

1934 Feb 12 Jiryas, Sr. to Suleiman – ‘Scorpions descending upon my liver’, she’s turning the children against me (his version of the story)

Ramallah, February 12, 1934

My Dear Son Sayyed Suleiman Jiries Farhat, the honorable,

I have read your note dated 8 January and I felt the pain of departing, and the bitterness of anxiety that had descended on you and so I cried and I regressed, and crying did not make it easier for me but those tears were like scorpions descending on my liver. I turned my mind to thinking about the days and what time does to its people, so I was saddened yet fortified with patience, lingering in the warmth of family and after my concerns had abated, to let you know that we are all in the best of health and we are lacking for nothing other than seeing you. Then, we want to tell you what literally happened between us, and Katrina.

In the previous letter, I told you that she went to Bethlehem and after a month of taking care of herself, she was planning to travel, and she came over to us and kidnapped Fuad and took him back to Bethlehem, as I was walking in the olive grove and had no news of this that she had taken him to Bethlehem. She came back in a private car to collect what was due to her so she could travel and she had already paid five pounds to the Immigration department. Your sister was at home and she took Fuad from her and we all went to Bethlehem so we could get Fuad back but her sister’s husband did not agree to give us Fuad and she refused to come down or talk to me and we had a long drawn out conversation with her uncle and I said what had to be said and I got to know that she wants the house and the land in front of the house and she wants me to register that in her name in the land registry so she can feel safe and assured so she can stay in this country. She said “I want to leave within two days in order to establish partnership in the land and the shop [*in South San Francisco?*] because they belong to me and to him.” As for registering anything in her name, I would not do it. I said to her “I will write a piece of paper for you in the presence of the District Attorney in which I will undertake to support you in all your living needs from now until your husband returns.” She would not agree until I registered the land in her name. I would not do that. I would not register the land in her name. So now I raised a case against her in the ecclesiastical court, so as to bring Fuad back. The head of the ecclesiastical court said “I will secure the boy to you and will not allow her to leave with the children.” And I have now commissioned a lawyer to stop her from travelling. Now, I am to sell the shop before she arrives because she is crazy and she went to the Consul and lied to him, saying that their Grandpa is expelling them, he would not feed them, he would not allow them to drink, and they live in destitution. The Consul had sent you a telegram about this. I went to the Consul and assured him about the security of the children. Because they are staying with me and I take care of them and their needs. Do not respond to him; take care of yourself in the best way you can.

She went to the Consul and complained about me that her children are needy and their grandfather let them go about without clothing and the Consul sent a memo to the Civil Governor of Ramallah, and she and I appeared before this judge and he did not believe a word she said. He ordered the children to stay with their grandfather and ordered her to be with the children at their grandfather’s home. She did not accept. She

said she will stay in Bethlehem and she is staying there to finish her affairs and then she will take the children [*back to the United States*].

Without our knowledge, on Monday, she raised a case against me. And on Thursday, she came and she kidnapped the child. When Fuad saw, he tried to escape. Then she gave the boy [Fuad] the two piaster carfare. She took him to the car and sent him to Bethlehem. She came back for the girl [Mary] and they [Farhat family] refused to give her the girl. Then we went after him to Bethlehem. The moment Fuad saw me, he started running [*towards me?*]. He was followed by his Aunt [*Na'ame*] and her husband and the whole neighborhood. They took him from us and then her sister and her husband started beating me up. Then I went and raised a case against them at the ecclesiastical court on 14 February and extracted an order forbidding her from traveling. I appointed a lawyer which enabled me to delay her departure as for as long as I can. She sent you a telegram indicating that she will be traveling on the 21st of this month and she put down five pounds as deposit to the company.

“Immediately sell the shop and come back, or else she’s going to ruin your house and will kill you. Immediately, get rid of the shop, even if you sell the shop for one piaster and come back without your clothes.” This is the last letter I will send you before her departure. If I can take the child, I will do my utmost to do it. Finish your affairs. Enough agony. I cannot take this anymore [*she has dried up my blood*]. I spent 15 pounds. Your immediate presence is necessary. May God keep you all and bestow complete peace and give our best to your cousin Khalil.

The one who has asked for your long life and is eager to see you,

Your Father,
Jiries Suleiman Farhat XXX Ramallah

The writer of the letter gifts you peace, the son of your sister that is anxious to see you, J. Jacob Farhat, Ramallah

PS. Let me know if you have sent any money to the Consul or not.
Do not send it in her name but in mine alone.

Translated by Fred Bisharat and Salim Tamari. Translation is partially speculative because it was written in anger, incoherent and contains no punctuation.