

1936 May 3 Suleiman to Abdullah – his version of the story as told to his father-in-law

Ramallah to Saltillo, Mexico

May 3, 1936

Dear Uncle Abdullah,

Greetings, etc.

This month we received a letter from our brother-in-law Anton [*Karra'a*]. In it, he indicates that you are unaware of what is happening. Since Katrina has only sent you one letter in which she tells you nothing except that I have returned to the country. And now I am telling you what happened, of what took place in brief since I arrived. She stayed in the country [*Palestine*] some six months and then she went back to California. Before she returned, she [*Katrina*] sent me a telegram to California through the American Consul in which she demanded money to return [for the ticket]. I answered the Consul by telegram indicating that I do not want my wife to come to this country since I am about to return to the homeland. At the same time, I sent her expense money by telegram, through the American Counsel. When the telegram arrived, the Consul sent after Katrina, read to her the telegram and told her that, within days, the money will arrive since it was sent telegraphically. She was not convinced of what the Consul said and she would not wait for the money to arrive. She decided to leave immediately and the Consul sent the money back to California. All of a sudden, I saw her descending on me with Fuad [*Fred*], while she left Mary and George in the country with my father. When she arrived, I said "Let us solve our problems [*liquidate our assets*] and return, and God will compensate us for the losses that accrue." I had a sale at the shop. When she saw that I started this sale, which was meant to get money for our return to the old country, she immediately began to complain that this was done without her knowledge. She said 'My husband is liquidating the shop in order to sell it and return and leave us here.' I was forced to hire an 'avocato' for myself and another 'avocato' for her. In two weeks, we put 500 dollars for the lawyers and for the court. From the first day, I have been trying to convince her, through people I sent to intercede, so that we will be reconciled. She remained stubborn and insisted on divorce. Suddenly, I received a letter through her 'avocato' which outlined extremely harsh conditions on me. It demanded first that I pay Jamil Afana \$500, which she claimed that he loaned her. And she also demanded that I bring back Mary, our daughter, from the country within 30 days. And if I do not do this, I will be accountable. She also wanted me to give her the house for her exclusive use, since I had bought another house and I have been paying for it in South San Francisco. She also wanted half our assets in the bank and half the goods in the store. She also demanded that I am not allowed to take her back to the old country by compulsion if she chose not to go back with me. She also demanded that if I go back to the old country, I cannot ask her to come there by compulsion. That is what she demanded. And as you can see, it's very harsh. I have offered to give her everything if she would come with me. And she refused to be reconciled on anything except these conditions. Otherwise, she wants a divorce. I have no inclination to divorce her. Nor can I reconcile with her on the basis of the conditions which she has requested through the government [*court*].

(*Interpretation of translation:*) After we reconciled, I tried my utmost again to convince her to go back with me. She refused and remained stubborn. To make a long story short, Mary arrived alone to New York. Her mother went and met her in NY and when she came back, I went out to make sales [*as a traveling salesman*] until I arrived to New York. During this period, I would send her a letter every two or three days. And she would reply to me. In every place I would arrive to, I would send gifts to her and to the children in order to soften her heart. When I went back to the old country, I sent her a letter indicating my arrival and I received a response from her congratulating me for safe arrival. In another letter, I told her about my father has become old and my property here are plentiful enough to support us, and enough disaster. Sell the house and sell the contents of the shop. Sell everything. Bring the children and come back immediately. No answer. I sent a second, a third, a fourth, a fifth, and a sixth letter, without receiving an answer. When I saw the situation like that, I took the Muhktar [*of Ramallah*] and a few members of our family and went to Bethlehem and told them [*Saade*] what happened and asked them to help us to resolve this issue. They tried to do what they can, and sent a letter to you, and to her, and to our brother in law Jamil. They sent another letter to her signed by her sisters. This is what happened. I ask you to do us a favor and try your best, my dear Uncle, because we have young children and it is a pity that they get humiliated. You know that women are lacking in intellect and religion and I hope you will do all you can. I am impatiently waiting for your response. Please reply immediately and give my greeting to your wife and to our brother in law Saleh and his family and to our brother in law Nicola and his family and everybody else at your end. From here my father and mother and all the cousins and relatives send you their greeting.

Your son in law,
Suleiman Jiryas Farhat

Translated by Salim Tamari