her inner life. By the age of seven, she could fast a full day, repeating to herself the name of *Allah*. The Bani Tayy began to call her “Shariha the Mystic.” She continued to cover her face with a veil according to the fashion of a noblewoman. As time passed, she grew more mature in appearance and speech. She rode her master's horses discreetly and carefully watched when the warriors practiced in a cleared field.

One day, a mighty Bani Tayy warrior named Qarih appeared. He saw her riding, and nearing her, he attempted to seduce her. Fatima saw what he wanted, and she lost her temper, yelling, “Get out of here, you most disgusting of all Arabs!” He continued harassing her until she insulted and cursed him, swearing and damning him. Then he left, but he still desired her. She fled to her master's house, crying and trembling.

“What happened?”

“Sir, Qarih insulted me. Tell him to leave me alone, or I will destroy

ستعلم أهل البغي بين الأعراب  
 يودون أنا ليس يذهب ثارنا  
 وحق النبي المصطفى خير خلقه  
 لئن لم يردونا إلى نحو قومنا  
 وإلا يروا من قومنا ما لا يسرهم  
 فلا أصلحن الدهر من كان ظالماً  
 قال الراوي: يا سادة يا كرام: هذا ولما ان سمعوا أهل الحي منها هذا الشعر والنظام قالوا  
 وحق ذمة العرب ما هذا الا قول بنت عربي شجاع وبطل مناع وانهم لما فرقوا القوم تفرقوا المال والعبيد  
 والاماء فوقعت فاطمة هي والاماء سعدى ثم ولدها مرزوق في قسم أمير يقال له الحارث بن مشير  
 وكان نازل بارض يقال لها الابله فسار بهم ونزل لارضه وقد ترك سعدى وابنتها ترعى الجمال والخيول  
 بعد أن أكرمها غاية الأكرام وكانت الجارية فاطمة تخلو بنفسها وتركب الخيل وتتعلم وحدها الكر  
 والفر والنزال والطراد وقطعت ورق الشجر والقصب وتتعلم المرافعة والممانعة واذا عصي عليها الفحل  
 من الأبل تصيح عليه فترجفه ثم تتعلق برفيقه فترده وتوقفه والعبيد يتعجبون منها وكانت فاطمة قد  
 قامت لحب ربها ورمت الدنيا عن قلبها وصارت تصوم النهار وتقول الله حتى شاع خبرها فسميت  
 شريحة العابدة ولما ان رأوا صلاحها اذ خلت بنفسها أحبوا القوم وكانت غارقة في عبادة ربها  
 وتنشد في الزهد وتقول:

نحن نطوي الأيام بالجهد منا  
 فافعل الخير ما استطعت طباعاً  
 قبل تعرض غدا على خالق الخلق  
 أبن عاد وثمود وأبن تبع ومن  
 لا يغرنك المحاسن منها  
 ليس ينجو من الحساب كريم  
 لا يوقى من العذاب سوى من  
 وهي في حال طيبها تطوينا  
 قبل أن تضحى بما فعلت رهينا  
 لعل تنجو وتكن من الفائزين  
 ملك الأرض أصبحوا هامدينا  
 كل وجوه سارت على الطين طينا  
 قد غدا محسناً من المحسنينا  
 أن بكاء من ذنوبه محزوننا

قال الراوي: وهي من حياها وما اعطاها الله تعالى من الجمال قد شددت البرقع على وجهها  
 كما ذكرنا وقد ألبستها الأيام ثوب الجمال والكمال والفصاحة والمقال الى ان بقت كالشمس المضيئة  
 وقد اكتمل لها من العمر سبع سنين هنالك طمحت بنظرها الى الفرسان وهم يتطاعنون في الميدان  
 فاشتغلت بذلك هميتها من شدة حميتها ونخوتها وسارت تقطع أصول القصب الفارسي وتركب  
 من خيول مولاها في بعض الايام فهي على عادتها في المرعى اذ أشرف عليها فارس من فرسان بني  
 طي يقال له قريح بن قابوس الطائي وكان فارساً شجاعاً لا يبالي بالرجال ولا بكثرة الابطال فيبينما هو  
 سائر ذات يوم فرآها في المراعي فدنا منها وجعل يتعرض لها ويداعبها ثم يراودها عن نفسها ويطلبها  
 ويثقل عليها فلما ان تحققت ذلك منه نفرت أوداجها وكثر انزعاجها وصاحت فيه اذهب لا كنت ولا  
 استكنت يا نذل العرب فلع عليها فسبته وشتمته وكلمته بأغلظ كلام ولعنته فانصرف عنها وفي  
 قلبه من هواها أمر مبرح هذا وقد انصرف الى بيت مولاها الحارث فرآها وهي باكية العبرة ثم تنفخ  
 كأنها الحية البترة فقال لها يا فاطمة ما وراكي وما الذي دهاكي قالت له يا مولاي قريح بن قابوس قال  
 لي كذا وكذا وقد طلب مني الفاحشة والاذى فانهيته عني والا أهلكته وقتلته

him!” Troubled, Harith set out to speak with Qarih.

“Qarih, my servant girl came to me complaining that you tried to take advantage of her. Don’t do it again, or that day will be your last. If you really want her, then make it legitimate by asking for her hand in marriage.”

“You want me to marry your servant girl? I don’t think so. I’ll have nothing to do with her.” Fatima’s master returned home, and told her about the conversation.

The next day, when Fatima was out herding the animals, she felt at peace because of her master’s words. Then Qarih appeared, as determined as ever. “So you told on me to your master! You think I take orders from him? Where is he now? Who’s going to save you from me?”

“Don’t you dare! Get away from me!”

She threw stones at him, and he left saying, “I’ll get you.”

Fatima went to her master again, shaking like a palm leaf. “Sir, the dirty bastard came back and threatened me again today. If you don’t do something about it, I’m going to have his head.”

Her master thought to himself, “This is getting serious. The boy is an idiot, and the girl carries herself as if she were a noblewoman. I think I should inform the clan leader.”

On arriving before the leader, he explained his predicament. “Sir, my servant girl has brought a complaint to me against Qarih. I am concerned that he will continue to harass her.”

Qarih was sent for, and when he arrived, the clan leader spoke to him: “Qarih, what is between you and this man’s servant girl? If you bother her, it will be your undoing. Marry her or cease and desist.”

“Your Honor, I was just playing around. I was never really serious about her.”

Fatima was present, and interjected, “Your Eminence, if he threatens me after this, I will kill him.”

“You’re a clever one! If he continues to harass you, it’s between you and him.”

“Yes sir,” and Fatima departed.

The next day, she went out to the pasture area as usual, caring for the livestock. At midday, Qarih appeared. His passion was inflamed, and he rode a fine horse dark as night. He prided himself on his bravery and

وعلى الارض جندلته فصعب ذلك عليه وسار الى قريح بن قابوس وقال له وكان جالسا بين جلسائه وقال له يا قريح ان امتي فاطمة قد اقبلت الي وشكت منك الخنا وتذكر انك طلبت منها الفاحشة والزنا فايك ان تعود فتسكنك رمسك وتلحق يومك بامسك فان كنت تريد فأمهرها وتزوج بها . قال الراوي : فلما ان سمع منه قريح ذلك الكلام قال له يا حارث لا كرامة ولا عزازة أتريد مني ان أتزوج بأمته لا كان ذلك ابدا ولو سقيت كأس الردى وأنا من اليوم ما عدت أخاطبها فرجع الحارث الى منزله وقد أخبر فاطمة بالمقال ولما ان كان من الغد خرجت فاطمة وقد جمعت المواشي وسارت للمراعي وهي طيبة القلب بما أخبرها مولاهما وبعد ساعة اقبل قريح وقد زاد في حبها فقال لها يا لينا شكيتني لمولاكي أتظنيني أنني أخشى منه أين هو الساعة يخلصكي مني فقالت له يا ويلك اذهب عني وقد رجمته بالحجارة فانصرف وهو يقول والله لا بد منك في فعاتد لبيت مولاهما وهي ترتعد مثل السعفة وقالت يا مولاي قد عاد اللئيم وتعرض لي اليوم وان لم ينتهي أخذت رأسه وأخذت أنفاسه .

قال الراوي : فما ان سمع منها مولاهما ذلك عظم عليه وكبر لديه وقال في نفسه هذا جاهل وهذه حرة وصاحبة نخوة وحمية والرأي عندي أنني أعلم الملك بالامر على جلسته فأتى الى الملك وقال له أيها الملك ان امتي فاطمة قد شكت الي من قريح بن قابوس وانني أخاف ان يلح عليها فلما ان سمع ذلك منه بعث اليه وأحضره وقال له يا قريح ما لك وامة هذا الرجل لا تتعرض لها يكون دمارك او تزوج بها والا أخدمناك فقال ايها الملك انما كان ذلك مني ملاعبة وما نفسي لها بطالبة وكانت فاطمة حاضرة فقالت يا مولاي ان عاد من اليوم يتعرض لي قتلته فقال لها الملك يا داهية ان بقا يتعرض لكي شأنك اياه فقالت سمعا وطاعة وانصرفت وقد باتت ليلتها فلما ان كان من الغد خرجت الى المراعي على جري عاداتها وسرحت مع الجمال والرعيان حتى علا النهار واذا اقبل قريح وفي قلبه النار وتحت جواد من خيار الخيل كأنه من سواد ظلام الليل وهو مدلل بشجاعته

strength, so he rode straight for Fatima. When she saw that he was coming for her, she fled for the bush. Seeing her determination, he desired her for himself. His horse cantered after her until she ran out of sight of the livestock. Then he began to overtake her, and Fatima turned to face her enemy. "Sir, what possesses you to torment me?"

"My passion for you, and your complaints to your master."

Talking smoothly, she put him at ease, "I never put you off out of hate. I was only afraid that if you succeeded, then I would be in danger of losing my heart without ever having yours. If you'll be mine, then I'll be yours!"

"Woe is me! As if a person could just separate his body from his soul, and accept the pain of distance from such beauty."

"If that's the case, then give me your hand in marriage," said Fatima.

"Here's my hand," he replied. Fatima approached, her hand extended, and then pulled with all the strength of her arm. He found himself on the ground, his sword fallen out of its sheath. Quicker than lightning, she struck him with his own sword. He crashed against the earth. The sound alerted the herders, and they saw the horse loose. Finding the corpse, they put it on the horse and took it back to the encampment. Fatima returned to her master's house breathless.

"What's wrong?"

"Sir, I've killed Qarih."

Fatima's master put his hands to his head as his whole world started to spin. "You've ruined me, you bastard girl!" He seized her, and brought her before the clan leader.

When Qarih's brothers saw his body, they demanded to know who was responsible. The servants said, "The Fiend of Bani Tayy did it." At this, the brothers drew their swords, and went in search of Fatima's master, for it was the custom to take out revenge against a slave on his master. When they arrived at the Bani Tayy encampment, they learned that he had sought sanctuary with the clan leader. So they went to the clan leader, and there they demanded the customary retribution of Fatima's master's life to avenge their brother's death. Fatima's master pointed at her: "Take her! She's the killer, so kill her to avenge his death!" They refused, saying that she had acted on her master's orders, and her actions were his responsibility.

وقوته فطلبها بالجواد فلما ان رآته قاصدها هربت منه وسارت بين يديه وقد أخذت في عرض البرية وقد رأى عزيمتها فطمع فيها وركض بجواده من ورائها وهي تجري امامه حتى غابت عن الرعيان فلحقها فلما ان صار بالقرب منها أقبلت بوجهها عليه وقالت يا مولاي ما حملك على هذا اللجاج فقال لها هواك وشكواك لمولاك فقالت له والله انا ما منعتك عن نفسي بغضة فيك ولكن خفت ان تنال مني غرضك فتقع بقلبي ولا يكون لي اليك سبيل فأموت بحسرتي وأهلك بلوعتي فان كنت لا تخون فانا أمكنك من نفسي وها انا بين يديك ولا ابخل بروحي عليك .

قال الراوي يا سادة يا كرام : فلما ان سمع كلامها لانته حميمته وانكسرت همته فقال لها معاذ الله ان يكون ذلك وهل يمكن الانسان ان يبعد روحه عن جسده ويذوق الآلام ويتخلى عن ذلك الجمال فقالت له ان كان الامر كذلك فاعطيني<sup>2</sup> يدك انك لا تغدر بي وها انا بين يديك بطيبة قلبي ففرح بذلك وقال لها هذه يدي فدنت منه وتناولت يده وتمكنت منه ثم جذبته بقوة ساعدها واذا به ملقى على الارض فوقع سيفه من جفيره فتناولته اسرع من البرق وضربته به قبل ان يقوم من الارض على رأسه فنزل السيف الى صدره فلطم الارض بيديه ورجليه ساعة وقد خمد حسه فنظروا الرعاة الى ذلك والجواد شارد فأتوا اليه فأرؤه قتيل وفي دماه جديل فنادوا بالويل الطويل وقد شالوه على جواده وساروا به الى الحي وعادت فاطمة لبيت مولاها وهي تنفخ كالافعى فقال مولاها ما بالك وما دهكي يا داهية النفوس فقالت يا مولاي انني قد قتلت قريح بن قابوس .

قال الراوي : فلما ان سمع مولاها منها ذلك الكلام ضاقت عليه الدنيا وأيقن بالردا وزاد في الاهتمام وقال لها يا لحننا أرميتيني في البلاء يا بنت اللثام ثم انه قبض عليها وطلب بها أبيات ملك الحي وقال له يا ملك من هذا كنت خائف مستهام واعلم انه جرى من الامر كذا وكذا فتعجب الملك من ذلك وقال له لا خوف عليك ولا عليها فجاءت اخوة قريح اليه وهو معهم قتيل وقالوا له من قتل اخانا من اهل الحي وكانوا قد سألوا من العبيد عمن قتله فقالوا لهم قتلتها داهية بني طي فعندها أشهروا سيوفهم وطلبوا مولاها يسقوه كأس الردا لان العرب مذهبها ان العبد اذا قتل حرا ما يفاديه الا مولاها فلما ان عزموا اخوة قريح على قتل الحارث قيل لهم انه التجأ الى سيد القبيلة فأتوا الى الملك والحارث عنده كما ذكرنا وقالوا من المقاتل ثم قالوا يا حارث نريد منك دم أخانا فقال لهم خذوها هي قاتلة فاقتلوها بثأره فقالوا له نحن ما بيننا وبينها دم مسكوب ولا قل مطلوب وما قتلتها الا برضاك هذا

2. Text emended here to fix spelling from اعطيني to اعطيني.

وقد زاد بينهم الكلام ثم انهم انقسموا فرقتان وصاروا شطرين شطر مع أخوة قريح وشر مع الحارث ولم يزالوا كذلك حتى حكموا أن يؤدي دينه الى اخوته الف بغير وعشرون رأس من الخيل وعشر دروع وعشر سيوف وعشر رماح .

قال الراوي : فحمل له جسيها ولم يبق له ساعة ولا راعية وقد طابت قلوب أخوة قريح بالمال بحكومة المشايخ لكن القوم أيقنوا بان الحارث يقتل فاطمة فلما انفصل الامر دخل عليها مولاه وهي مربوطة بالسلاسل وبيده سوط من جلد بغير مدبوغ وقال يا لئنا قد كنت ميشومة علي ولقد أفقرتيني والفقر يضر بحالي ولم يبق معي ما اطبخ به وأسد به أكلكم وهم ان يضربها فقالت له علي ان احضر لك ما غرمت من المال وهو ان تعطيني جواد وسيف وخوذة ودرع وحجفة ورمح واجعل ذلك بجملته ما اخذ منك فقال لها وما تصنعين فقالت اركب الجواد والبس العدة وأخرج وأتيك باموال العرب واعلم انني قادرة على اموال العرب وحرى الرجال ومكينة من أخذ مهج الابطال والله لآتينك باضعاف ما غرمت من اجلي فعند ذلك أطلق سبيلها وأتى اليها بما طلبت فغاصت في العدة وقد تلثمت على البيضاء بعد ان تعممت وسارت وقد تبعها مرزوق عبدها وسارت في تلك الارض سبعة ايام حتى اذا كان اليوم الثامن اشرفت على ارض خضرة نضرة كثيرة العشب والنبات تتجاوب فيها الطيار بسائر اللغات فسبحان من زانها وانشاها وبتلك الازهار كساها وفي جنب تلك الارض اموال ومواشي سارحة مع الرعاة يكاد أن ينشق شحمها ولحمها لخصب الارض وكثرة المياه وكانت تزيد عن الف ناقة وجمل ومن الخيل والغنم غير قليل والعبيد في غاية الامان .

قال الراوي : وكانت هذه الاموال لفارس من فرسان العرب يقال له ضرمة بن ضرغام السعدي وقد انفرد في تلك الارض بنفسه وكان يعد بالف فارس فلما ان نظرت فاطمة الى تلك الاموال فرحت فرحا شديدا وحملت على العبيد واحتوت على الاموال جميعها هذا وقد ساق العبيد والاموال قدامها وكل منهم يظن انها رجل من الرجال وبطل من الابطال فقال لها احدهم يا غلام اعلم ان اجهل الناس من سلك غير مسلكه وطلب ما لا يدركه اندركه لمن هذه الاموال هذه اموال ضرمة ابن ضرغام السعدي وهو البلاء الذي لا يصرم والقضاء الذي لا يرد فاضي الى حال سبيلك ولا تتعرض بنفسك الى المنية فتتهلك وتبقى في الرزية .

قال الراوي : فلما ان سمعت كلامه عطف عليه وقد ضربته بالسيف على عاتقه طلع السيف يلمع من علائقه فوقعت هيبتها في قلوب الرعاة وهابوها فساقوا الاموال قدامها وسارت فينما هي سائرة واذا بصرخة عظيمة جسيمة فتأملت ذلك واذا هي بفارس قد غشيها كأنه طود او بغير حل من قيود بهامة هائلة واحداق كالمشعل وقد انقض عليها كانه الليث فعلمت فاطمة انه ضرمة صاحب المال فعطفت نحوه وهاجمته ولاقت وتعرضت له

Fatima's master had to give up all his wealth to appease the brothers—one thousand camels, twenty horses, ten coats of mail, ten swords, and ten spears. His band agreed that Fatima should be killed for his loss. They tied her up in one of the tents, and he entered, holding a whip. "You've ruined me! I have nothing left!"

Harith raised his arm, but Fatima said, "I will make it up to you."

Harith's arm dropped to his side and Fatima continued, "I can bring you the wealth that you lost if you'll give me a horse, a sword, a helmet, a coat of mail, a leather shield, and a spear."

"How would you do that?"

"I'd ride the horse, wear the armor, and go bring you the wealth of the Arabs. I'm capable enough to fight anyone, even the best. By Allah, I'll bring you more wealth than you ever lost over me." He freed her, and brought her what she requested. She donned the armor, retaining a light veil over her face. Adding a turban, she set out, with Marzuq accompanying her as assistant.

She traveled for seven days, and on the eighth day, she came upon a vibrantly green land filled with herbs, flowers, plants, and birds calling to one another in their various languages. Off to one side roamed great herds with their herders. There was such plentiful water that the camels alone numbered more than a thousand. The horses, sheep, and goats were not few, and the servants were living a life of ease.

This wealth belonged to an Arab warrior named Darma. He had moved to this land by himself, with one thousand warriors in his service. When Fatima saw all this abundance, she rejoiced that she would be able to ransom herself. She overcame the servants and seized the livestock, driving them all before her. The servants all thought that she must be a man, not to mention one of the greatest heroes of their time. One of them said to her, "Only the ignorant take on more than they can handle. Do you know to whom these belong? This is the property of Darma. Look sharp or he will be your undoing." She struck him with her sword, and her ferocity fell into the hearts of all the herders. They drove the herds before her.

Suddenly a great cry rang out behind her. She saw a warrior tearing after her like a massive lion just freed. She knew that this was Darma, and she came to meet his attack.



He said, "You're in for it now, boy! You have no idea what you have taken on!" Fatima said nothing. With a cry, she stabbed him. He fell to the ground, and she left him.

Meeting up with Marzuq, Fatima traveled, folding the land by length and by width, until she neared the Bani Tayy encampment. The herds filled the land as far as the eye could see. The people watched, wondering where they all came from, and then Fatima appeared in the distance. When Fatima's master Harith heard the news, he rejoiced, and rode out to meet her.

As soon as she spied him, she dismounted and dropped to the ground in front of him. "Sir, for the one thousand mares that were taken from you, here are four thousand camels, both mares and stallions. There is also other livestock and trappings, and people to tend them." He was impressed, and all those present began to whisper about her success.

"How did you acquire this wealth and all these camels?"

"They belonged to a man called Darma. I triumphed over him with my own strength."

Harith praised her for her great deeds, and the tale spread far and wide. Fatima became a commonplace character in conversation, and although some people continued to call her the Fiend of Bani Tayy, eventually she was referred to by the honorific title *Amira*<sup>3</sup> and the nickname *Dhat al-Himma*.<sup>4</sup> Along with her new reputation, she acquired her own tents and lands.

Fatima undertook another raid, although Harith discouraged her from putting herself in danger. When she returned successful, Harith joined the throngs that went out to meet her and the new herds that she brought. When Fatima saw Harith, she dismounted and went to greet him. She divided the spoils, giving half to Harith, and keeping the other half for herself. The people of Bani Tayy shared in the celebratory atmosphere, some spontaneously composing poetry in admiration of Fatima. Harith asked, "Where did all this come from?"

And Fatima replied, "Sir, these belonged to Hassan al-Fazari."

When he heard her words, Harith became fearful of her capabilities,

3. "Princess," "Lady," "Commander," or "Warrior Woman."

4. "The Valorous."

فقال لها ويلك يا غلام لقد قمت على أمر عظيم اذهب بروحك ودع عنك الطمع ولا تخاطر بنفسك تقع فلم ترد عليه جواب ولا خطاب دون ان هجمت عليه وصرخت فيه أذهلته وقد طعنته في صدره أطلعت السنان يلمع من ظهره فوق وقع على الارض يخور في دمه فتركته وهجمت على الخيام والمضارب وقد نهيت ما وجدت من الاموال ولحقت باخيها مرزوق وسارت تطلب الاطلال ولم تزل تطوي الارض في الطول والعرض حتى انها وصلت الى ديار بني طي فنظرت الرعاة الى الاموال قد ملأت الارض في طولها والعرض فتأملوا من اين هذه الاموال واذا هي مع فاطمة فقالت لها الرعاة اقبلت داهية غائمة فتبادروا الى الحارث وهنوه بقدوم امته عليه وما وصل معها وما اتصلت اليه ففرح بذلك فرحا شديدا وركب وخرج للقائها .

قال الراوي : فلما ان وقعت عينها عليه ترجلت له واقبلت عليه وقد قبلت ركابه وقالت يا مولاي ان كان اخذ لك الف ناقة فهذه اربعة آلاف ناقة وجمل ومعها من الاسلاب والعبيد والاماء والدواب ما يملأ الرحاب فنعجب من ذلك وقد احتوى على المال وسار به الحارث وتحدثوا الناس بفعلها وعجبوا من اعمالها فقال لها مولاي من اين اكتسبتي هذه الاموال والنوق والجمال فقالت يا مولاي هذه اموال ضرمه بن ضرغام السعدي وقد قتلته بقوة ساعدي فاستعظم فعلها واستهول قتالها وعلموا الناس بذلك فتمكنت فعالها وهيبتها منهم هذا وقد ظهر اسمها وكثرت سمعتها وخف اسمها على السنة الناس فصاروا يسمونها ذات الهمة وصار لها مضارب وخيام وقد أقامت بعد ذلك عشرة ايام ودخلت على مولايها وقد غصت في عدتها وأخذت للسفر أهبتها فقال لها مولايها الى أين يا فاطمة فقالت له يا مولاي قد عزمت على الغزو وتحصيل الغنيمة فقال لها يا بنتي اياك والتعرض لاموال العرب فما كل وقت ينجح الطلب فقالت يا مولاي لا تخف على امتك فانها لا تبالي بالرجال ولا بكثرة الاطلال ثم انها ودعته وخرجت من عنده وركبت جوادها وسارت ومعها مرزوق وهو اخوها من الرضاع ولم تزل سائرة تجد السير ستة ايام وهي تقطع الريا والآكام وفي اليوم السابع أشرفت على مرج واسع ذات مياه ومنافع ومروج ومواقع وقد سمعت رغاء الابل وصياح الغنم والاماء والعبيد فهزت الجواد فخرج من تحتها كأنه الريح الهبوب حتى صارت في وسط المرج فنظرت الى الاموال وهي تسرح والنياق ترح وقد رأت العبيد والموالي يمرحن في الرياض فحملت على الاموال كيما تحويها برمجها فصدمتها العبيد وقالوا لها ايها المغرور عرضت نفسك للحمام اما علمت لمن هذه الاغنام اعلم ان هذه للفارس الضرغام مجندل الفرسان حسان بن جعفر .

قال الراوي : فلما سمعت من العبيد هذا الكلام رمتهم شذرا ونظرتهم حقرا ونذرا وقالت يا ملعون ومن هو حسان لا كان ولا استكان وقد ضربت العبد عاتقه أطلعت السيف من علائقه فعندها طلب الرعاة الامان فقالت لهم كونوا لي غلمان فان لحقوا بي أصحابكم وأخذوكم من يدي فما يضركم شيء وان نصرت فكونوا طائعين أمري فعلموا ان كلامها حق ولفظها صدق فعندها ساقوا المواشي قدامها وما فيهم من عصي لها مقال فتأملت في جملتهم عبد صبيح الوجه والكون صافي اللون فقالت له ما اسمك فقال لها مبارك فقالت مبارك ان شاء الله تعالى اركب يا مبارك من هذا الخيل وتولى سوق المال والرعاة وسوق بهما عدامي في الفلاة فقال لها السمع والطاعة ثم انه ركب جواد من الخيل الجياد وصاح في العبيد سوقوا الاموال والنوق والجمال فجدوا بالسير واذا بفارس قد أقبل كأنه القضاء المنزل وهو ينادي الى أين تذهب يا أخس العرب وأخس من ركب سرج وقتب أي سماء تظلك واي أرض تقلك أتظن أنك تسوق الاموال وتروح سالما من الردا لا كان ذلك ابدا لقد ساقك القدر على رغم أنفك لمصرعك ( هذا ) وفاطمة لا تلتفت له ولا ترد عليه

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The English language text continues on page 50.

ولم تزل كذلك حتى ناداها مرزوق غشيك الفارس هنالك فركبت عنان الجواد فحمل عليها وقد طعنها طعنة هائلة فسحبتهما على طرف جحفتها وقد طعنته فضييعها ايضا ولم يزالا يتطاعنا بالرماح حتى علا عليهما النهار ودارت الافكار وتكسرت الرماح وامتشقت الصفاح وتجالدا وتباعدا لان الداهية انقلبت عليه فأدته وضايقته حتى التصق الركاب بالركاب وشارت اليه بضربة من حسامها وقد طلبت بها رأسه فرفع الجحفة يستر بها رأسه فأقبلت يدها أخف من الهواء وضربت على صدره طلع السيف يلعب من ظهره فوقع الى الارض شطرين وانقسم نصفين فلما ان رأت العبيد والعبد مبارك ذلك وقعت الهيبة في قلوبهم وارتعدت فرائصهم ثم انهم أقبلوا عليها وصاروا يقبلون يديها ورجليها فصاحت في العبد مبارك سوق المال وقد شتمت العبيد والموالي .

قال الراوي: يا سادة يا كرام، فقالت لهم الداهية اهجمو بنا يا بني حام بقية ليلتنا في موضعنا هذا الى ان يطلع الصباح فقالوا لها سمعا وطاعة ثم انهم نزلوا وأضرموا النيران وعقروا من الاغنام هذا وقد نزلت الداهية في موضع عالي وترجلت عن جوادها فأتاها واحد من العبيد ومعه شيء من الزاد فأخذت بعضه وقالت له اذهب الى أصحابك وقد تقدمت الى الزاد وأكلت على حسب الكفاية وشربت قليل من الماء ونامت حتى مضى من الليل الثلث واستيقظت وسيفها مسلول بين يديها واخوها مرزوق يحرسها خوفا عليها ولما ان افأقت من المنام جعلت تحادثه والخدم والعبيد الى ان ذهب من الليل ثلثيه فنهضت ودخلت في لامة حربيها وشدت جوادها ونادت في العبيد بالمسير بقية الليل فساروا بين يديها وسارت تقطع البراري والقفار الى ان وصلت الى ارض بني طي ونظرتها الرعيان فدخلوا الحبي وأعلموا الناس بقدمها فرفعت الزعقات وخرجوا لها جميعا وشاهدوا بني طي ما معها من الاموال ما يحير الناظرين فذهلوا من فعالها وقد خرج الحارث الى ملتقاه وهو مولاه وهو لا يصدق ان يراها فلما نظرتة ترجلت وسلمت عليه فرد عليها السلام باحسن رد وسار بين يديها لا يباتها فنزلت المال وقسمت الاموال شطرين فحمل لمولاه النصف وتركت النصف الثاني لنفسها وضربت لها الابيات والقبايع العاليات وقد صفت الخيول على الطوالات فقال لها مولاه يا بنية من اين هذه الاموال فقالت له يا مولاي هذه اموال حسان بن جعفر الفزاري .

قال الراوي: فلما ان سمع مولاه منها ذلك الكلام وقعت هيبتها في قلبه

and he thought to himself, *I should marry her. Everyone is following her these days, lining up to join her. Her reputation is growing, and tales of her are spreading. She has made me a wealthy man, and she is becoming a legend...*

Several days later, Fatima was sitting outside her tent when Harith approached her with the elders of Bani Tayy. As soon as she saw them, she stood to receive them and had a meal prepared for the visitors. When they had finished eating, Fatima asked them, “Men of Bani Tayy, is there something that you came to discuss?”

Harith addressed her, “Bani Tayy has long been disturbed by the Bani Kilab clan. They slaughtered our best men, and we could do nothing about it. Now they have heard of your deeds, and the time has come for us to act. You have restored our reputation. Now we want you to focus your efforts on Bani Kilab. Avenge our lost kinsmen, and erase our shame.”

“By all means! Even if I owned the sun and the moon, I would still support you. From this day on, you will see that I am taking action against Bani Kilab.” The elders of Bani Tayy thanked Fatima, and returned to their homes for the night.

The next morning dawned bright and clear. Fatima prepared her sword, and mounted her horse. She had already called her men to ride with her, and together they set out toward the lands of Bani Kilab. Crossing through the hills, they arrived to see thousands of well fed mare camels. It so happened that these camels belonged to Fatima’s father, Mazlum. Without a moment’s hesitation, Fatima signaled to her men and moved forward toward the herds. They drove the herds back with them toward Bani Tayy. It was late afternoon, and the sun was lowering toward the horizon. Mazlum was waiting in his camp, and when his herdsmen arrived without the herds, he shouted, “What is wrong with you? Where are all the camels?!”

“The Fiend of Bani Tayy has captured them.”

At this Mazlum roared in anger, calling for his men. By the time they were mounted and riding, it was night. Mazlum had no idea which route to take, and he and his men eventually had to admit defeat and return home for the night.

Fatima and her vast herds continued until they reached the lands of Bani Tayy, where everyone from the youngest child to the oldest adult

وقال في نفسه الرأي عندي أن أتزوج بها وأعيش برأيها هذا وقد نظرت العرب من بني طي الى نجابتها فانضافوا اليها جماعة وصاروا يركبون لركوبها وينزلون لنزولها وقد شاع خبرها في جميع الآفاق وسار بحدِيثها الرفاق واحترزت منها العرب ودخل في قلوبهم الرعب ولم تزل تأخذ في الغارات وتنهب أموال السادات وتغار على القبائل وتهجم على الاموال والمناهل حتى أغنت مولاها بالاموال وضربت بها الامثال .

فلما ان كان في بعض الايام وقد اصبحت جالسة على باب مضربها واذ بمولاها اقبل عليها ومعها وجوه بني طي فلما ان نظرتهم اقبلوا اليها نهضت لهم قائمة على قدميها وقد استقبلتهم بالترحيب والبشر وعقرت لهم ثم فرحت بهم فلما ان اكلوا ناداها مولاها فأقبلت عليهم وقالت لهم يا سادات بني طي هل من حاجة فتتقضى او وسيلة فتتمضى فقال لها مولاها يا بنية ان في قلوب بني طي من بني عامر وبني كلاب حزازات لا تخفى ونيران لا تطفى لانهم قتلوا ساداتنا وابادوا ابطالنا وحماتنا وقد سمعت بما تفعلني وقد سمح الزمان لنا بمثلك وصار لنا الفخر على العرب بفعلك ونريد تجعلي غاراتنا وغزواتنا الى بني عامر وبني كلاب فتأخذي لنا بالتار وتكشفي عنا العار .

قال الراوي : فلما ان سمعت كلامهم قالت لهم اما والله لو كنت ملكت بكفي الكواكب السائرة ما كنت الا لكم ناصرة وسوف ترون من اليوم فعلي وما أصنع ببني كلاب وما أنزل عليهم من العذاب فشكروها على ذلك وباتت الى أن مضى الليل وأقبل الصباح الضاحك فقامت الى عدة جلادها وركبت على جوادها وكان من الخيول الحسان وقد نادت في رجالها الذين يلودون بها وسارت بهم تطلب ديار بني كلاب وهي تقطع التلال الى ان وصلت الى الحي ووقعت في القوم وكان من أعجب الاتفاق انها نظرت الى أربعة آلاف ناقة كأنها العقبان وهي حمر الوبر كثيرة اللحم وموسوقة شحما وكان بالقضاء والقدر ان تلك النياق لابيها مظلوم فقالت لرجالها دونكم وهذه الغنيمة وساق جوادها وتبعوها اجنادها وساقوها عن بكرة ابيها وعطفوا بها آمنين والى ديارهم طالبين وكان ذلك الوقت آخر النهار وقد سارت الشمس في الاصفار هذا وقد أرسلت الداهية واجنادها في القفار وكان مظلوم ذلك الوقت في خياه وهو ينتظر الى الرعاة مقبلين فقال لهم يا ويلكم ما وراكم ومن بشره رماكم فقالوا له قد ساقنا أموالك داهية بني طي فلما ان سمع منهم ذلك صاح في رجاله وقد ركب في ابطاله وركضوا وراها على الاثر هذا وقد اظلم الليل واعتكر فلم يعرف مظلوم في أي طريق يذهب ولا الى أي جانب يطلب وأيس من الضيعان فقال لنفسه ينبغي ان نعود الى ديارنا ولا نجازف بارواحنا فقالوا له أصحابه افعل ما تريد فلقد صدقت وقد عادوا خائبين وخافوا ان يكونوا من الهالكين .

قال الراوي يا سادة يا كرام : فهذا ما كان من هؤلاء واما ما كان من الداهية فانها لم تزل سائرة بما وصلت اليه فلم يبقى صغير ولا كبير الا وخرج ليلتقوها

came out to meet her. They welcomed her and praised her, and in return, Fatima hosted a great feast.

Several days later, Fatima led another raid on her father's camp. Again, no one was able to pursue her or find her tracks. For her father Mazlum, his world was spinning. Suda looked on as Fatima returned multiple times with loot from the Bani Kilab lands. She marveled at the irony, and thought to herself, *What a paradox that it is Mazlum's own daughter who is his undoing. She who could be the glory of his people! If only the girl knew. . . . If I told her that Mazlum is her father, and Bani Kilab is her own clan, then she would ask me why I did not inform her earlier. She might even turn on Bani Tayy.* Suda decided that discretion was still the best course.

For a full year, the Fiend of Bani Tayy conducted raids on the lands of Bani Kilab. She came and went with no trace, hunting on their lands, until one day she raided a clan allied to Bani Kilab (by her parents' marriage, unbeknownst to her). Some of the people who had been tending the livestock came to inform Mazlum, and he called out to his men to make haste. They leapt up like ferocious lions, seized swords and spears, and set out. Mazlum was in the lead, wearing iron armor and chain mail. Meanwhile, Fatima had just reached a stretch of flat, unprotected land when she heard horses neighing, bridles clattering, blades hissing, and warriors whooping in pursuit. Mazlum shouted, "You bastard! No matter which sky shades you or which bit of earth upholds you, it's time for payback!"

"No!" Fatima hefted the spear in her hand, and called to Marzuq, "Cover my back, brother!" She left the men who rode with her to look after the herds as she raced toward her pursuers. She saw Mazlum in the lead, and he in his turn noted her approach and knew her to be the Fiend of Bani Tayy.

As they met in combat, Mazlum's hate burned for the Bani Tayy, who he believed to be her people. He barked at Fatima, "Meet me on a field so that everyone can see what you are made of!"

"I am the Fiend of Bani Tayy!" Fatima turned her horse with a flick of the reins and raised her spear to block Mazlum's assault. "I am the one who drove off your animals day after day—Come and get me!" They descended into a pasture, their spears clashing. The longer Fatima fought, the stronger and more intense grew her attacks. When they

وسلموا عليها فكان يوم قدمها يوم مشهود وفرح الصديق وكمد الحسود هذا وقد نظروا بني طي الى اموال مظلوم ابن الصحصاح ففرحوا بذلك اجل الافراح وقالوا لها صولي على الزمان ما شغتي فقد سدتي على الاقران وافتخرتي على سائر الفرسان فشكرتهم وقد نزلت وعفرت لهم ونحرت وأحضرت الرجال فأكلوا وشربوا ولذوا وطربوا ومولاهم يقول في نفسه يا ليت شعري بنت اي شيطان هي ثم قال لها يا بنية ان ظفرتي بأى الرجلين ظالم او مظلوم اولاد الصحصاح فلا تغفلي عنهم اما قتلا واما اسرا فانكي ان ظفرتي باحدهما ظفرتي بالشرف البارح فانهم المراد ومرة الفؤاد فقالت لهم لا بد ما تنظروا ما يكون ان شاء الله تعالى .

قال الراوي : ثم انها أقامت أيام قلائل وركبت وعادت الى ديار بني كلاب وطرقت اموال ابيها ثانية فركب فلم يلحقها ولا وجدها فضاقت على مظلوم الارض ولم تزل في كل حين تنصيد أموال بني كلاب وتنزل الغدران حتى أحرمت أموالهم المرعى والنبات وعادت لهم مفزعة وفي أموالهم طامعة فما ان نظرت سعدى أم مرزوق ذلك حارت من فعالها واعمالها فقالت سبحان الله ما هذه الا نجابة عظيمة ان اعلمت هذه البنية وقلت لها ان مظلوم ابوها وبنو كلاب أهلها فتقول لم لا أعلمتيني وتأخذها بني طي في العداوة ثم انها افتكرت فرأت الصمت أو جب لها .

قال الراوي : هذا وان الداهية انقطعت عن ارض بني كلاب مدة سنة كاملة وهي لا تلم بأرضهم بالكلية حتى أيسوا منها وقد اطمأنت قلوبهم ثم انها ركبت في خيلها وسارت نحو اطلالهم عازمة على اخذ اموالهم ولم تزل تجد السير الشديد حتى وصلت الى بني الوحيد وهي من ناحية بني كلاب فنظرت الى الاموال تسرح وتمرح في البيدا وكان بالاتفاق اموال جددها ابو امها فحملت وهي تنادي الغنيمة فاحتوت على الاموال وساققتها هي وأصحابها وعادوا طالبين ارضهم والرجال تطردوا بين يديهم فعادوا بعض الرعاة ونادوا بالويل والثبور وعظائم الامور فسمع مظلوم صياحهم فنهض وقال لهم ما وراكم فقالوا داهية بني طي احتوت على الاموال ورجعت فنادى الامير في الرجال فتبادروا مثل الاسود الضارية او اسباع العادية وأشهبوا الصفاح واعتقلوا بالرماح وساروا ومظلوم في فسيحة الارعاء اذ سمعت سهيل الخيل وقعقة اللجم وحس الحديد وصياح الرجال وصراخ الايصال ومظلوم ينادي يا مخذولة أي سماء تظلك أو أي أرض تقلك فلقد خاب أملك واستد سبلك وساقك الحين الى مصرعك ورجم أنفك .

قال الراوي يا سادة يا كرام : فما هي الا ان سمعت كلامه حتى انها لعبت بالرمح في يدها ثم أقبلت على أخيها مرزوق وقالت له وبيك يا ابن أمي قم ورائي واحمي ظهري ثم تركت الرجال الذين معها يحفظون الاموال وقد عادت للقوم وحملت على ابيها وعلمت انه المقدم عليهم في ذلك اليوم فطلبته مجاله من غير اطالة ورآها مظلوم وقد طلبته فحمل عليها وعلم انها داهية بني طي فكان في قلبه منها نار لكونها آذته مرارا ومراده انه لو ظفر بها حتى انه يأكل لحمها أكلا وينهل دمها نهلا حتى اذا وقعت عينه في عينها فحب ان يعلم ان كانت هي داهية بني طي أم لا فناداهم هلمي الى الميدان وقد جمع بيننا الزمان فقالت له انا داهية بني طي فدونك والنزال والضرب بالنصال ثم انها ألوت العنان وقومت السنان وحرصت على نفسها وقالت له انا الذي أخذت أموالك على ممر الزمان والايام فدونك والضرب بالحسام فعندها نزلا في الميدان واخذوا في الضرب والطعان فرآها كلما طال قتالها نصلت واشتدت وعظم نضالها فتضاربا بالرمحين

had whittled each other's spears down until all that was left in their hands were the butts, they drew their swords and sparred. The dust rose around them, clouding everyone's vision, and the day lengthened as all those gathered craned their heads to watch. Every time Mazlum charged toward Fatima, he found himself feeling sympathy and affection for her, so she took to playing with him within the field like a small boy might play with a bird. This continued until the sun had reached its peak in the sky, and Mazlum thought that he was surely doomed. Fatima could sense his strength, but she overcame him, unhorsing him. When he sprawled on the ground, heart racing, the men of Bani Kilab rushed in to defend him. They attacked her from every side, but she held them off, and calling for her men, attacked right and left.

Even in the midst of this battle, Fatima never let up on the combat with her father until she had tied him onto a horse and handed him over to Marzuq before returning to finish off her assailants.

One of Fatima's warriors went ahead to notify Bani Tayy of her arrival and the outcome of the latest battle. The people came pouring out of the camp to celebrate the victory. They gawked at Mazlum, safely secured to a horse. Fatima called for a tent to be prepared for Mazlum's use.

Suda watched these proceedings anxiously, knowing that the next step for revenge in the blood feud would be Mazlum's death. "God holds each of us, and to God we all return," she muttered the scriptural adage. "If only the girl knew that he was her father! I can hardly believe that she could overcome him. She has so much power." Suda covered her face with a light veil and entered Mazlum's tent.

"Peace be upon you."

"And upon you," replied Mazlum from where he lay tied up.

Suda sat at his head and said softly, "Oh master, how on earth did she overcome you, when you are such an experienced warrior?"

"Honest to God, I saw her pull moves that I have never seen any man master. She is a fierce and solid fighter. I also found myself won over by her. My hand could not reach to hurt her; it was as if it was paralyzed."

At that, Suda began to cry uncontrollably. She was so overcome that she departed, and went to sit at Fatima's door.

"Mother, what happened?" Fatima came out.

"My daughter, you know the man you captured?"

حتى لم يبقى في أيديهما غير العقبين ثم أشهروا السيوف وتضاربوا بهما حتى ملاههما الغبار وطلع النهار وازورت الابصار وحارت الافكار وكان مظلوم كلما انقض عليها يرجع نفسه عنها بالخبية والشفقة فصارت تلعب به في الميدان كما يلعب الصغير بالعصفور ولم يبالا كذلك الى ان أقامت الشمس في قبة الفلك وقد ظن مظلوم انه هلك وضاق منه الصدر وقد بان لذات الهمة من ايها القوة وعرفت منه ذلك المعرفة خبير فعند ذلك انطبقت عليه وقبضت على أطرافه أقلعته من سرجه وأخذته أسير وملكته ذليل حقيير وجلدت به الارض وأوثقتة كثاف فعندها حملت عليها بني كلاب تروم خلاصه وقد اصطفوا المواكب بالمناكب وانطبقوا عليها من كل جانب فهناك حملت عليهم وصاحت رجالها وعملت في الحرب أهوالها .

قال الراوي : هذا ولم تنكف ذات الهمة عن أبيها حتى شدته على ظهر الجواد وسلمته لمرزوق وعادت الى القتال وسقت الرجال كؤوس الحمام ونثرت بني الوحيد نثرا وهبتهم هبرا فولوا منها منهزمين وقد لقيهم رجال الدلهمة وتركوهم على التراب وقد داسوهم بحوافر الدواب وما زالوا خلفهم حتى قاربوا الابيات التي لهم وعادوا عنهم وقد أخذوا الاموال والعبيد وتبادروا الى ديارهم راجعين يقطعون البطاح وفرحوا بأسر مظلوم ابن الصحصاح وقد سبق المبشر الى ديار بني طي وقد خرجوا لقدم الدلهمة فوقع في الحى الصياح والافراح وخرج الناس وفي أولهم مولاها فلما ان وصلوا اليها سلموا عليها ونظروا الى مظلوم وهو موثوق على ظهر جواده ففرحوا الفرح الشديد فلما ان نزلوه افردوا له بيتا وأمرت بوضعه فيه كيما تضرب عنقه في غداة غد فقال لها مولاها يا بنية لا تتعجلي عليه بالقتل حتى نكاتب سائر بني طي ليحضروا قتله فاذا صاروا عندنا نخرج ذلك الوقت مظلوم وتبصره الامراء والعساكر والعشائر ونضربه بسيفونا ونكون قد أخذنا تارنا وكشفنا عارنا .

قال الراوي لهذه الاخبار : فلما ان نظرت سعدى الى ذلك الحال ورأت مولاها في ذلك الوثاق قالت انا لله وانا اليه راجعون في هذا تدبير وهو على كل شيء قدير والله لو علمت هذه الجارية ان مظلوم اباه لعز عليها ان تهب عليه الرياح واعجبا كيف وصلت اليه وقدرت عليه مع ما قد أعطاها الله من شدة بأس وقوة المراس ثم انها سبلت البرقع على وجهها ودخلت اليه وسلمت عليه فرد عليها السلام فجلست عند رأسه وهو موثوق وقالت يا مولاي وكيف وصلت اليك هذه الجارية وانت الليث الهمام والاسد الهجام فقال لها اذا نزل القضاء عمي البصر وما بقي له عمل فوالله لقد نظرت من هذه الصبية ما لا شهدته من رجال ولا عاينته من ابطال ولا رأيت اشد من هذه الداهية بأسا ولا اقوى منها مراسا وكنت كلما هممت بها لا تمتد يدي نحوها بسوء وكان يدي شلا .

قال الراوي : يا سادة يا كرام : فلما ان سمعت سعدى من مظلوم ذلك الكلام بكت ونهضت من عنده ودموعها تتحادر وعبرتها تتقاطر ثم افكرت في نفسها وقالت ان لم أعرفها انه ابوها والا هلك لا محالة وأكون خسرت الدنيا والآخرة ثم انها جلست على باب ابنتها تبكي فسمعتها الداهية وقالت لها يا أماه ما أبكاكي لا أبكي الله لك عينا ابداف قالت لها يا بنتي اما تعرفي هذا الرجل الذي قد أسرتيه

3. Text emended here to correct spelling from فواعجبا to واعجبا.



“I captured him. How could I not know him? He’s Mazlum, son of Sahсах, son of Jundaba the Kilabi.”

“Yes dear, but he is also the closest of people to you by kinship.”

“What do you mean?”

“As God is my witness, he is your father, and you are his daughter.”

“You’re right!”

“How do you know?”

“Because every time I went to strike him during our skirmish, my heart would contract as if I cared about him. My joints got shaky, and my hand would go limp. I could see that the same thing was happening to him, and so you must be right.”

Without a moment to lose, Fatima stood. She took Suda inside before continuing, “Tell me what happened. Surely I wasn’t born into servitude. Tell me everything.” Suda told her the whole story.

When Suda finished, Fatima prayed in thanks to God for being the child of one of the most prominent Arab chiefs. She waited until nightfall before she and Suda crept into Mazlum’s tent and released him.

Stunned and confused, he asked “Why?”

“This is my duty,” Fatima said in a hushed tone. “Suda, you tell him.”

Suda lifted her veil, and Mazlum’s eyes widened. “You are Suda!”

“Yes sir, and this is your daughter Fatima.”

“God be praised for giving me such a lioness!”

Fatima, seeing that he really was her father, grasped his hands and kissed them and his forehead. Mazlum hugged Fatima to his chest, and kissed her forehead, murmuring, “God forgive me.” Weeping tears of joy, he said, “I am so glad to meet you.”

Then Fatima held out to him a coat of mail and other gear, saying “Put this on, Father.” She was already outfitted. Then she signaled to Marzuq and her warriors, saying, “Put the goods and the captives on camels, and take them to the camp of Bani Kilab.”

“As you wish,” they answered, and set about silently settling tents, goods, and people on camels.

Fatima mounted, her father behind her, driving before her all the herds that she had captured throughout the past year. She moved as quickly as possible, but her departure was soon noted by some of the Bani Tayy. They went to inform her master, but he told them that she

فقال لها وكيف لا أعرفه إنما هو مظلوم ابن الصحصاح بن جندبة الكلابي فقالت لها بلى والله يا بنية غير انه أقرب الناس اليكي حسبا وأدناهم نسبا فقالت لها وكيف يا امه ذلك الكلام وما يكون هذا مني فقالت لها والله يا بنية هذا هو ابوكي وانت ابنته من ظهره فلما ان سمعت كلامها الداهية قالت لها صدقتي وحق عالم الغيب والشهادة الكبير المتعال فقالت سعدى وكيف علمتني انني صادقة في هذا المقال فقالت لها يا امه انني كنت كلما هممت ان اضربه في بعض المقاتل يخفق قلبي من الاشفاق وترعد مني المفاصل ويدي ترتخي وقد بان لي منه ذلك ايضا فدل ذلك على صدقك .

قال : ثم نهضت من وقتها وساعتها ودخلت سعدى الى بعض الابيات وقالت أخبريني بالاخبار واطلعيني على جليلة الحال وكيف هذا وأوضح لي نسبي فلقد كانت همتي تسمو في يد المراتب العالية وما انا من نسل العبيد الدانية فاكشفي لي عن هذا الحال وأوضح لي وأصدقني في المقال فعند ذلك أخبرتها بالحال من اوله الى آخره وما أخفت عنها شيء .

قال الراوي : فلما ان سمعت منها ذلك سجدت شكرا لله تعالى اذ كانت من اولاد الملوك ملوك العرب أهل الحسب والرتب فصبرت الى أن أرخى الليل ستوره وأزهت نجومه ودخلت هي وسعدى الى أبيها فحلت وثاق يديه ورجليه فصار باهت فيها لا يعلم الموجب لذلك فقال لها يا ستاه بماذا استوجبت ذلك منكى وما سبب ذلك فقالت له استوجبت بالشرع والدين وألتمس رضا رب العالمين ثم انها قالت لسعدى أخبريه بمكاني منه ولا تكتنميه فعندها قد أسفرت سعدى عن وجهها فعرّفها في الحال فقال لها ما أنتي سعدى فقالت اجل وحق الملك المتعال هذه ابنتك فاطمة من ظهره وفخرها موصول بفخرك وقد أخبرته كيف سلمتها امها اليها وصارت ترضعها بالخفية من ظالم فلما ان سمع مظلوم من سعدى هذا الكلام سجد شكرا لله تعالى وقال الحمد لله الذي أخرج من ظهري هذه اللبوة فله الحمد على تلك المنة .

قال الراوي : ولما ان تحققت الاميرة انه ابوها حقا قامت وأخذت تقبل يديه ورجليه وصدرة وبين عينيه .

واما مظلوم فانه ضمها الى صدره وجعل يقبلها بين عينيه ويقول لها عفى الله عما مضى يا بنية والحمد لله على معرفتنا ببعضنا البعض وهو يبكي من الفرح ثم قدمت لابيها درعه وعدته وقالت له البس يا ابي وقد لبست هي ايضا عدتها وأشارت الى أخيها مرزوق والعبيد وقالت لهم ارفعوا الاموال والرجال على الجمال وسيروا الى ناحية بني كلاب فقالوا سمعا وطاعة ثم انهم رفعوا البيوت والاموال والرجال على ظهور الجمال من غير ضجيج ثم انها ركبت وقد ركب أبوها معها وأخذت كل ما كانت غنمته طول الايام وساقته بين يديها وتعجلت في المسير فعلم بها بعض الناس انها رحلت فأتوا الى بيت سيدها وأعلموه بذلك فقال لهم لعل ان يكون ضاق عليها الكان والمرعى

must have just taken her herds out for fresh foraging.

Fatima and her band continued moving all night, and then stopped in the morning for prayer and a respite. When they resumed their journey later that morning, suddenly the Bani Tayy scouts came into sight, and Fatima pulled in her reins and sped away at a gallop.

When the Bani Tayy had discovered Fatima's empty campsite that morning, with all of her tents and possessions taken, they concluded Mazlum had bribed the slave girl with his riches. Like the waves of the sea, six hundred fifty warriors surged after Mazlum and their Fiend. As the first scouts crested a hill and spotted Fatima's group below, the others followed quickly behind.

Seeing the horses pouring over the hill, Fatima turned to her father, "They've caught up with us, and are not taking your departure very well. You stay with the herds and Marzuq until I return. I'll go reason with them."

"May God help you!"

Fatima turned back to meet the oncoming horses, with Harith in the lead. She and Harith slowed their horses, and then halted, facing each other.

"I am the Fiend of Bani Tayy, and I come to you in peace. Gentlemen, you are all seasoned warriors, and I salute you. Are you prepared to hear me out?"

Harith spoke up, "Bani Tayy, this woman has proven herself equal to a thousand fighters, so let us hear her out. No one is to interrupt her."

One spoke on behalf of the group, "Agreed: tell us what you have to say."

"Men of Bani Tayy, as you know, God determines the course of fate, and that of each of us mortals. Some of you may know already, but for the rest of you, I have learned that I am Fatima, daughter of Mazlum, chief of the Bani Kilab. Marzuq is my milk brother. I was separated from my father, and now I have been reunited with my father. Who can blame me for returning to my own father? I don't want to fight you. I grew up in your lands and at your campsites."

Harith was the first to speak. "You have spoken honorably, and you have done many great deeds. It seems right somehow that you are of noble birth. My heart told me that you were not born a slave. If I did

وتريد تنفرد بأموالها في البيدا .

قال الراوي لهذا الكلام : هذا وقد سارت الذلهمه طول ليلتها الى الصباح فنزلت للراحة وقد صلت صلاة الصبح وسارت في أواخر النهار واذا بنواصي الخيل قد أقبلت والاسنة شرعت وبني طي قد لحقتها ولما ان رأتها أطلقت أعنة الخيل وتسارعت .

قال الراوي يا سادة يا كرام : وكان السبب في ذلك ان بني طي لما طلع الصباح شاهدوا مكان الاميرة الذي كانت بخيامها نازلة فيه وهو خالي منها ومن اموالها فماجوا كما يموج البحر وقالوا لا شك ان مظلوم قد أطلقت سبيله من الاعتقال وسارت معه الى منزله والاطوان ثم انهم صاحوا في منازلهم فغاصوا في العدد وفي أوائلهم الحارث بن شريك والقوم في ستمائة وخمسون فارس كالليوث العوايب وقد جدوا في السير الى ان لحقوا بالاميرة الذلهمه عند الصباح كما ذكرنا وشاهدت الاميرة الخيل وقد أقبلت كأنها السيل فقالت عند ذلك لابيها يا أبتاه أدر كنتنا الخيل وقد صعب عليهم خلاصك من ايديهم فكن انت مع الاموال والنوق الجمال وأخي مرزوق حتى ارجع انا الى القوم وانفذ اليهم بالاعتذار من قبل الطعن بالخطار والضرب بالبتار وأخاطبهم بلين الكلام لما لهم علي من الحقوق والكرام، فان رجوعا فهو المراد ومسرة الفؤاد وان ابوا قلدتهم بقلائد البغي والبستهم الندم فقال لها مظلوم لله درك يا بنية بلغك الله الامنية ثم انها عادت الى الخيل ولحقتهم فلما ان رآها الحارث بن شريك وقد عادت اليهم واقبلت عليهم وتركت سنانها بين ايديهم فوقف بالحصان عن المسير وقال يا آل طي ارفعوا أسنتكم واجمعوا أعنتكم واعلموا ان الداهية قد أتتكم وعادت اليكم وأقبلت عليكم .

قال الراوي : فلما ان سمعوا ذلك الكلام تطاولوا عليها بالعناق وشخصت لها الاحداق حتى انها قريت منهم وأشارت لهم بيدها بالسلام وقالت لهم يا وجوه العرب ويا سادات اهل الرتب ومن انتم اعرف الناس بالضرب والطعان في حومة الميدان ومنازلة الاقربان والشجعان وقد خطر لي كلام فهل انتم من نفوسكم منصفون حتى أقول لكم وتسمعون فقال الحارث مولاه يا بني طي اعلموا ان هذه مقومة في الحرب بألف فارس فاسمعوا ما تقول ولا احد يتكلم بغيرها يكون .

قال الراوي : فقالوا ها نحن سكوت وقولي ما عندك يا داهية واسمعينا قولك فقالت لهم يا وجوه العرب اعلموا ان الله تبارك وتعالى يسوق المقادير الى العباد ليفعل في ملكه ما يشاء ويحكم ما يريد وله في خلقه تدبير هو على كل شيء قدير وبعد هذا من عرف منكم فقد عرف ومن لم يعرفني انا اعرفه بنفسي انا فاطمة ابنة مظلوم ابن الصحصاح ابن جندبة بن الحارث الكلابي ملك ملوك بني كلاب ذو الحسب والنسب صاحب القول الصواب والصدق في الضراب والاصل في حديثي كذا وكذا وقد جرى عليهم ما جرى ثم قالت ومرزوق هذا اخي من الرضاع ومن مظلوم خرجت واليه رجعت فهل فعلت يا بني طي غلط أو عملت شطط فممن كان منكم شرب لبنا فائر او قام عنه ذبلا طاهر فليرجع عني فاني كارهة لحربكم بعد ما ربيت في حيككم وبأرضكم نشئت .

قال الراوي : فلما ان سمعوا منها ذلك الكلام فكان اول من ناداها مولاه وقال لها والله قد أحسننت فيما قلتي وذكرتي والله درك والله ما دعيتي الا بالشرف وانكي لمن خير سلف وانه خير خلف وانتي كنتي كما شاهدت منكبي كبار الامور والافعال التي ما يقدر عليها ملك ضرغام أقول لبت شعري هي بنت أي سيد مجيد وتحديثي نفسي انكي لست من العبيد

not carry the responsibilities of family and loyalty to Bani Tayy, I myself would follow you and work as one of your warriors. It would be an honor to be in your company.” He concluded, “May God bless you.” Then he turned his horse back, calling out, “Go back, Bani Tayy!”

وبعد هذا وحق سيد الورى وأجل من وطئ الثرى لولا ثقل ظهري في بني طي وكثرة العائلة وما تعرفين من محبة الوطن لكنت أسير في خدمتك وفي صحبتك موافق لكلي على هجرتك وانزل من حيث تنزلي وأغرس حيث تغرسي وأنا أستودعك الله سبحانه وتعالى ثم انه ألوى عنان جواده وارجع الى الحبي ونادي ارجعوا يا بني طي . . .

