

Muhammad and Two Assassins Make Waraka ibn Nawfal Into a Metaphor

by A. Human Being (June 2016)



November 13, 629AD: On the camel trail from al-Medina to al-Harrah, Arabia

It was the strangest thing; whenever Salim ibn Umayr murdered someone, he always felt that phantom houris were licking his cock.

It had begun that sweltering night that, sword-in-hand, he crept upon Abu Afak, the old man everyone knew to be one hundred and twenty years old, sleeping alone outside without even a blanket.

No.

His was only the second link in a chain of murders beginning with al-Harith ibn Suwayd ibn Samit. So, that's when the curse, if curse it was, really began. There had been other murders, of course, *that goes without saying*, but it was al-Harith's that set off the old man, Abu Afak, chief of a Yemenite tribe living in Medina.

So, you see, he wasn't at cause, really. Salim was just a link in a chain, like Umayr bin Adi al-Khatmi after him, shutting the dirty hole of Asma bint Marwan, loudmouth bitch that she was. Salim remembered how Umayr had been shaken by the incident, and had asked the prophet if it was proper to butcher a woman at night in a room filled with her children. Of course the prophet had his reassurances. "You have greatly helped God and His prophet, Umayr!" What in Allah's name did Umayr expect? Salim and Umayr had laughed about it afterwards . . . *that feeling of doubt*. Salim enjoyed talking with the other assassins because it gave him a feeling that . . . well, a feeling that what he had experienced that night . . . and what he was going through ever since was . . . *normal*. He was a brother, after all.

So, cocks crow. People wake up and all the women start screaming, Salim had remembered of the first murder. We knew what had happened. Ha! We had celebrated it the night before. "Al-Harith is dead!" women had screamed, staggering in the streets. Oh, they had some nerve, those women, Salim thought.

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Salim remembered the moment fondly as he and Umayr rode their camels out into the desert, while old Waraka ibn Nawfal, the prophet's teacher, who couldn't really be called his teacher anymore . . . the prophet's third cousin then . . . trailed behind them, tethered by a rope to Umayr's camel.

Waraka was bound and gagged, "so as not to incite you with his lies," the prophet had said before sending the two assassins and their human encumbrance (shivering in a sack strapped behind the camel's hump) northeast of the city. Once they were well into the desert and close to the flat rocky basin of al-Harrah, they had let old Waraka out of the bag to let him see . . . yes . . . and walk toward that valley that apostates and liars don't walk away from.

Salim and Umayr made sure their camels walked at a slow comfortable pace. They wanted Waraka to have a proper sense of expectancy for whatever the prophet had planned. The two assassins grinned at each other after making backward glances at their prisoner. It was funny, Salim thought, seeing what an open mouth could earn a person.

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Six years previous, al-Harith, Abu Afak, and Asma bint Marwan had been a chain of open mouths that had, each in the succession, incited the annoyance of the prophet. So, six years ago, sitting at the feet of the prophet, Salim had heard Allah's messenger speak of ancient Abu Afak, chief among the Yemenis, who had, to the prophet's annoyance, composed a poem that first praised the people of Medina for their strength over mountains, then chastised them for their submission to an outsider who would split their hearts in two. "Who here will deal with this mischief-maker for me?" Muhammad had asked. Salim ibn Umayr, feeling a strange stirring within him, had raised his arm and shouted, "I vow to either kill Abu Afak or die before that decrepit old fart."

However, the murder was easier said than done, for Abu Afak was a chief among

the Yemeni Jews and slept well guarded in his dirty Jew house. So Salim waited. And waiting, he asked himself what the lord of assassins would do. And he kept a keen eye on the house. And he waited some more . . . every evening, *Inshallah*, until . . . Allah sent sign in a sunset that loomed in the sky like a clot of blood. In that evening that Allah had blessed, the air refused to cool as the sun went down, but rather, the dry stifling air became hotter and hotter. And if you believe in jinn magic and the will of the prophet, the Jew Abu Afak left the safety of his home to sleep alone on the roof of his wattle and daub house.

So in the dead of night, like the vengeance of spite, Salim crept in the shadows and up the crooked ladder to the marvel – *the miraculously ancient man* – that Allah had destined to die. And on that rooftop, Salim crawled, because it somehow felt good to crawl, toward the man who had defied death for two generations. At the ancient Jew's bedside now, then straddling him, Salim untied his sword from the sash he had slung over his back. He lifted the blade in the air. "Allah akbar," he said. In that instant, light from the crescent moon reflected from his blade into the ancient Jew's eye and he awoke spiting a curse in Salim's face, "Cursed!" he said, and no more. For Salim thrust the sword down into the old man's chest, and turned its blade, right and left, driving it in deeper, and deeper still, until his red fists pressed hot on the old man's chest. The man's eyes bulged and he coughed blood as his body thrashed beneath Salim. So the assassin gripped the thrashing legs tight with his thighs and pressed down on that bloody chest until the old man's spirit had left for the fires of punishment.

"Uuuhhh," Salim moaned with wild exhaustion at the murder, but then he realized that he was ejaculating in his straddle atop the dead ancient Jew. *Is this what it's like sometimes*, he wondered, *when you kill someone?* He pulled his sword out of the dead man, and thought to wipe the embarrassment off his pantaloons, but only smeared his crotch with the old man's blood. In doing so, he climaxed again, and again, falling out of the wooden bed, and again on the rooftop, and again while crawling, and again while falling off the ladder, and again while lying on his back in the moonlight, and again while staggering home, and one final time while leaning against his front door and slowly replaying the murder in his mind while he smeared the mess on his groin up his kurta and over his chest. This was the greatest feeling he had ever known, and in this beautiful death trance he imagined a pair of houris taking turns on his snuff-aroused

shaft.

The next day, when the society of brothers congratulated him on the successful assassination of ancient Abu Afak, he had very casually . . . *very casually, mind you* . . . mentioned the experience of ejaculating on the dead body. He was shocked however, by the wide-eyed silence and awkward sideways glances of the others, and so he quickly changed the subject to sports.

However, amongst the society of brothers, that evasion did not go unnoticed.

Salim tried to make up for it by participating in the frequent raids that the prophet had ordered against Quraysh caravans. But now, an utterly sexual drive was pulling, licking, and tugging him into banditry. In the thick of one raid, for example, he had struck a camel rider with a spear, leapt off his own camel, and on quivering legs, in a conflict of dismay and arousal, he watched a pulsing thick stain spread over his pantaloons. He was lucky that his brothers made quick work of the Quraysh men in that caravan, for he fell immobilized in ecstasy next to the body of the man he had speared. Again, the houris in his mind's eye took turns on him with their soft mouths.

Asma bint Marwan, in no time at all, scandalous bitch that she was, hiding behind her father's civic honor, had begun to sing verses dishonoring Muhammad for the murder of old Abu Afak. "I despise these traitors," she sang. "They obey a stranger who is not of their kin; not of Murad or Madhhij. To these traitors I ask, 'Do you expect good treatment from your new master after you kill your own chiefs? Are you not hangers on, like hungry men fawning over a cook at the smell of his broth?'" And in short thrift, Umayr bin Adi al-Khatmi had done his famous deed of plunging his dagger into the scandalous woman and sending whatever soul an infidel woman might have to the fires of Hell.

Salim had approached Umayr afterwards and told him that he felt very close to him in their cause and deed. So the assassin of Asma bint Marwan accepted Salim's friendship, but cautiously and with such a look of apprehension that if Salim had seen it, he would have departed feeling offended.

In those increasingly isolated days, Salim distanced himself from his wives, and had begun to sleep outside his house, leaning his back against a camel's saddle while dreaming of red murder and houris.

It had gotten to the point where even in a minor raid or skirmish, the suggestion of slitting a man's throat was enough to have him falling off the back of his camel in a convulsive swoon of ecstasy. He had begun to feel as though a giant black leech had attached itself to his soul and was sucking him dry through his loins.

He had even begun to pray to Allah, quite sincerely, for martyrdom – death on the battlefield – to speed him to Paradise (and an eternity of consuming lips) and away from the embarrassment of repeated pantaloon stains when beating his wives, slaves, and sons. His slaves had even begun to make all sorts of household mistakes in jest and anticipation of seeing him fall groaning to his knees in convulsive unremitting orgasms upon beating them. He had long since given up hope that his slaves would be more exhausted from the beatings than he.

One evening, after a particularly lucrative raid on a Quraysh caravan, soldiers were squabbling over which silver cup or which woman belonged to whom; and Salim had approached Muhammad at the campfire and in a quiet voice told the warlord prophet, "I spill my seed in battle. What should I do?"

"It's the rhythm of the camel," Muhammad had said. "Don't worry about it."

"Forgive me, but no. It's the thought of killing or torturing the Quraysh or any others. Oh, Allah, just thinking about killing the prisoners, or knocking out their teeth beforehand, I . . . Allah akbar. Oh . . . ah, ah, ah, ah." (And so on.) This went on for quite some minutes . . . and then for a few minutes more.

Muhammad's brow was knit in the puzzle of the man. He sighed, kicked sand into the fire, stood up and deliberated in several property disputes, and finally when Salim had recovered his composure, told the man, in what he hoped was a voice of irresistible conviction, "This means that Allah is well pleased with you, particularly in your handling of that Yemenite Jew, Abu Afak," and went on to say that if Salim properly returned to entering his wives, slaves, a temporary partner, or a chattel girl more often, it would ease him out of his disconcerting state.

For Salim, however, indulging obsessively as he was in clumsy warfare and the ecstasy of phantom blowjobs, more than five years went by with little or no change in his condition. *It was Abu Afak's curse*, he had convinced himself.

Through this time of deep inner-conflict, confusion, and ecstasy for Salim . . . Umayr had begun to feel an unexpected sense of obligation to his fellow assassin and did his best to keep the man out of trouble.

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However, one forgotten day . . . Muhammad's old teacher, Waraka ibn Nawfal, had come from Mecca to Medina to seek out his past pupil and offer him moral caution against war on the city of his birth. At least that's what Umayr had told Salim. And a group of brothers (good friends with Umayr actually) had struck the old scholar in the base of his skull, then lugged him down crooked alleys, turning on their feet right and left, to the spot where it had been arranged that they should meet Umayr and Salim on camel back, and load this open mouthed man behind the hump of Umayr's snorting beast. And thus burdened, the two men rode out into the desert toward the rocky basin of al-Harrah.

It'll go down like the slow punishment of the eight men of Ukil, Umayr predicted in his mind, as his camel trod over the stones of al-Harrah. If he was in the mood for a laugh, all he had to do was tell his friend something like, "I bet you'll be asked to hatchet out the old man's teeth," and he could watch his friend fall off his camel in a swoon.

In the direction of distant Medina in sunset, another rider was approaching.

Umayr and Salim dismounted from their camels, tied Waraka to a post, and built a fire with wood from the back of Salim's camel. It would be dark soon. In that hour of fading light in which they waited for the rider to approach, the two men talked about the size and strength of Muhammad's army and compared and contrasted it with the size and strength of the army of Mecca. Their army, they concluded, was bigger; and as their men were also more conditioned to battle, they could last longer. At this conclusion, the two friends puffed up with pride. They could see now, close in the firelight, the features of the rider. It was Muhammad. He dismounted and tied his camel to a wooden stake driven in the rocky ground. He greeted his two assassins and then (without looking at the man) Waraka.

He looked worried. And in distraction, he pointed to Salim to undo the gag that was shoved in his old teacher's mouth. Umayr untied the old man's arms as well.

Waraka coughed and asked for water. Muhammad gestured for Salim to give him water.

"Any news about me?" Waraka asked, making a sign upward with his eyes.

"You make it hard for me," Muhammad said.

"This conflict of yours is a burdensome contrivance," Waraka said. "Believe me, I feel for you . . . but I also *understand*. Do you hear me? Stop looking away from me, my cousin. I'm telling you that I understand the structure of your dilemma. I have eyes. I am awake to the tension and death that you needfully create. I'm letting you know that *I understand it*. Now, do you hear me alright?"

"Sit down, so I can think of what to do with you," Muhammad said, pushing the old man onto the rocky ground.

"You mistake your dilemma," Waraka said, on his knees, clearing an area free from stones. "*I am not your problem.*"

He drew two circles side-by-side in the small area cleared of stones. "There was once a father who was wise and honorable, but advanced in years. He had a profitable garden in which he grew two crops: dates and pomegranates." Waraka pointed his finger at the two circles in the sand. "However, because of some childhood enmity of little consequence, the son had developed a hatred for dates. He wouldn't eat dates. He wouldn't even touch rice that was cooked with dates. He simply hated dates and no one among his friends and family could do anything about that. Now, the father had bequeathed this beloved garden to his son in his will. And when the father had died, Lord bless him, the son remembered his old enmity for dates. And so, he uprooted all of the date palms." Waraka pointed to the circle for dates and slowly . . . ran his hand through it. "The son failed to see that the dates and pomegranates were both fruit that his father had loved. And thus he destroyed his fathers beloved garden here on earth."

"Metaphors. You love your metaphors, old man."

"I simply understand that you would be happier with an enjoyment of *all fruit*," Waraka said.

"Metaphors still!" Muhammad said with a laugh, turning toward Salim and Umayr.

"Around every pair of circles, Muhammad, you can draw a *larger* circle." Waraka pointed back and forth between the two circles. "Kind/unkind; just/unjust; good/evil; my tribe/your tribe." He drew a larger circle around the two smaller circles, and wrote, *Humanity*. "This is the larger circle, isn't it? Don't confine your world to such a small circle," he said, his finger pointing at the smaller sphere.

"But look," Muhammad said, and wiped away the entire drawing with his foot. "Look what happens to metaphors."

"Don't make this *your* metaphor, my cousin, my friend, return to yourself."

"Should I tie his arms behind his back," Salim asked, in an urgent voice.

"He brings it upon himself," Muhammad said, as Salim, in the throes of ecstasy, bound Waraka's arms.

"In the cave of Hira, in the mountains north of Mecca, I had been visited by the Angel of Allah, *which you yourself confirmed!* And since then, I have seen its immensity, standing straight, and appearing on the uppermost horizon, coming nearer and nearer to me until it was at a distance of two bows or less."

"Don't invoke the blood leech as a means of intimidating me."

"There is only one God and I am his prophet. Me!"

"I have always treated you as family, a friend, and budding scholar even," Waraka said. "I have always been kind to you . . . if even too temperate toward your affliction. This was a fault of mine. I had assumed your affliction would pass. I did not imagine that your soul, lacking a sense of self, would graft itself so completely to this hydra whose blood now flows in your veins." Waraka prostrated his head on the stones. "Forgive me for not seeing the depth of your wound, my cousin. Forgive me. And know now that I am as regretful as my state will allow, for not needling out this splinter that afflicted you from that blood clot in the cave and which now has poisoned your blood . . . the blood you offer it of your body's sacrifice, and the blood you spill unceasingly in its name."

Muhammad snorted. And some world behind his eyes seemed to shape-shift from a tree to a serpent to a buffalo to a black leech; all the time demanding blood

from slaves and slaughter.

“People mock me,” Muhammad said. “They say that my words are not the words of Allah, but are from you, my teacher, and from Salman the Persian. Also from the Christian whom I shall not name, whom I had believed was transcribing so many of my sayings . . . *and yet he was not!* He confessed his crime and, laughing in his escape, howled to all Arabia how he had tricked me – lampooned me – and had invented the verses he wrote according to his mood. ‘Muhammad knows nothing but what I have written for him,’ he had laughed in the face of my men while making fast his escape. How does that make me look, teacher? People mock, and jeer, and slander me.”

“Have you ever asked yourself why?”

Muhammad waved his hand and Salim tightened the cords binding Waraka’s arms behind his back. Then Salim staggered back and forth, and clasped Waraka’s shoulder so as to keep from falling.

“You can’t intimidate me,” Waraka said. “I have the truth, *real* truth, inside myself. And these forms, actions, and appearances around us are simply the dance of this larger embrace. Don’t forget that in cosmopolitan Mecca, I have had conversations with Greeks, Persians, and Zoroastrians about Herekles, Dionysus, Ahura Mazda, the tripartite goddess who appears as al-Lat, Manat, and al-Uzza. And we didn’t argue about ideology then, but we shared each other’s practices. Indeed, we embraced each other’s practices. And we allowed *our truths* to emerge – each naturally, each individually – from within.” His face brightened with a world-embracing smile. “And you, Muhammad, would have me trade a truth beyond faith and dogma for the fearful vulgarity of your military scheme? Ho ho.”

“Submit, Waraka. Submit! For you must be able to see how it would help others end their delusion. Sages, poets, and those who would debate the issue, all say I’m possessed, Waraka. And so I yell back, “Allah has sent me this verse, ‘Muhammad, by the Lord’s bounty, you are not a madman nor possessed.’ And still they laugh, saying Allah’s words are contrived.” Muhammad waved his hand and Umayr got a stool for him. He sat down and then looked into the fire until it began to die. And after a while he started poking at it with a stick. And every now and then he sighed. His breathing sounded labored – uncomfortable. He dug his stick into the sand next to the fire he had half-heartedly rekindled.

Waraka was silent for a long time. But eventually, he spoke, "Long ago, you and I had conversations, my cousin, many conversations about how religious feelings could be abused. I had mentioned how I felt some of the prophets of old were keen to graft their name to the name of their Lord. And I had mentioned how community isolation and ritual were often used to bind a people. At the time, I wasn't giving you a prescription for abuse."

"All very well," Muhammad said. "But will you submit?" he asked, looking away from Waraka.

Waraka was silent again. And in that endless silence of night, Salim and Umayr watched as Muhammad skewered and turned the end of a stick in the fire. When its point glowed orange and black, he pulled it out and stared hard at the crackling smoking spear.

"What are you doing with that?" Waraka asked.

"You were talking earlier about religious metaphors," Muhammad said. "I am resolved in your rejection of my religion. But people still remember you as my teacher and as the man who confirmed that I had been visited by a spirit . . . and 'What kind of spirit?' some ask. It's an embarrassment that you reject my one faith to bind the others."

Waraka's right eye twitched as Umayr and Salim seized his bound arms, grabbed his hair, and pulled back on his head.

"What would be a memorable metaphor for *you* teacher; for a man who won't submit to the binding faith? What will people say of you? What story of you will I tell my wives? What story will they repeat? Don't struggle, Waraka. You live in a world of metaphor and experience. And you teach a message of not struggling with the conflict I have uncovered as the unrelenting and painful hypocrisy that surrounds us." Muhammad laughed. "Doesn't it pain you? Living as the hypocrite that you are? Do you not feel the fires of Hell every moment branding your flesh with blind sinful utterances? Don't struggle. No more struggling, Waraka. I'm going to turn you, heretic that you are, into a metaphor."

He pushed the stick into his teacher's eyes.

The above short story is a chapter from the novel *War Verses: A Jihadist Fairytale* by **A. Human Being**. The first part of the novel, *Muhammad and the Origin of Jihad*, is serialized at <https://warverses.wordpress.com/>. The novel will soon be available on Amazon.com.

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