

Umayr of Somalia and His Assassin Namesake

by A. Human Being (December 2015)

January 1, 2014, New Years Day: Mogadishu, Somalia

Umayr, named after the famous butcher of Asma bint Marwan, raised his arms without a twitch as his handler put the vest on him. It was real and going to happen. He thought of the enemy, those in the cowardly federal government who turned their backs on sharia law. He was really going to do it. His brothers were reading to him from the Quran, “Muhammad is God’s apostle. Those who follow him are harsh to the unbelievers, but merciful to one another.”

His handler was attaching wires into a metal plate on the aluminum foil square taped to his chest. “Keep your arms up,” he said.

Umayr repeated in his mind, over-and-over, “Allah akbar Allah akbar Allah akbar,” arms raised, eyes closed, seeing darkness behind his closed lids and trying to imagine light. Trying . . . trying. He lifted his face toward where he knew the bare light bulb hung from the ceiling. The backs of his eyelids glowed red. “Allah akbar,” he repeated silently like the assassin he was . . . *like his namesake.*

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For in 624 ad . . . his namesake, Umayr bin Adi al-Khatmi, sat gratefully in the company of Muhammad, his leader, warlord, apostle, and prophet. This Umayr – a *medieval Arabian of Medina* – was grateful to have his shadow enlarged with wealth, wives, sons, and slaves. He had entered into a new life since Muhammad – *the messenger* – had been driven from Mecca to the city of Medina. Umayr’s two brothers and uncle had brought him into Muhammad’s fold; for a new relationship to what was yours or could be yours was being played out – a new message. The feudalism of tribe rivalries had been penetrated as it were by a new knife, Muhammad’s declaration that you could take everything from those you kill of the Banu Quraysh tribe. And this was an odd thing, because the Banu Quraysh was Muhammad’s own tribe from Mecca. And wasn’t loyalty to one’s kith and kin a sacred trust? Wasn’t it a man’s duty to defend one’s tribe, not attack them in

caravan raids as Muhammad had ordered?

Don't take this the wrong way. It was never about revenge. The caravan raids Muhammad ordered against his own kith and kin were not motivated by self-righteous anger against those in the Banu Quraysh tribe who declared him a lunatic and chased him out of Mecca. It wasn't like that. It wasn't. For Muhammad's Medinan caravan raids against the Banu Quraysh of Mecca . . . *God Himself had willed*. For Allah had sent His apostle on caravan raids, over-and-over, repeatedly to give confidence to the people of Medina that Muhammad was the usurper of that city. His was the one authoritative voice.

And for those who would refute that message . . .

. . . *well, that's why Allah has assassins*.

In this, the best house of all Medina, there was word from people at Muhammad's shoulders, left and right, like little black birds bringing whispers of the city's speech. The city had been taken over from within. It was now occupied territory . . . *marked territory*. But still there were whispers of resistance, the voices of heretics from whole tribes of heretics, non-believers who questioned the caravan raids on the city's frontiers, the escalation of killings within the city, and yes . . . those supremely calculated murders. Of these voices, the spies had whispered into Muhammad's ears, left and right, and these whispers became a voice in the room at Muhammad's knee, at Muhammad's hand, from one person to the next, the voice circulated as a chorus, a refrain echoing behind the messenger's discussions with tacticians, advisors, and friends. This entourage was wealthy . . . *because they submitted*. Amongst these wealthy tacticians with their new social idea, this incipient sharia law, there sounded that nagging, annoying, and exasperating chorus – the voice of disagreement in the otherwise subdued city. Open defiance. And from an educated woman at that – a poetess from the Banu Khatma tribe, a tribe that had yet to submit. And to be a poet, is said to be touched by a spirit, and perhaps Divine. So this woman had to be dealt with.

"What?" asked someone who had just entered the richly decorated room, a room that could have been the mirror image of Paradise itself.

"Asma bint Marwan had openly criticized three of Muhammad's followers for killing their chief, Abu Afak, at Muhammad's command," a man told the newcomer.

“Asma, the poetess, had said, ‘I despise these traitors. 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?’”

“She said that?” the newcomer asked. And with that, the whisper had fully circulated the rich home and had become something else.

“Who will rid me...” Muhammad started, then cleared his throat. “Who will rid me of the poetess, Asma bint Marwan?”

Umayr bin Adi al-Khatmi, twitching with hungry eagerness at Muhammad’s foot, answered, “I will do it.”

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Namesake. His namesake. “Allah akbar Allah akbar Allah akbar,” Umayr repeated. His handler was leading him down a staircase in Mogadishu, Somalia. Umayr swallowed, cleared his throat, and spittle dribbled down his cheek. “Allah akbar.” He was committed. His handlers had kept him in this world of single-minded determination. His body, in the bomb and shrapnel-laden vest, was frog-skin cold in a trance of rigid determination. His breath came in faint ghostly whispers – *hardly his breath at all* – in and out of that brass vessel that wasn’t even his chest anymore, heavy as it was with the weight of shrapnel and what would be his mantel of power. The charges were ready, set, and wrapped around him. A wire taped to his body pulled his chest hair with every step forward toward destiny and heavenly light. He remembered the light bulb in the room where his handler had helped him make his martyr video, when he had stared hard at the camera and declared his absolute faith and determination like so many before him in video after video, faces like his own, wild-eyed as if they were half way in another world already. There was something ensnaring in those looks . . . or rather, *that look* . . . that look from a world beyond death that stared out from a thousand eyes. It was a force and momentum that would come up from inside him in fits and starts to clarify his more damaged emotions in that same world-shaking clarity. “By Allah,” he’d exclaim, “It is the best feeling!” For it felt like a new drug to take away the slouching drag of his father’s voice that he’d find himself repeating out loud in his most visibly embarrassing

moments. But in this room with his handler, even exhaustion had an implicit extra-potency. Through exhaustion, he could *really* feel the meaning of submission. And he could feel himself being carried in the momentum of those who had gone before. Watching the thousand eyes, and listening to the singsong of myriad impassioned voices praising Allah for this grand deed – brothers in the smell of iron – hurtling through this compressing tunnel toward the fierce light of Paradise. And when he was tired, he closed his eyes, and in that darkness, tried to imagine the light. Eyes closed, he'd look up through dark lids at where he knew . . . knew the light bulb to be. *Like a moth to flame*, he thought, head tilted back. "Allah akbar." All I have to do is...

In the present now, walking forward . . . down the staircase and out the door . . . a soldier. He would kill a lot of the enemy, the animals that would reject the absolute mandate of the one true law, Allah's law as given by Muhammad, His prophet, "Praise be upon him," he voiced silently. Step-by-step, walking next to his handler. He didn't know his handler's name, his real name, because that was the way it had to be, for this to work, over-and-over, unending. Step-by-step, toward victory in light, like a moth. In Paradise, *Jannah*, the greatest pleasure is said to be Allah's mercy. Step-by-step, he walked with his handler. To that copper-colored car, its trunk laden with explosives. Closer and closer to the vehicular bomb. Walking forward now on feet that can't feel the road any longer. Ears that hear only the perfect Quran from the voice of the handler.

The highest gardens in Jannah, the handler says, are reserved for the martyrs. And *oh* . . . there's a journey to be had. For Paradise is surrounded by eight gates, and at each gate he'll be greeted by angels saying, "As-Salamu Alaykum!" Yes, and each region guarded by a gate is divided into a hundred levels, each degree dependent on the brother's worth. And he, Umayr, would be a martyr, and so fly through all these gates to the cheers of angels. He would recline at a great banquet surrounded by family and friends. Mother, father (no longer despondent) . . . they would be there. They would be served heavenly food and drink . . . eternal youths, pure maidens actually, would serve them . . . in this final Heaven beyond the eighth gate mingling amongst those closest to the prophet.

Like his namesake.

* * *

Umayr bin Adi al-Khatmi was led by his brothers to the house of Yazid bin Zayd, husband of the poetess Asma bint Marwan. These brothers who walked with him – spies – knew everything about this woman, where she went, who she spoke to. It was their job, these invisibles, to move amongst the infidels and inquire about things. They were the unseen eyes and ears of the prophet. The obscure sense organs amongst those societies which hadn't submitted yet.

Yet.

"Here," one of the brothers said, "Here is where she sleeps. Here with her children." It was one of the larger homes in the city.

Umayr's hands shivered, so he hooked one in his belt and grabbed his dagger hilt with the other. He twisted his body at the waist, and from side to side, so that his shivers would more resemble a swagger. Umayr had killed before. But only out in the open and with his brothers, in Muhammad's caravan raids. There was a boyish simplicity to those open-air murders. While this murder would all happen in the dark, and the spies told him that Asma would have her five children about her. He approached the mud and daub house in the darkness. With uncertain stealth and eyes leading him into the dim interior, he pushed aside the curtain and entered.

These tribesmen of the Banu Khatma are oblivious, he thought at the ease with which he had penetrated their defenses. Stupid kuffar. Infidels. Moving to a second room, there she was – a mother surrounded by children – with an infant asleep at her breast. To kill a woman in her sleep is some business indeed, he thought. And yes, as he was going against all the rules of society and war, he would have to ask the prophet for reassurances afterward. And yes . . . yes . . . as Muslim storytellers who would later applaud him describe . . . Umayr lifted the sleeping infant from Asma bint Marwan's breast and plunged his dagger into her naked tit again, again, and yet again as spouts of blood spurted over his left hand that pushed down hard on her mouth.

* * *

Step-by-step, Umayr made his way forward to the copper-colored car. "Kill those animals, brother. Those who deny the truth. Allah akbar," his handler said, as he slowed his gait and continued on at a right angle. Umayr put the key in the driver's side door lock as he had rehearsed over-and-over, flipped the latch,

got in, and started the ignition. The car hummed. And somewhere, from this street or the next, brothers without names were watching him with binoculars. From the machinations of history itself, a thousand eyes were watching him too, pulling him along in their ensnaring momentum. The smell of iron. And that same taste on the tongue. He was swimming in it, a deep red current that lifted him, floating and bobbing, as he put the car in gear, let out the clutch, and put the machine in motion. It seemed that this car had been in motion before he had even sat in the driver's seat. For maybe, this car had begun its slow predatory path – *for him* – that ancient day that his medieval namesake had stabbed, stabbed, and stabbed in a way most pleasing to Allah. And just as in his moments of exhaustion watching the martyrs' videos, he submitted to his final act of martyrdom and murder – *murder and martyrdom* – as though it were his final ritual prostration. As though it were the form of submission most favored of Allah. For was it not written in the perfect Quran, "Let whoever fight in the way of Allah, who sell this world's life for that of the hereafter, be he slain or victorious, We shall grant him a mighty reward."

Over-and-over, Umayr spoke his prayer, "Allah akbar Allah akbar Allah akbar," his voice getting higher, like his high school teacher's nails on the chalkboard, a funny thing to remember. *And that teacher was an animal too*, he thought, and wished some last imaginary vengeance on the old disciplinarian as the car slowly rolled forward like an ancient predator. Umayr would swear that he had bitten his lip for the taste was everywhere, filling his mind, as his repeated refrain opened up for him a euphoric glimpse of his Paradise to come.

Reclined on richly colored soft cushions, he would raise his hand . . . and a goblet would appear in it. And he could almost see the exalted food and drink through the car's windshield as he approached the Mogadishu hotel that was his intended target. Young girls with pale almost translucent skin filled his goblet with drink . . . filled his plate with miraculous delicacies and caressed his cheeks gently as he moved his mouth, digesting inspiration from the perfect Quran as the car-bomb rolled forward seemingly of its own will now. These girls were houris – heavenly maidens that the perfect Quran describes in great detail. Heavenly maidens that the Quran eulogizes . . . over and over again. Redundantly, like a circular obsession on small non-menstruating things. For these celestial girls, be assured, were pure and virginal.

Non-menstruating. You heard right. Consider their age. Consider the taste of the

messenger.

Ooo là là!

“Allah akbar Allah akbar!”

There would be two of them for him, or so it was foretold. Umayr thrust his hands forward, up up as if to clasp them, grasp them.

They tittered, these celestial virgins.

The blood current lifted and filled Umayr in ritual submission. He was already half-liquid when his car rolled up to the late-model Bentley and Mercedes in front of the hotel. “I have always wanted you,” Umayr said. The copper car’s front fender crashed into the legs of the Bentley’s driver and then the Bentley. Umayr was shocked and buffeted by the crash. The two houris floated above him, their skin a silky translucent white. The driver screamed at him through the glass, but it sounded somehow far away in a world of flesh and bone that no longer applied to Umayr. He felt the cylinder in his hand and pressed down on the button. “Allah ak...”

And yes . . . there was a light like they say, but it was burning with howling jinn fire. The twenty-odd faces of the people who had been in front of the hotel flashed before him. It seemed odd indeed and somehow meaningful to see them. There they were . . . people. Human beings like the rest of us. With fleshy cheeks ballooning into expressions of emotions that no longer made sense to Umayr. And yes, there was a tunnel too, and he could make out the smoky translucency of the houris with him, somehow guiding him on his journey. And just as he had looked up through closed lids at the bare light bulb in the room where his handler had isolated him, so too, he looked up now . . . through a distorted and uncertain coppery darkness that was filled with the unmistakably nauseating stink of the rotting dead.

The itching momentum that had begun with his namesake and that had been pulling him on its dank current for so long now had seemingly fused with his emotion, twisting it into a fierce mask on his bodiless face. He was a being of spirit now, of soul or essence. He was an ethereal thing in a world of dank and vague impressions, like an elusive fantasy, memory, or nightmare. Ghostly now, he saw a female visage . . . a face and form only half-uncertain in this light that was

not light.

“Who are you?” he asked, feeling the memory of an emotion that might have been terror in the lost world of flesh. What looked like a woman – sultry, slithering, and damp – curled its dark pale lips around something housing a smile. Umayr felt her form shift in accordance with inconsistencies in his memory of en fleshed fantasies. In moments of semi-clarity, it seemed he was in an exotic brothel. But just as in the flesh-world, it had been difficult to imagine paradisaal light behind closed lids, so too was it difficult to grasp even vague sensations of past-fantasy from behind the mask-face of the emotion that drove him to this. And from that constriction of soul-devouring hate, he asked his question again.

“Don’t you know?” They laughed. “We are your houris. Don’t you like us? There are two of us for you, just as it’s been written.” And they openly laughed in his face.

And he felt nothing but twisted paralyzing hate for them . . . everlasting and unrelenting hate.

One brought her ghost mouth – *pale green, then moist black* – up to his phantom lips. She brought her lips so close to his . . . *and waited* . . . as though at any moment she might kiss him, like his adolescent self had once long-imagined. “Your devotion feeds us,” she continued. “In your dreams and jack-off fantasies, we two . . . have always been pulling you into our arms, darling.” They laughed as he thrashed in the soul-sticky disability of being new and seemingly hate-crippled in this world after death. A houri licked his open eye with her black tongue and said, “In dream and fantasy, I have had many hooks dragging you slowly toward the dream-flesh of my mouth. The soft flesh of my mouth. This has been the dream that you’ve always wanted. The soft flesh of my mouth . . . that now smells abhorrent to you.”

Umayr thrashed like a hateful child in their crooked decomposing hooks. He hated these women in the darkness. Hated them. And would revenge himself on them with the aid of his brothers, and his handlers, and the whole momentum of history. Damn them all!

Worms and beetles, or the ghosts of worms and beetles, oozed and crawled through the black earth falling out of the caverns between the houri’s flesh and bone.

The ghost of something winged flew out of an eye socket. “Just as you have craved my soulless flesh . . . I have hungered for your flesh’s soul.” The houri’s disheveled maw hovered, rotting desiccating flesh, a half an inch above Umayr’s open and quivering mouth!

She whispered to him from the Quran... whispered that verse that all houris remember, chapter 7, verse 99. Remember? Do you remember it? She whispered, whispered Allah’s sacred and holy words, “*Who can feel secure against the scheming of Allah? No one... except the damned.*”

His eyes widened. His neck arched back. His head twisted from side to side like a serpent tearing out of its shivering dead skin.

As the houri bit into his mouth, half her own mouth crumpled into a decomposing mess of black earth, mucus, and rotting black bone. And the fresh soul blood of this, his shadow, gushed in spasms into her mouth. As the thrashing repetition of her hateful whisper – *and the meaning behind that whisper* – reverberated in Umayr’s madness, the houri’s decomposing mouth made its way over his face and neck like a jagged saw.

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

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