

THE SHORT STORIES OF ZAKARIA TAMER

Hamida al-Sammakh had many husbands. She married the first one and discovered after a few weeks that he was a gambler and a drunkard. Then she married a man who pretended to be generous and contemptuous of money, but to her surprise held her accountable every evening for the matches she used in the kitchen. He said that he who does not guard his sheep night and day will be devoured by the wolf along with his sheep. Then she married another man and discovered from the first night that he did not like women. Then she married someone who was said to be an educator of new generations, but she could not even cough without asking his permission. Then she married a militant who kept on being transferred from one prison to another and she became weary of waiting by prison doors. She divorced him and lived single for the rest of her life with a cheerful cat for a companion.

Riyad al-Allal inherited from his father a huge fortune which he spent on charitable deeds and lived the rest of his life like others of God's creatures who toil from dawn till dusk. It was said that he had been rewarded with two wings that would allow him to fly from hell to heaven but would not allow him to fly away from a harsh and savage hunger.

Hassan al-Tabbal was walking in a deserted street after midnight and was stopped by a police patrol who asked what he was doing in the street so late at night. He said he was walking for pleasure enjoying the moonlight. The policemen then gaped at him and at the moonlight and arrested him on the charge of planning to rob one of the houses of the village.

Jabr al-Masud dreamed of becoming a famous television announcer, and was told his face was more appropriate for horror films. He rushed to see film producers, who told him that horror films do not exist in Arab cinema and that daily life was itself a sufficient horror.

TRANSLATED BY IBRAHIM MUHAWI

Published in Arabic in *Al-Quds al-Arabi* newspaper in 2014