

# Alaattin and the Jinn

by A. Human Being (May 2016)

May 15, 2014: Reyhanli, Hatay Province, Turkey

Hajji Alaattin was a man who loved good coffee and conversation. He had five sons, had lived a long and rewarding life, and intended to end it with a direct passage to Paradise. It was a new decision for him, and one he had come to through coffee and conversation.

“Have I ever told you about the experience of my hajj?” he told his most faithful coffee friends. It was funny that he knew . . . *knew* . . . that he had told this story to them at least three times . . . and yet they never seemed to tire from hearing it.

“Tell us about it,” the two men said at the small circular table outside the corner market.

As it was every brother’s obligation to perform the hajj at least once in his life, and one never knows when the scribe of Fate may cease writing a man’s story, his father, bless his soul, had made sure that when his four boys were of age, they would participate in that experience.

And so, in 1953, during Dhu al-Hijjah, the last month of their calendar, Alaattin’s father took his family of eight to Mecca and Medina. His father had instructed the family to meditate on the life of Muhammad and Ibrahim in performing the rites. They had donned the white cloth that represents a state of Holiness about 10 kilometers from Mecca. In the center of Mecca, they had walked seven times around the Kaaba. During the family hajj to Mecca and Medina, they offered prayers, repented, and slept on the ground under the stars.

At the *jamrah*, the place of stoning, Alaattin’s father reminded the family to consider the evil that men do in Dar al-Garb – the “house of the West” – unclean lands where sharia law is not in force. He asked his son to consider the strange hate of those who slander Allah and His prophet, blessings be upon him. He urged them to consider that what awaited them was a fire whose fuel is men and stones.

Alaattin, at his father’s suggestion, meditated on the nature of violence and

evil as he held his stone in his hand. Feeling the cold hardness of that stone that warmed in his hand, he closed his eyes and secretly prayed to the jinn. He prayed in that simple and most genuine way that all children pray, and he asked of the jinn to grant his wish. With eyes squeezed tight, his lips moved unconsciously, framing the shape of his secret wish.

As the jinn were the helpers of men, he wished that this act of ritual would not simply be the unthinking aping of social observance, but a vision into the insipient instant when a man's heart turned to violence. He wished with a child's pure heart for the possibility of genuine spiritual knowledge into the nature of violence.

With that, like many before him in the circle of the faithful around the jamrah pillars, he threw his first stone. And he wished again, and hurled his second stone even harder.

A small pebble now, thrown from someone on the opposite side of the circle, landed in front of his feet. His father shook his shoulder and said, "C'mon," urging the family to back up. But Alaattin, with his jinn prayer and wish, pushed away his father's hand, blew upon the stone, and hurled it with all his might at Jamrat al-Aqabah, the largest of the three pillars representing evil.

Immediately, something struck him in the face. He heard his mother scream and he felt his father's hands fold over him and drag him hither and thither, yelling at other men to get out of the way. The pain in his face swelled and yawned as his father laid him on the ground. Sitting outside the corner market with his coffee friends, he reflected on how that was the only time that he had ever heard his father cry.

And that was a long time ago, the day that he had lost his right eye.

It took young Alaattin a year to confess to his father about the jinn wish. And his father had slapped him in the face, then apologized, and hugged him. "You've paid price enough, my son," his father had said. "Pray to Allah, not the jinn."

But from behind some red hollowed out hole, Alaattin half-wondered, with a seemingly prohibited curiosity, if he had not already been somehow . . . *granted his wish.*

It was a stupid thought that he had quickly shaken off. But there were solitary nights after his children had gone off to college, to work, and after his wife's death, and in his retirement, when he would drink whiskey and smoke cigarettes under the stars that that curious thought would return. And it would return from an unremembered place halfway between this world and dream. It would return seemingly . . . with a promise.

But again, those were stupid thoughts of a "What if?" world.

Alaattin's remaining coffee friends told him that it wasn't worth thinking about. "The evil that the jamrah stoning ground represents is real. And losing an eye in the fight against evil," they said, "was an assertion that you have a warrior's heart, and with one eye... *uh... a clear ability to focus!* It was Fate," they said, and an echo of a religious duty to come.

And Alaattin had nodded, for their proposition seemed logical enough. The indisputable aggression of evil was a thought that had – through gritted teeth at foreign tourists – shaped much of his life after his lesson at the pillars of jamrah.

Ideologically, Alaattin aligned himself most strongly with the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad, whose genius had drawn the West into the trap of an expensive armed conflict with IS, while simultaneously using IS to exterminate entrenched moderates such as the Free Syrian Army. Assad, as he saw it, was positioning the jihadist world for a smart future. He imagined that Turkey desperately needed that sort of two-pronged approach if it was to orchestrate its penetration into the European Union. This is Turkey's role, to be a flying wedge (the ancient Greek military formation) carving an entrance tunnel into Europe. To a lesser degree, that's what Algiers was – Allah bless them for showing the way. But the sheer size of Turkey promised to make it a great unassailable wave.

The Japanese had a legend of a great tidal wave, *the kamikaze*, after which its World War II suicide pilots were named. The truth behind the legend was this: from China, Kublai Kahn had ordered the two largest navel invasions in history against the isolated island of Japan. Both times, a "divine wind" – *a wave of phantasmagoric size* – pulled the water out from under both fleets, amassing it in a great tottering wall as no surviving eyes had ever witnessed.

It was both myth and history, but it was also Turkey's divine role in returning

the fight to the land of the Crusaders. Once attached to the body of the EU, Turkey would fortify its position, its flying wedge would cut deep into Southeastern Europe like a great greedy scimitar, then magnificently, like an avenging archangel howling for the loss at Tours in 732 AD, the wings of the flying wedge would open and a river of holy warriors – *May! A great wave of phantasmagoric size* – would totter over Europe for a day casting terror into the hearts of the infidels . . . before crashing down upon them with a force that would blot memory from the eyes of the dead. That was to be Turkey's essential role in history.

Turkey's present government, in supporting Syrian rebels, had lost sight of the model that Assad offered. Alaattin had friends with connections within Assad's intelligence agency, the Military Intelligence Directorate. They had a great many talks over coffee at the local market. At his age most of his day was spent in talks over coffee. He had opinions for everybody who would listen. And increasingly, most of his friends preferred excuses to conversation. All except his friends connected to the MID. They listened intently to Alaattin, and agreed with him wholeheartedly about almost everything. And although he didn't remember formulating the idea, his friends were supportive of *his* plan to bomb the Reyhanli shopping district where Syrian refugees with anti-Assad sentiments lived after they had been adopted by the Turkish government. Alaattin's coffee friends had even procured a stolen car, which they had fitted with enough explosives, they had assured him, to blast concrete and shrapnel over a three-block radius.

Now, in his life as a businessman, restaurant owner, husband, and father of five, this unblinking proximity to his own mortality – *to which their conversations would suddenly and inevitably turn* – was where Alaattin would usually excuse himself. But then, there was that *other* conversation that he had had with his doctor about "organotrophic metastasis." And although Alaattin was a hajji, he was still one to worry about getting a proper seat in the hereafter. Metastasis promised to be a horrible business. That was one conversation he wouldn't have minded skipping. Nobody enjoys a conversation about how long you'll be bleeding out of your ass until the cancer moves painfully into your bones to finally kill you. So, yes, he greeted conversation about "his plan" to bomb the Reyhanli shopping district with a surprisingly gentle acquiescence.

So, he immersed himself in thoughts of the Western evil that the stoning at the

jamrah represented. He isolated his soul in that hateful fever that had driven so many of his conversational convictions and which had increasingly isolated him from all but a few friends. And with the help of his coffee friends, he filmed his martyr video, he familiarized himself with the car-bomb and the thumb trigger of its detonator, he made phone calls, wrote letters, and paid his bills. With a few tears, he finished with all these . . . the final responsibilities of a terminal widower.

So the day of his expected martyrdom finally came. In his mix of worry about technical competence, anticipation of houris, and desperation for a good seat amongst the blessed . . . something growled in the pit of his stomach . . . and burped . . . *down there*.

*Fucking mortifying*, he thought. To have shit himself on the cusp of his moment of glory. And there would be no changing his pants at this stage. They were too far in.

His coffee friend noticed the smell and told him that he was right in his thinking, and that they would simply have to “roll with it” . . . and explain it all to the prophet in Paradise. In fact, he even had a story to that effect.

“Once upon a time,” his coffee friend – *his handler* – told him, “There were two unfortunate assassins that Muhammad had sent out to murder a rival in Mecca. However, they had been discovered, and in their flight, they had hid in a cave.

“A fool, however, happened to be grazing his horse near the mouth of the cave, and as they feared discovery, one of the assassins snuck stealthily out and stabbed the man in the liver. But the man let out such a girlish shriek that the Meccans heard it and the assassins had to flee a second time and find yet another cave in the desert cliffs.

“But before long, a goat shepherd came by and, with a handful of dates, walked directly into their cave to take a break from the desert heat. And as the fool lay down and slept, one of the assassins stuck an arrow in his eye with such force that it burst out the back of the man’s neck. But again, the man had shrieked, and the strange acoustics of the cave sent the man’s voice out across the desert cliffs. So, a third time the assassins had to flee.

“And in their flight from capture, the assassins came upon a third witness whom

they fell upon and murdered, and who . . . *again* . . . had let out a tell-tale shriek.

“So again, a fourth time, they were set to flight! When they had finally got back to safety in Muhammad’s camp, they related these events to the prophet, peace be upon him, who, according to Tabari . . . *laughed so hard that you could see his back teeth!*”

“But promptly, he blessed the assassins for their trouble.

“So, even during the time of the prophet, these things happened! No big deal. Muhammad’s reaction to a soiled car seat would be much the same. He would simply laugh at the mishaps that Fate throws at us to test us along the road of duty. Most importantly, he would bless you just the same.” His coffee friend squeezed Alaattin on the shoulder. “Allah akbar, my brother. I gotta go.” And Alaattin smiled at the kindness of his coffee friend as the man left the garage.

Now all the work was left to Alaattin. And the work was easier than dying of bone cancer. There was no doubt about that. All he had to do was back the car out of the garage, drive it to the shopping district a block away, and simply . . . *press this... “Fuck!”*

The explosion had been immense.

And in its light, Alaattin saw what must have been fifty souls torn from their bodies . . . including the wide-eyed face of his coffee friend. It seemed to him, that these dismembered people were now connected to him in a way that was somewhat like all that Indian karma shit.

For Alaattin, there was an experience of confused uncertainty. Not about death or dying at all, but an existential confusion about the reality of his situation. The physicality of the body became an “as if” – a thought, seemingly far-distanced from a felt sense of being . . . *of being alive* . . . of moving the arms and legs or even of breathing. This sensual alertness to life had dissolved into a vague dream or ideation of an embodied self – the most uncertain thought of consciousness localized in a body . . . and occupying limbs with their natural eros in swimming, in running, in jumping . . . and in playing basketball as he had enjoyed long ago in high school. The innate joy of those limbs was gone – the sensual pleasure of the simple circulation of blood in an

observed hand, for example, that ubiquitous though unmistakable verve of physical aliveness.

In the first moments of his death, it didn't even occur to Alaattin that he had died. Rather, his thoughts were occupied in the reality of his situation. *Is this real?* he wondered. He knew that something was different, but as he had already lost the faculty of what was lost in this change, he couldn't discern what exactly was different.

*I . . . I am still thinking,* he thought. *That means I'm real . . . sane . . . safe.* The compass center of this identity was felt as an intoxicating confirmation of existence. *Am I dreaming,* he wondered. *And where am I?*

There was a piercing Light of sharp unassailable pervasiveness – a terrifying Peace of panoramic encompassment that threatened to annihilate the seemingly contiguous center of this differentiated self that was his only fragile sense of ideation. And this self, it seemed, was threatened by the razor edge sharpness of utterly unchallengeable and pervasive Love – an immovable encompassing Sphere with no entrance. It was adamantine . . . indestructible . . . an Eternal Light wholly resting in Itself, knowing only Itself, and understood only by Itself. Its Self-Illumined Brightness – *like a living eternity within the thunderbolt* – was such . . . that the awe-struck self observing it . . . utterly swooned from consciousness.

And drifted . . . as it were . . . in a dream.

There was a Hell of hot coals and an intense feeling of paranoia. The self looked out and saw another – *the persecutor* – the man behind the mask. The pitiless hell-being that smites at one's neck and finger-tips. This self roared and gnashed its teeth at it in indiscriminate hell-hating aggression. And the self was burned in fire, and no sooner was its skin consumed than it had been given another skin. And mockingly, here in front of the self was his eternal persecutor, the one who had (in that time-bound dream of life) argued to his face against his convictions. And on seeing the persecutor, the self instantly had a knife in his hand. It was as if the one implied the other.

However, the third – the intercessor – stepped in. The third held a piece of chalk in its hand. "Rather than strike your enemy, mark your enemy with this."

But the self knew that the third didn't know the subtlety or cruelty of the enemy. And so the self raised its blade in the air, and stabbed, stabbed, stabbed into the heart of the other.

Plumbs of blood spouted from the heart of this great self . . . invisible as it was and unknown to itself.

And the great self stood now in another world! And again the self could sense another, somewhere awaiting discovery. But as soon as the most insipient impression of another began to appear, the self began shifting his behavior to a position of advantage toward this other. It was a slow mechanical dance of cunning, strategy, and book learning that lacked spontaneity in its eternal impasse . . . which faded as if a dream.

But Lo! The great self stood now in another world! And again the self could sense another, somewhere awaiting discovery. In this world, the self felt the depth of its own innate poverty. It's greedy sense of lack. The self imagined the luxuriousness of Paradise; rivers of water, wine, and honey. Golden plates of endless food offered by beautiful women. And when the self reached for the tantalizing food, the soft sweet cakes crumbled and dissolved in its grasp. It was a frustrating, exasperating hunger pang for food and drink that are . . . *right here!* Did I say that? *Right here! Right fucking here! Here!* Within grasp. Within the hands. Cake that one can crane one's empty neck towards and bite, but which lends no satisfaction, no enjoyment, a cake of dry ash and empty air. Empty promises. Wine that one can pour from a great goblet which turns to sawdust on the tongue. And there . . . the self sees another . . . an infant satiated with breast milk from a source unseen. The infant is content . . . an enjoyer of the world . . . a source of nourishment.

However, the third – the intercessor – stepped in. The third held a piece of chalk in its hand. "Rather than feed on the source of your envy, mark it with this."

But the self knew that the third didn't understand the secret meaning in the frailty and insignificance of this source of envy. And so the self grabbed the infant by its neck and tore its ribcage in half, forcing the still beating heart into its mouth . . . swallowing, swallowing, swallowing . . . the fulfillment of another.



Blood and mutilated organs hung from the empty chest of this great self . . . invisible as it was and unknown to itself.

And Lo! The great self stood now in another world! And again the self could sense another, somewhere awaiting discovery. The self stood solidly in a world of routines . . . though slothful to attentiveness . . . to wakefulness . . . or joy. And the self went through its work, its habit, its routine as a myrmidon – a brute soldier soldering away on stage in the play of life, scornful, threatened, and abrasive to the joy and irony – *oh, sweet irony* – of this sweet sweet play! And here on stage with him stood another – *a theatre person* – and you know how they are! Irregularly dressed, lacking real work, with a lifestyle and sexuality that consumed the self's mind with paranoia and an itching sense of suffocating self-doubt. *As if the self was the one that needed to change! Ha!*

At this moment, the third – the intercessor – stepped in. The third held a piece of chalk in its hand. “Rather than strike at this other that threatens you, mark your threat with this.”

But the self knew that the third didn't know the genuine threat of this other. This other would only drag discipline, structure, and society down to its level. *Mark my words*, the self thought. And again the self murdered. And it hid its handiwork, this time, with rubber gloves and bleach . . . cleaning, cleaning, cleaning . . . a bloodstain that can never be removed.

And bleached, and scrubbed, and scoured, and sanded was the memory of this great self . . . invisible as it was and unknown to itself.

And Lo! The great self stood now in another world! And again the self could sense another, somewhere awaiting discovery. And with embittered disgust, he perceived this other. This other claimed all the wrong ideas, habits, preferences, and pleasures. He ate the wrong meat, celebrated the wrong holidays, and did violence upon violence upon violence upon Allah Himself . . . by living in a skin outside of this self's burning itching rash! Seeing the joy and play of this other gave him no natural happiness, for instead he felt a hot and needling anger which burned and embroiled his hands in the planning of assassinations, political intrigues, and the laying of traps. Sitting in a vehicular bomb made of insecurity and entitled rage, the self rolled his thumb over a trigger that would kill all those others who dared live in a world

outside his inflamed rashness.

At this moment, the third – the intercessor – stepped in. The third held a piece of chalk in its hand. “Rather than avenge yourself at this other that incites you, simply mark your enemy with this.”

And in a moment of insight, the self paused. “What if . . . *just what if* . . . my sense of self could encompass this apparent other and the observant third state as well? What if this third – *this third state* – led me to see a wholeness that encompassed the trap of this apparent binary conflict? What if?”

But that was just crazy talk!

He pressed the thumb trigger of his vehicular bomb killing, killing, killing . . . this great self . . . invisible as it was and unknown to itself.

In life, Alaattin had already been transported into a state, only it had seemed so subtle (in his denial) that he hadn’t allowed himself to consciously notice. *A pity perhaps* . . . for at the moment of death, there was only one difference, and it was that the stability of a body had been pulled out from under him like the disappearance of a magic carpet. The body had been a compass, a measuring rod, and ultimately an elegantly complex feedback system that he had failed to utilize in relation to the state of his awareness.

In life, he had flown out through the sense organs and made a new center – *like a bird making a nest of straw* – in one of two polarities that ever hovered in front of his nose. And now his center, his house of five-doors, his home in the body . . . was gone.

And with the total absence of a body, the hallucination that had hovered in front of his nose . . . and in which he had invested a life – *like a nest of straw* . . . was now all that he had for the hope of a home.

Just as he had chased that contrived state of awareness – *that hallucination* – in life, so he would in death . . . or rather, in this bodiless state. And so he . . . was pulled . . . and allowed himself to be pulled . . . and *pulled himself* . . . toward the gravitational center of this ever so self-inventive hallucination.

It was as though, through sympathetic magic, or the logic of “likes attract

like”, that he had invented his preferences in the theatre of life. And just as a man who *only* eats spicy food might “only” be attracted to “spicy” women, heated relationships, and violent action films, so too, Alaattin drifted toward a contrived gravitational vortex of awareness that accommodated his most habituated feeling tone.

He found himself in a dark pit surrounded by smoky red-veined walls of semi-translucency. His surroundings had a hazy liquidity and phantom organic quality. Nothing was physical, per se, except bits of meat and bone somehow transported through the fire. Otherwise, everything existed with a semi-vaporous and sometimes jelly-like incandescence. And all around him was the smell of rotting putrefaction. He ran to the semi-translucent wall and pressed his face against its gelatinous slime before recoiling in angry surprise. In that instant, he had seen what looked like an enormous spine, ribs, and huge billowing lungs above him. He was in the rank throbbing belly of some gigantic beast whose outline he could not imagine.

And crawling toward him on crooked ambling hooks was a figure that swayed in and out of vision to the rhythm of a cooing and comforting voice. A translucent face with pouting lips came toward him then inched back into the darkness as its hue changed. “Darling,” the hourie’s voice said, as an arm-like appendage from a sleek seductive shoulder slid a rotting hooked hand gently around his waist. “It would be violence not to kiss one who has waited so long to taste your mouth.”

Through the mad gnashing teeth of his habituated state, he held onto the fragment of a feeling tone that he had once held for his wife. But now all such *irregular* feelings were clouded over by the unremitting truth that was his wish-granted world of embittered rage.

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The above short story is a chapter from the forthcoming novel *War Verses: A Jihadist Fairytale* by A. Human Being.

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