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In the Name of Allah,  
the Beneficent, the Merciful

**AN ENCOUNTER AT THE HOSPITAL  
AND OTHER  
SHORT STORIES**

By Martyr Bint Al-Huda  
Translated by: M. N. Sultan  
Edited by: Zahra Sepahi and  
Traudi Andrea Miles  
(Fatimah Djawaheri Yaganeh)

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This book is a translation of  
**Leqa' Fi Al-Mostashfa,**  
from Arabic to English

By: Martyr Bint Al-Huda  
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## INTRODUCTION

Dear Readers,

To embody the general concepts of the Islamic viewpoint concerning life is the aim behind these stories. I believe concepts at the theoretical level cannot produce a change or an effect as they can when drawn in events or incidents from real life. Thus the Holy Qur'an gives examples and values through pictures with details of the events in which prophets and the righteous suffered for the sake of Allah.

If these short stories are knitted of imagination, they are certainly taken from the depth of present-day Muslim girls' lives. Hence, any girl may read in these stories incidents she has experienced in some way or directly.

In each story, there is the positive stance of an Islamic viewpoint. The difference is great between this pure and sublime Islamic stance and the impure, corrupted stance of non-Islamic views.

Bint-Al-Huda

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IN THE NAME OF ALLAH,  
THE COMPASSIONATE, THE MERCIFUL

TRANSLATOR'S COMMENT

Amina Haidar Al-Sadir, known as Bint-al-Huda, tackled in her stories women's issues of concern, at a time when love stories and translated pornographic literature flooded our Islamic world during the 1950's and 60's. The young generation suffered major psychological crises and schizophrenic situations. Islamic values and ethics became a source of embarrassment for the educated youth who fell in the trap of western deviation and disbelief.

Bint-al-Huda considers story writing as a tool to be used to revive Islamic concepts and values. She turns these concepts into living personalities with real-life roles. She presents various models of defeated young girls who are encouraged to fight back and regain their confidence and strength to start a new, respected life. She encourages the young girl who is pressured by social non-Islamic traditions to fight back for her rights.

Despite her short life (1937-1980), Bint-al-Huda managed to create an awareness among the Iraqi women to the extent that this awareness became a common feature in society, embodied in Islamic dress—*hijab*—observed by the educated girls in schools, universities, government offices, etc...

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No doubt, the ruling Ba'ath Party in Iraq, a secular regime, wouldn't allow such a promising personality to live, threatening the regime's false claims of freedom, justice and progress. Hence, Bint-al-Huda and her brother the great Muslim thinker, Ayatullah Sayid Muhammad Baqir Al-Sadir, were arrested in early April 1980. A few days later, on 9th April, 1980, after brutal torture they achieved blessed martyrdom.

The loss has never been compensated for since then. We lack Muslim women writers to counter so many secularist women writers in the Muslim world.

On the eleventh anniversary of her martyrdom, we present this book to our English readers. We hope every Muslim woman will follow in her footsteps and strive for the sake of our oppressed societies and oppressed women in particular.

Though deceased Bint-al-Huda will rejoice whenever a deviated soul finds the right path of the religion of Islam.

Allah, the Almighty says, "*...And reckon not those who are killed in Allah's way as dead; nay, they are alive...*"

(Al-Umran:168)

M.N.Sultan  
Early 1991  
(1411 Hijri)

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## AN ENCOUNTER AT THE HOSPITAL

### The Meeting

Dr. Miyad was half asleep when the telephone rang. She struggled between sleep's powerful domination and her duty to answer the phone. It rang insistently until she finally answered it, as she knew she must. It was after midnight.

An urgent case on the hospital's seventh floor made her quickly put on her Islamic modest dress and soon she was hurrying towards the patient's room. A nurse near the door told her that an elderly woman in the room was seriously ill.

Dr. Miyad quickly entered and saw a young woman, modestly dressed, standing next to the old woman's bed. The young woman said anxiously, "Oh doctor, this is my grandmother. She was complaining of severe pain and she's unconscious."

The doctor carefully examined the elderly woman, who began to moan, and the young woman paced the nearby corridor. Her grandmother had had a serious heart attack and needed to be hospitalized for a number of days. After giving the patient the needed medicine, Dr. Miyad approached the young woman, whose eyes were filled with tears. The doctor felt that she had to comfort her and give her hope. She smiled, saying, "I'm sure she will soon be well I have done all that is necessary."

"I am very grateful, doctor."

"Don't thank me. It's my duty to help all my patients." She noticed that the woman's face was pale, so she took her hand, which was cold to the touch, and told her kindly, "You are tired. Why don't you sleep for a while?"

"Yes, I am tired, but I can't leave my grandmother alone."

"Don't you have a sister or anyone else to help you?"

"No," the young woman replied sadly. "She is not only my grandmother, but is a mother to me as well."

The doctor felt sorry for her and comforted her, saying, "I'll look after her for you so that you can rest."

"Oh no, you need rest. You work so hard."

"I'm used to it, and I don't feel tired. I've slept for a few hours and that is enough for me. Now it is your turn to rest, but first I'll get a book to read. I'll be right back."

The young woman thought the doctor was a wonderful woman and felt she could depend on her.

Dr. Miyad soon returned with a book in her hand and said, "Now you can sleep, I'll sit here and read. By the way, I'm Dr. Miyad."

"I'm Warqa, I'm pleased to meet you."

Warqa stretched out on the sofa and soon fell asleep. When she awoke she found that she had slept for over an hour. The doctor was still reading near the sick woman, who slept well with the help of an oxygen mask. Warqa got up and approached Dr. Miyad. She asked about her grandmother's health. The doctor put aside her book and said, "She's all right. No I shall sleep for a while after doing my morning prayer. I'll see you later today, God willing."

"I don't know how to thank you," said Warqa. "You have been very kind and helpful. I am all alone."



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“You’re not alone; Almighty Allah is with you. You seem to be a committed believer, and faith can help you throughout life.”

Warqa thanked the doctor again and walked with her to the door. When she came back into the room, she saw the book which the doctor had just left and the title attracted her attention. It was entitled, *Medicine: A Sanctuary for Faith*. She wondered, ‘What does it mean? What relation is there between the two? Isn’t medicine a science which cures bodies or diseases, and religion worship of Allah in order to escape from Hell? How can medicine be a sanctuary of faith?’

Curiosity prompted her to pick up the book. First she examined the cover, which showed a drawing of a human brain and the Qur’anic verse: *This is Allah’s creation, but show Me what those beside Him have created.*

(Luqman:11)

Warqa read a few lines from the book and thought deeply for some time, and then she read more until she got up to perform her morning prayer.

A nurse entered the room in the morning to give Warqa’s grandmother a dose of medicine. A specialist and another female doctor also came in later.

The doctor’s hair was uncovered and her high heels clicked as she walked. She turned to give Warqa some instructions and Warqa noticed that her face was heavily made up. Warqa saw a big difference between this doctor and Dr. Miyad, whose appearance was natural, and she was eager to see Dr. Miyad again. She needed her encouraging words wanted to ask her a few questions about her book. She wondered why Dr. Miyad had not returned. Warqa’s grandmother was feeling better, and Warqa was glad to see her getting well.

“I’m so happy that you are well again,” said Warqa. “You don’t know how worried I was yesterday.”

Her grandmother replied, “I’m sorry to see you

worry; especially since you are alone.”

“This time I wasn’t alone. Dr. Miyad was here. She is a wonderful woman and she insisted that I sleep while she sat near you for over an hour.”

“Praise be to God for sending you such a person at this time.”

Warqa pleaded with her grandmother to sleep and not to talk or otherwise tire herself. She continued to read and she occasionally glanced at the door. At noon, she became quite anxious to see Dr. Miyad and thought to herself, ‘Why am I so anxious to see her? I’ve known her for only a few hours. She is just a doctor performing her duty. Maybe she won’t even come again.’ Some inner voice told her: ‘You have a right to feel this way. This doctor is filled with compassion and sympathy. She is not only a doctor, but is also a good person without whose help you would have suffered more hardships.’

Warqa was deep in thought when she heard a knock on the door. She hurried to the door. It was Dr. Miyad. They shook hands warmly, and the doctor said, “I heard from a colleague that your grandmother was better. I was busy all morning in the delivery room, so I must apologize for not coming sooner.”

“Oh, there’s no need to apologize; you were not obliged to come. However, I did want to see you.”

The doctor looked concerned and examined her patient. “Has she complained of any pain?” she asked.

“No, she is much better, thank God. As a matter of fact, I was in need of you. Won’t you please sit down?”

“I will stay for a while. You look tired, you need to sleep,” said Dr. Miyad.

“Oh, I don’t need sleep, but, rather, a thorough waking up. I would like to ask you about some of the things I have read in this book,” Warqa told her. She sat near the doctor, who said, “Oh, I see I have left my book here. You must have enjoyed reading it.”

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“Yes, it really made me think deeply.”

“How?”

“Well”, Warqa explained, “I never thought there was any relationship between medicine and faith. I know medicine deals with human bodies, while faith is only worship.”

Dr. Miyad said, “But science leads to faith. The more knowledge one has, the more one believes in the Creator.”

“How is that so?” asked Warqa.

“If someone ignores something, he cannot appreciate its value. For instance, if you take a look at this electric heater, you don’t think about the great effort and care it took its maker to make it. You won’t think about the numerous experiments that preceded this final product. Yet, anyone with a little knowledge can talk about its complex technical design.”

Warqa tried to suppress a smile. Dr. Miyad was silent for a moment and then said, “Are you a student?”

“Yes, I’m in my final year at the university.” She did not mention what her major was. Dr. Miyad told her, “You’re studying at the Engineering College, aren’t you?”

Warqa was surprised, and said, “Yes, but how did you know?”

“Because of your small smile on hearing me mention the electric heater. I guessed that you are familiar with the subject. It wasn’t a good example but you didn’t object, out of courtesy.”

“It is a good example, ” Warqa said. “Please go on.”

“So you see, even a minimum of knowledge about something doubles its value. Science, with all its branches, brings scientists nearer to Almighty Allah. Medicine is the most important and accurate science. To a scientist who is not a fanatic, science is a road which clearly leads to faith.”

“My religious knowledge is very limited, ”said Warqa. “It is only traditional commitment, such as fasting, pray-

ing and observing Islamic modest dress. Sometimes I feel embarrassed about my lack of religious information. Would you be kind enough to explain some matters to me?"

"I'm ready to answer all your questions. Consider me as your sister, since we share the same beliefs. Now, what do you want to ask me?"

"Why has a drawing of a brain been chosen for the cover of the book?"

"You know that the brain is the most important part of the human body. It is the organ which controls the entire body, including the nerves and the cells. Every cell obeys the brain which, though small, contains thousands of millions of nerve cells."

"How amazing!" exclaimed Warqa.

Dr. Miyad continued, "You know that every cell has its own function but, at the same time, it cooperates with other cells. If some cells are damaged, the result will be bad."

"I never imagined that the brain was such a delicate structure."

Dr. Miyad noted, "A scientist lectured about the brain in 1957 and said that if all the world's telephones, telegraphs, radar systems and televisions were made into a small, complicated device, it would not be as complex as the brain."

"How wonderful for one to have such a marvellous apparatus in one's head. But what a pity it is that we know so little about our bodies."

"It may take a long time to discuss the human body. You know that the nervous system has a two-fold function: voluntary and involuntary. The nervous system controls the body's muscles, the hands, the feet, the tongue, etc. Of course, some organs function automatically, such as the lungs, the heart, the stomach and so on. Here, the Wisdom of our Creator becomes manifest. If they functioned at the will of a creature, it would be impossible for him to

motivate and monitor the processes of these organs all the time, even during sleep, thus they would cease to function.

“The same can be said of the organs which function voluntarily. If they functioned automatically, a human being would go on, for example, talking and talking all his life.”

Warqa was very interested in the discussion and listened attentively. The doctor suggested that she read the whole book and told her that she would learn much about the body's secrets. In fact, Warqa wasn't very enthusiastic about reading, but Dr. Miyad said, “Hearing isn't enough. One should depend on one's brain to comprehend matters. If one listens more than one reads, then one will depend on others for knowledge.”

Warqa's grandmother awoke, and both women approached her. Dr. Miyad asked her how she felt. She smiled and thanked the doctor for her help, saying, “I prayed for you. You have been kind to Warqa. I shall always remember that.”

Dr. Miyad said, “Oh, I've done nothing. I pray that you will have a long life.”

“What is your name, my dear?” she asked.

“Miyad.”

“That's a nice name. What's your family name?” asked the grandmother.

The doctor didn't reply but said, “I'll see you every day until you fully recover, which will be soon. God Willing, with Warqa's help.” Dr. Miyad left and Warqa kept the book to read.

### A Sick Friend

The two young womens' friendship grew stronger as time passed, and Warqa continued to ask the doctor about ideological questions. Then all of a sudden, the doctor stopped visiting her elderly patient. After three days, Warqa asked another doctor about Dr. Miyad. She told her that Dr. Miyad was ill. Warqa asked if she was at home, but the doctor told her that Dr. Miyad was in that same hospital. Warqa learned from a nurse that her friend was in room number seven.

"Is her illness serious?" Warqa asked.

"She has influenza," the nurse replied. "The doctor advised her to remain in bed for a few days."

Warqa made arrangements for the nurse to stay in her grandmother's room after 12 o'clock noon so that she could visit Dr. Miyad. Warqa thanked the nurse and went to room seven. When she knocked, she was surprised to see a young man open the door. She asked hesitantly, "How is Dr. Miyad?"

The young man said, "Come in, she's awake."

Warqa entered the room, anxious to see her friend, who smiled and said, "I'm all right. How is your grandmother?"

"She's fine. She sends her regards and wishes you a speedy recovery."

As she sat down near the bed, Warqa noticed that

Dr. Miyad's face and neck were flushed. It was the first time she had seen the doctor without her headscarf on. Warqa wanted to stay, but she thought about her grandmother and soon arose.

Dr. Miyad sensed her uneasiness, saying, "You mustn't leave your grandmother alone for long."

"But I don't want to leave you alone either."

"I'm not alone. My brother is here. When you leave, please tell him to come in."

"Where will I find him?" asked Warqa.

"He'll be in the reading room. His name is Sinad. He was the man who opened the door for you."

Warqa said, "Oh I thought he was a stranger, a doctor."

Dr. Miyad said, "He is a doctor, but he's also my brother. Otherwise, I wouldn't have allowed him to see me without my scarf on."

"I never thought of that."

"He left the room so that you would be at ease," Dr. Miyad remarked.

Warqa wished her friend good health and said goodbye. She saw Dr. Miyad's brother near the room and didn't speak to him, since he had seen her leave.

She hurried to her grandmother, who was still sleeping. When she awoke she asked Warqa about the doctor and Warqa said that she was very ill.

"Is she alone?" asked Warqa's grandmother.

"No. Her brother is with her, although he left the room when I entered."

"He seems polite," her grandmother remarked.

### Further Questions

The following morning, Warqa visited Dr. Miyad and saw that she was feeling better. The doctor appreciated Warqa's visits. When Warqa expressed concern about her friend's health, Dr. Miyad said that she seemed upset.

"Oh that's to be expected."

"You are right. A lot of processes take place in the body when it is in such a state."

"What processes?"

"There is a network of nerves in the body. It carries impulses between the brain and all of the different parts of the body. Hence, sensations like cold, heat and pain are received through the nerves. There are millions of nerve cells carrying out this job."

"How do they function?" asked Warqa.

"The brain is the centre of the nervous system. It controls all of the muscles and organs. Thus, when we touch something hot, the hand is withdrawn very quickly. We may not think much about such actions, but what the Creator has planned is really a source of wonder."

Dr. Miyad continued to speak. Warqa enjoyed listening to her simple explanations and wished she could stay longer, but she didn't want to tire the doctor.

Warqa said, "Your words are so interesting and I am in need of religious knowledge, especially about the Great Creator, since I lack such information. I can't answer the



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questions of skeptical people. At first, I planned to attend medical college, but my exam results weren't good enough."

"My religious knowledge has nothing to do with college," Dr. Miyad told her. "In fact, I knew many things before I went to the university."

"That's wonderful! You knew about your religion early on."

"Yes, from early childhood my brother encouraged me to read. He helped me to understand many difficult matters."

"Which of your brothers helped you?"

"I only have one brother. He always took care of me when I was sick. He's everything to me."

"May Allah protect you both," Warqa said.

Dr. Miyad added, "He has not gone to his clinic because of me. He stays near me when I'm sick."

"I thought he worked here."

"No, he has his own clinic."

Warqa looked at her watch. She felt that she had stayed long enough and that her grandmother might be in need of her. She got up, saying, "I'm sorry to leave you again. I must take care of my grandmother."

"Don't worry, my dear; my brother will soon come."

"Then I'll see you tomorrow," said Warqa.

"Please do come."

"I may trouble you with my questions."

"Not at all. I'll be happy to see you whenever you come."

When Warqa visited her friend the next day, she asked about her health and when she would begin work again.

"I feel fine, except for some pain near my spleen. I'm waiting for my laboratory results."

Warqa said, "I hope nothing is wrong with your spleen, although I think this organ is not very important."

Dr. Miyad smiled and said, "On the contrary, it is

very important. Every organ God has created has its own importance.

“The spleen is similar to a movable graveyard, really. It receives the dead red blood cells, which usually die after two months. It is interesting to see the iron particles carry the dead cells for burial and return to produce new ones.”

“Do the iron particles produce red cells?”

“No, ” said Dr. Miyad, “but it is helpful in their manufacture. The main process involved in making the red and even the white blood cells takes place in the bone marrow. So you can see what a wonderful factory there is inside the human body. Each organ has its own special function.”

“Please continue,” urged Warqa.

“The cardiac system exchanges the gases through the circulation of blood. Oxygen is carried to the tissues by the blood and, on the way back to the heart, remnants of burnt out tissues are transported in place of the oxygen.”

“You mean that the blood’s circulation helps the digestive system?”

“Yes, that’s what I mean,” replied Dr. Miyad.

“The respiratory system helps as well. We breathe as long as we are alive, yet we never think about the Creator’s design of our breathing apparatus. The necessary gas, oxygen, is provided and carbon dioxide is removed. Hence, our blood is purified and whatever substance is useless is discarded. It is the delicate design of Allah. Consider the digestive system. We eat and drink whatever we like, but we forget that Merciful Allah has given us the organs which make use of starches, proteins, fats, minerals, water and vitamins. These organs remove the unwanted waste products from the body.”

Warqa then asked, “What about the liver?”

“The liver is a large reddish-brown organ which secretes bile and purifies the blood. It is similar to a de-

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fence front." Dr. Miyad hesitated, giving Warqa time to think. Then she asked how her grandmother was. Warqa replied that she was much better and that that was why she was able to leave her for a while. Her grandmother wanted Warqa to go back and attend her college lectures from the coming week, but Warqa had not yet made up her mind about it.

Dr. Miyad said, "You have been absent from your studies for a long time. You should return to them. I'll be near her while you are away."

"Poor grandma," said Warqa. "She has tried hard to give me a comfortable life. She loves me very much, but I feel so lonely, since I am her only granddaughter. Her son, my father died when I was one year old, and my mother died shortly after my birth."

"Neither of us has a sister, let's be sisters to each other."

Warqa's face brightened as she asked, "Will you have me as your sister?"

"With great pleasure," the doctor replied.

"That's settled then. I wanted you to read this book." She held out a book entitled *Perfection in Islam* towards Warqa, who took it and said good-bye.

Two days later, Dr. Miyad had recovered and was once again on duty, and she made a point to visit Warqa's grandmother every day while Warqa was at college. Warqa read the religious book and asked her friend for another volume. She really wanted to understand what she had read, and spent many hours at the hospital, reading and discussing various questions with Dr. Miyad. Warqa was greatly influenced by the doctor and longed to be with her always. One day she asked the doctor, "Is it true that the body's cells change?"

"Yes. Everything: the cells, the blood, the fat, the proteins, even the nerve cells are changed. Basically, the complete body structure is renewed and replaced

every ten years.”

Warqa commented, “Even the nerve cells. Does that mean a person could forget his previous knowledge and memories?”

“This is one of the mysteries of creation, and because of this we can understand that memory is not matter, and that it cannot be explained. It is a spiritual phenomenon with no physical characteristics. If it was matter attached to the nerve cell, then one would forget everything with the passage of time. One would have to re-learn everything again and again, even one’s name and one’s father’s name. The average human being gathers nearly half a million pictures in his memory each day. Thus, tens of billions of images are stored in his memory during his lifetime, in addition to the other information received through the other senses.”

Warqa was listening attentively and said: “What an enormous number! It’s difficult to believe.”

“It is an enormous amount. Some scientists say the memory can hold enough information to fill nine million volumes. Consider how great is the wisdom of the Creator.”

Then Warqa asked, “With such facts, can’t we prove the existence of Almighty Allah to unbelievers?”

“It can be,” said Dr. Miyad. “But some may even deny the existence of the universe. They deny such a reality and think that everything is an illusion.”

“Who are these people?”

“They are those who deny the Creator, the universe and themselves. They doubt the existence of everything and try to persuade others to consider everything as merely a dream or as their imagination. In any case, we can refute their claims by ascertaining whether or not they are sure of such claims.”

“Of course, they are sure,” Warqa commented.

“If they are sure, then they profess certainty in some matters, which is in contrast to their claims of doubt. This,

then, devalues their doctrine of belief.”

“That’s quite true,” said Warqa. “Please continue.”

Dr. Miyad said, “We can ask them whether they consider our profession of faith to be in opposition to theirs or not. If they agree that there is a contradiction, then they must also agree that these opposites cannot meet. This is a fact which cannot be doubted and, therefore, it follows that certain statements cannot be denied. If they say that there is no such impossibility, the two parties may both be right. Then those who believe in the Creator can also be right.”

“That’s logical,” said Warqa.

“There are other proofs which we can discuss later, when we meet again, God willing.”

Warqa said, “I know you are very busy but I am really looking forward to our next chat.”

“Which will be on the day after tomorrow,” said the doctor. “Meanwhile you can read this book.”

Warqa took the book and left. She read the book carefully and thought seriously about it. At their next meeting, Warqa was ready to listen to her friend. She welcomed her warmly and they sat close together to continue their discussion.

Dr. Miyad began, “Those who doubt the existence of everything should be asked to prove their doubt. If they cannot, then their claims are groundless.”

“But suppose they can,” said Warqa.

“If they say they can, then they should be asked if there is a relationship between the proof and its outcome. If there is no relationship, then it is of no value. But if they claim there is, then they must believe in a cause that brought about such a result. Thus, there is a law of cause and effect.”

Warqa noted, “They may reject such a law.”

“They must have evidence to do so,” said Dr. Miyad. “Otherwise, their claim is groundless. If they can produce

evidence, then they are confessing to the law of cause and effect.”

“I should take notes,” said Warqa.

“That’s a good idea,” agreed Dr. Miyad. “You won’t forget various points.”

### A Proposal

Warqa stopped writing and looked at her friend, waiting for more information. However, Dr. Miyad said, "Now it is your turn to help me."

"I am ready. How?" asked Warqa.

"It is about my brother, Sinad. I am thinking about a wife for him."

"How can I assist you in this matter?"

"Well," said Dr. Miyad, "you know that my brother is very dear to me. He is a good believer and is well-mannered. He is loving, compassionate and calm. I want to help him find a good wife, and I have recently found someone."

"Thank God for that," said Warqa.

Dr. Miyad continued, "However, I would like to know whether both sides would be happy with such an agreement. I want to persuade the girl; can you help?"

"How?"

Dr. Miyad explained, "You persuade her to marry him. She can trust me with regard to his righteousness."

"But who is she?" asked Warqa. "Where can I find her?"

"Can't you guess?" asked the doctor with a smile. "She is very close to you."

Warqa blushed, cast her glance down and remained silent.

Dr. Miyad continued, "You have guessed. Why don't

you answer? Haven't we already agreed to be as sisters? Don't you trust me? Believe me, I care a lot about your future, just as I care for my brother's. I have thought carefully about the matter and I am sure that it is right for both of you. You can ask whoever you like about his character."

Warqa said shyly, "I am sure of your good intentions; I am just taken by surprise, as I never thought about this before. I must speak with my grandmother."

"The important thing is that you are convinced," Dr. Miyad stressed.

Warqa wanted to say, "Yes!", but she thought it would be better to think the matter over. "Please give me some time to think about this," she said.

"Of course, you have the right to think and then decide. But when can I have the answer?"

"Within a few days," said Warqa.

"All right, my dear. I hope your decision is for your own good."

Warqa smiled and said, "I have never thought about my own affairs. My grandmother has made me depend on her for everything."

Dr. Miyad told her, "You should think for yourself with regard to your future."

"Yes, I will make my own decision. In any case, knowledge is gained through experience."

"That is not always the right criteria," said Dr. Miyad.

"Why not?"

"This is what the experimentalists claim. They don't believe in any fact without experimenting, even though they ignore the fact that their doctrine indicates the possibility of believing in matters without the least experiment."

Surprised, Warqa said, "Please explain more. We have a female lecturer at our school who always insists on



this subject.”

“I will tell you tomorrow, ” Dr. Miyad replied.  
“ Now it is time for me to check on my patients, so I will see you later.”

### An Obstacle

Warqa sat thinking of her friend's proposal. She asked herself happily, 'Should I agree, and become her brother's wife? Will he help me to understand Islam and lead me to the right path? How lucky I am!' She almost scolded herself for not agreeing immediately, as no obstacle stood in the way. She spent some time day-dreaming and then her grandmother awoke. Warqa assisted her and then she sat down, anxious to tell her the happy news. She began by saying, "Dr. Miyad has been here; she just left."

"Oh," said her grandmother indifferently.

"She had something special to ask me."

"What was that?" asked her grandmother.

"A marriage proposal."

Warqa's grandmother looked annoyed and said, "What does it have to do with you?"

"It concerns her brother."

"What relationship is there between you and her brother?" said her grandmother angrily.

Amazed at her anger, Warqa said, "She wants me to marry him."

"What was your answer?"

Warqa was confused by her attitude and told her, "I postponed the answer until I could consult you."

Her grandmother turned her face away and said,

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“No. This marriage must not take place.”

“But why not, grandma?”

Her grandmother did not answer her, so Warqa insisted, “Why shouldn’t it —please tell me why you disapprove, because I am convinced that I should accept this proposal.”

Still her grandmother didn’t speak.

“Why don’t you talk to me. Perhaps you are mistaken,” said Warqa.

“I am not mistaken,” said her grandmother. “I know what I am saying and you must give up this idea. It will not happen, so do not mention it again.”

Warqa was silent for a moment and then said, “Don’t I have the right to know why? It is not easy for me to decide without knowing the reason for your refusal.”

“Of course, you have the right to know. Are you ready to hear?”

Warqa nodded, and her grandmother said, “However, after hearing what I have to say, you must end your relationship with Dr. Miyad.”

Warqa was shocked at the idea and said, “But why? She is my best friend!”

“Then don’t insist upon knowing the reason.”

After a moment Warqa agreed, “All right. I am ready to hear what you have to say.”

“When you were a child, your father died, as you know. But you never learned how he died. He had a good friend, and they decided to go into business together. They opened a workshop making unbreakable plates. He was happy and optimistic about the business, but did not have the necessary funds. Because of his experience, your father’s friend was to provide the technical skill. In order to raise the money for the project, your father had to sell half of the fertile land that he owned.

“However, the half was less than that officially approved for selling. So the landlord, Mr. Hamid, bought

that half on the condition that the whole area be registered in his name. He was to give us half of the produce of the land, while your father retained the right to buy it back when the debt was repaid. The land could not be sold to anyone else, because it was in Mr. Hamid's name.

"The money was not sufficient for the workshop and your father mortgaged his house on the condition that Mr. Hamid would get half of the land's produce. Your father and his friend became the night watchmen for the factory. One morning, I went to the factory, where I saw a crowd of people at the entrance and a police car was parked there also. I entered the building and to my surprise and horror, your father lay on the floor, dying. I rushed to his side. His partner was crying crocodile tears. I bent over your father to talk to him, but he did not speak. He was taken to the hospital and on the way he opened his eyes, looked at me and said the name of his murderer: Abdul Majid Muhammad Rajie, Dr. Miyad's father."

Shocked and dismayed, Warqa cried out, "Oh no, it could not be her father!"

"Yes, her father, I was one of the witnesses in court, but one witness was not enough proof. He proved to the court that he was not at the factory at any time that day that the murder occurred. He lied and cheated often. The crime was recorded as a robbery."

"Was anything stolen?"

"Yes, of course," her grandmother replied. "Money and important documents were taken from a safe. So we lost the land and the right to buy it back, as well as the ownership of the house. Mr. Hamid managed to produce papers proving his ownership of the property, but we could not get it back. With regard to the house, Mr. Hamid has been patient and understanding all these years. He has an aim, but only God knows what it is."

"I knew that Abdul Majid had twins, a boy and a girl. That is why I asked the doctor what her father's name was. She ignored my question. I asked a nurse what Dr. Miyad's father's name was and she told me. Now, are you ready to marry the son of the man who murdered your father?"

Warqa bitterly replied, "I won't marry him, but I will remain friends with Dr. Miyad," she cried quietly and *thought about her friend. She spent a very sad day thinking about all she had heard. She said to herself, 'What is their guilt in their father's crime? If their father was a criminal, why should they pay for his misdeed? What can I say to Dr. Miyad? How can I explain my refusal of her brother's proposal? Should I tell her the truth? Perhaps they know nothing about this matter; how can I explain it to them?'*" She remembered that she was to meet Dr. Miyad the following day. She felt that if she lost the doctor's friendship, it would be a great loss. Warqa spent a sleepless night. The next morning she visited her grandmother, who was planning to leave the hospital the same day, without the doctor's permission. Warqa could not make her change her mind. She searched for Dr. Miyad, but to no avail. Dr. Miyad was on 24 hour leave. Warqa could not leave without saying good-bye to her dear friend, so she decided to write a letter to her to express her gratitude. She wrote:

Dear Dr. Miyad,

I don't know what to tell you. I am facing a dilemma and I can find no solution. My grandmother insists on leaving today, so there is no chance to see you. It is as if Almighty Allah has deprived me of His paradise. I am very sad and broken-hearted about my sudden departure. May Allah help me.

Please don't be angry about my behaviour. I have been forced to act thusly. As for your brother, I hope

he will find someone better be his wife. I have no particular reason for refusing him. It is just Allah's will.

If you still think of me as a sister, please write to me.

Your sincere sister  
Warqa

Warqa gave the letter to a nurse and begged her to give it to Dr. Miyad, then she left the hospital with her grandmother.

The days dragged on. Since her grandmother was not completely well, Warqa had to look after her in addition to attending to her college studies. She was sad and anxious to hear from Dr. Miyad. Her grandmother sometimes saw tears in Warqa's eyes, but she never asked about them. A week passed, and a letter arrived from the doctor which said:

Dear Warqa,

*Assalamu alaikum.* I was very stunned by your letter. Now that the shock is over, I am writing to you. It was hard for me to see you leave without a good-bye. I cannot give up your friendship so easily. You are like a sweet-smelling flower that should fill the spring air with its beautiful scent. If such a flower lacks the hand which waters it and the shade which keeps away the sun's rays, it may not blossom and may fade away before it fulfills its role in life.

I feel a spiritual pull towards someone who needs my help. It is my duty to respond, and I am ready to help. You have indeed become a sister to me, and you have brought me happiness. I wanted you to become my brother's wife, but suddenly, without any warning, you disappeared and left only a few written lines. The shock was too great to tolerate, so it took me some time to answer your letter.

I thought the matter over and found I must stren-

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gthen our friendship. You should know that I am still your loving sister. I won't ask for an explanation for fear it may hurt you. You are so dear to me. Please keep writing to me at the hospital address.

May Allah keep you well and safe.

Miyad

Warqa felt a little happier after reading the letter. She decided not to tell her grandmother about the letter. That night, she wrote to her friend:

Dear Miyad,

God only knows how I long to see you and how sorry I am about this situation. I have indeed been thirsty and in need of water. I found a spring to give me water, and it was you. Then time's cruel hand denied me water. I am again suffering from terrible loneliness, though I have always needed someone who would value my feelings; someone I can talk openly to and confide in, who can lead me on the right path and allow me to rest under his shade. When I first saw you, I thought of you as the real sister of my dreams. I loved you and felt at ease with you. I really appreciated your friendship. Then life changed the game and I was deprived of you. I am again sad and lonely. Life is unkind to me—it takes whatever is dear to me and this war has no truce.

I suffered so until I received your letter this morning. It gave me hope again. You drew me towards yourself and then to my Creator, hence it is difficult to keep away from you. I rejoiced at your letter and learnt another lesson of sacrifice and unselfishness, a practical stance which pays no heed to personal gain. I thank God first and then you, dear sister. I am still ready to meet with you at any time and anywhere that you suggest.

Your sister for ever  
Warqa

### Another Meeting

Warqa posted the letter the following day and waited for Miyad to fix a date for their next meeting. A letter soon arrived and Warqa planned to meet her friend at the hospital the next day. Warqa told her grandmother she would be late in coming home and she went to the hospital directly from college. She waited a moment to calm down and then knocked on the doctor's door. Dr. Miyad met her with a bright face, and Warqa felt like crying. The doctor said, "Welcome, dear. I have missed you very much, as if I had lived with you all my life."

"I have also suffered a lot. God knows how worried I was that you might be angry at me."

"Why should I?" asked Dr. Miyad. "You are free to make your own choice. Perhaps you think that my brother is not good enough for you."

"Please don't say that. What happened was not my own decision. I was satisfied with what you told me about him."

"What then?"

"It was my grandmother," Warqa confessed.

"Has she given a reason?"

Warqa became confused and remained silent, but the doctor repeated her question and Warqa told her, "There is a reason."

"A good enough reason for your refusal?"



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"Yes."

"Then I won't insist on discussing it further. Let us keep our friendship," said Dr. Miyad.

"Yes, please. I feel quite at ease with you. I was very upset these past few days. I have many girlfriends, but you are the most trustworthy one. I have had difficult times, but never one such as giving up your friendship."

"Forget it, and be sure of our friendship," said Dr. Miyad reassuringly.

"Now we must continue our discussion," said Warqa. "You promised to explain the relationship between empiricists and science."

"What do you know about empiricists?" asked the doctor.

"They rely on observation and experiments, not on theory. They deny the role of brain and rational reasoning. Every issue should be proved through experimenting."

"Right," said Dr. Miyad. "So we shall refer to this fact in our arguments. If a piece of iron is kept near fire, it expands, so the general rule is that fire causes the expansion of metals. This is accepted through observation of iron, but the general rule is a mental calculation. The brain produces such knowledge."

"It is quite interesting," noted Warqa.

Dr. Miyad continued, "There is something else; the thesis and anti-thesis doctrine. Opponents never agree. This is a basic fact in mathematics and without it this science would be nullified."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that we cannot say that the water in this glass, for example, is both hot and cold. It is either hot or cold. We cannot say that the sun is both bright and dark at the same time, or that something is long and short."

"What does this have to do with mathematics?"

"For instance, we say that one plus one equals





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someone else. It is logical that your enquiry might end with someone you know. This is the starting point."

"Quite right," Warqa admitted.

"This is the case with authenticated matters. There should be a starting point well-known, with the least experimenting."

Warqa then asked, "Can you give me an example?"

"For instance, if we say that a part of a book is smaller than the whole, someone might say: 'How do you know?' This is quite simple. Since we refer to a part, surely there must be a whole."

"If simple facts need no experiments, since the brain comprehends them," Warqa asked, "then why can't a person learn these facts at an early age? Why can't they be retained until old age?"

Dr. Miyad explained, "There are two types of mental faculties: reasoning comprehension and imaginary comprehension. We can perceive such things as water, flowers, gold and so on, through our senses."

"And we can imagine unreal objects, such as a sea of milk or a mountain of mercury," added Warqa.

"Here comes the perceived information through the power of the senses. But, again, we depend on previously received information. We cannot say, for example, there is a date palm without imagining the date tree first. It depends on imaginative perception. That is why a child cannot comprehend authentic information; he cannot imagine the actual thing."

"It is so interesting to listen to you, but I am afraid I cannot stay any longer," said Warqa.

"We can continue tomorrow," the doctor said.

Warqa said good-bye and left. When she reached home, her grandmother was quite upset. Warqa kissed her and said, "Please don't be angry at my seeing Dr. Miyad. I will obey all your other wishes."

Then her grandmother asked, "You will obey me in

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other matters?"

"Yes, except with regard to Dr. Miyad."

"Will you swear to that?" asked her grandmother.

Warqa was about to swear that she would when something stopped her. "I won't swear, but I do promise. That is sufficient."

"You will keep your word of honour, won't you?" asked her grandmother.

"I will do that," said Warqa.

Her grandmother's face brightened and she kissed her granddaughter with an easy mind. She told herself, 'She has promised to obey me. I am sure she will accept her cousin's proposal. Poor man, I was the cause of the delay until now. I was waiting for Warqa to finish her studies, but he has again expressed his wish to marry her. He is rich and educated, even though he is not religious. She can guide him to the right path. When she marries, she will have no time to see Dr. Miyad.'

The next afternoon, Warqa attended some lectures and went to see Dr. Miyad again. The doctor was waiting for her at the hospital door and she greeted her, saying, "We shall go home together. I have some work to do."

"Whose home?"

"My home, of course," said Dr. Miyad.

"Will anyone else be there?" asked Warqa.

"No one, be sure of that. We will leave before sunset."

"As you like," Warqa agreed.

"It is not far; we can walk."

They soon reached the doctor's home and she unlocked the door. It was a small home with a tidy little garden. The house furniture was simple but in good taste.

Warqa asked, "Who cleans your home for you?"

"I come here twice a week," said the doctor. "I usually clean it myself and arrange it for my brother."

"Does he live alone?" Warqa asked.

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time in order to create life.”

“What prevented it from starting earlier?” asked Dr. Miyad.

“Well, like the traveller who was delayed because he needed time to prepare for the journey, so life came into existence after billions of years,” said Warqa.

Dr. Miyad replied, “The answer suits the traveller, but not in the case of the universe, because it is claimed that time exists through everlasting motion. Such answers could be true if the universe actually did begin in a manner similar to that of the traveller, which would mean that motion is accidental and that time is limited; an excuse for a late start.”

“Thank you for this explanation. By the way, sometimes I hate time, because it moves so quickly, as in the case of our meetings,” laughed Warqa.

“I hope you won’t be late,” said Dr. Miyad. “Let us leave now. We will come here again sometimes, just for a change.”



### Conflict

When Warqa arrived at home, her grandmother met her at the door and said, "We have visitors. Go upstairs and get ready, then come down right away."

"Who are the visitors?"

"Mr. Mahir, a cousin of your parents."

"What does that have to do with me?" Warqa asked.

"He is your cousin too."

"It makes no difference to me," said Warqa. "He is a stranger and I don't want to sit and talk with him for no reason."

"Who said there is no reason? He is a wonderful man—educated, understanding and rich," said Warqa's grandmother.

"That is enough for you to welcome him!" said Warqa.

Her grandmother took hold of her and said, "I won't let you go until you promise to come down. You promised to obey me. Come on now and say 'salam'."

"That is all," said Warqa. She walked into the living-room and saw Mr. Mahir and his mother sitting near each other, facing the door. She murmured a few words of welcome as her cousin stood up and asked her to take a seat. Her grandmother said approvingly, "Come here and sit by your cousin."

Warqa did not move, but said politely, "I am sorry,





listened carefully to the useful discussion. She asked, "Will you please continue where we left off last time?"

Dr. Miyad said, "You don't seem to be happy today. I am afraid you won't enjoy the subject."

"I will enjoy it," insisted Warqa. "I intend to forget my problems by listening to you. The best times for me are when I am learning something new."

"Let us argue with them then," said Dr. Miyad.

"With whom?"

"With the materialists who claim that life was created through the motion of matter, which is everlasting. We can ask them to explain the different stages of that matter and the different outcomes, while matter has only one simple stage."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that through chemical processes and a combination of gases, new substances may result. Through radiation, a compound substance may produce a new one. Hence, we have a chain of elements and minerals that stops at a certain stage."

"Why does it stop?" asked Warqa.

"Well, this is the question we must answer. They claim that development is the result of a conflict between the original direction and its opposite, or through unification. For instance, through just such a process, hydrogen combines with other gases to produce various compounds.

"But the amazing thing is why doesn't all the hydrogen combine and disappear in the process? Here we come to know that there is an Everlasting, Wise Power that designed everything. Science has proved that electricity is merely negative and positive charges, therefore, it is not an intelligent source of power. It can't have created such a mighty universe as this."

Warqa's silence prompted the doctor to ask her if anything was wrong.

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"Nothing at all," replied Warqa.

"I hope you will always be strong," Dr. Miyad said.

"With the help of Allah, I will. I feel better when I talk with you. It makes me strong."

"But you are pale," said the doctor. "I'll give you some pills. Dissolve one in a cup of water and drink it once a day."

"Oh, I should remember that you are a physician. I think of you as a psychiatrist," Warqa said.

"I am prouder of this than of being a doctor."

"It is time to leave," said Warqa. "I can't come tomorrow, I have lessons in the afternoon, so I will see you the day after tomorrow, God willing."

"You will find me waiting for you."

Warqa's grandmother did not discuss the subject of marriage that day. Warqa was low-spirited and tired, so she went to bed early. The next morning she got ready and left for college. At the bus stop, an expensive car stopped near her and Mr. Mahir got out of the car and came up to her. "Good morning, Warqa," he said. "It is good to see you. Can I give you a lift?"

"No thank you, Mr. Mahir," Warqa declined.

"Come on, get in. Are you waiting for anyone?"

"I am waiting for the bus," Warqa said.

"How strange!" Mr. Mahir remarked. "You are waiting for a bus and refuse a ride in a car?"

His words increased her contempt for him, and Warqa turned her head away, saying, "Please don't trouble yourself. I won't get in your car."

"There is no trouble in giving you a life," he persisted. "It would be a pleasure for me. Consider the car as being yours and get in."

At that moment the bus arrived and Warqa boarded it. She left Mahir bewildered by her behaviour.

When Warqa saw Dr. Miyad the following day, she felt uncomfortable and was in poor spirits. She found her





existence. Was it everlasting originally, or did its components come first?"

"One might say that its components came first," suggested Warqa.

"In that case, there must have been a reason which caused its existence."

Warqa then said, "Suppose one says that the parts and the whole existed simultaneously?"

"Then we must ask if these parts can be separated either by transformation or development, such as the chemical processes which break water down into oxygen and hydrogen. It is quite possible for a compound to dissolve and vanish, so it can't be everlasting. The everlasting cannot be affected. Whatsoever depends upon a cause may disappear, as in the case of the atom," concluded Dr. Miyad.

"Science has also recently proved that there is a continuous change in heat energy, which proves that the universe is not everlasting," said Warqa.

Dr. Miyad commented, "Yes. This change in temperature proves such facts. Had the temperature remained the same, the whole universe would have suffered the same degree of heat for ages. Life would thus have been impossible."

Warqa then said, "Through various calculations, science has proved that the universe is expanding and that it is not everlasting. Otherwise, the planets would have been separated by unlimited spaces."

Dr. Miyad ended the conversation by adding, "The universe has been created by an everlasting Power, Almighty Allah."

Warqa glanced at her watch and said, "I am sorry I have to leave now. I won't see you for a week. I will be preparing for the final exams."

"I wish you success. I will be waiting for you the following week, God willing."



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That week Warqa was quite busy with her studies. She thought only of her finals and she even forgot all about Mr. Mahir. She passed her exams successfully and at the end of the week she went to see Dr. Miyad, but could not find her, so she left a note saying that she would see her the next afternoon. Warqa returned home to find her grandmother happy that she had finished her studies. She kissed Warqa warmly and said, "I am still alive to see you become an engineer."

"I have not got the results yet," Warqa said with a smile.

"I am sure you will succeed."

Warqa went up to her room and found a large crystal vase filled with beautiful flowers on her table. Next to the vase was a small white box and a note on which was written: 'To Warqa, with much love...Mahir.'

Warqa knew that the gift was serious. She went downstairs and asked her grandmother, "Who brought this bouquet of flowers for me?"

"Mr. Mahir's chauffeur. He said Mr. Mahir and his mother will visit us this evening."

"Where is his house?" Warqa asked.

"Why? I don't know where his new house is. Why do you ask?"

"So I can return his flowers," stated Warqa.

Her grandmother was shocked and said, "You want to return the flowers?! Are you crazy? Haven't you seen the precious diamond ring in the box?"

"No, I have not looked at it, and I don't want to," Warqa said.

"You must be mad. If you were sane, you wouldn't do such a thing. He is your cousin and your fiance."

"What? What have you said? Who is my fiance?" demanded Warqa.

"Mahir!" said her grandmother.

"Since when? I never agreed to marry him."

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Her grandmother said, "You should think carefully before you reject him. He is an excellent person and would be very good for you."

"I have made up my mind not to marry him."

"What is wrong with him?" her grandmother asked angrily.

"He is not a committed person," Warqa said.

"You can guide him to the right path."

"What if he never listens?"

"Then you can mind your own business and leave him. You don't have to share his grave, you know. You will enjoy his great wealth and he alone will suffer in Hell," her grandmother told her.

"Then this would not be a marriage, just a business deal for exploitation—no more, no less," Warqa objected.

"What about his gift?"

"All his gifts, cars, property and other wealth count for nothing, since he lacks religious belief. Give him back his gift and tell him to look for someone else to marry."

"I won't do that," replied Warqa's grandmother, "You can do it yourself if you wish to."

That evening Mahir came alone. Warqa's grandmother welcomed him and tried to speak with him alone before Warqa came in the room. She began by saying, "Thank you so much for the gift you gave Warqa, Mr. Mahir."

"Oh, it is nothing. Warqa is worth much more. I hope the ring fits."

"She is still young," Warqa's grandmother said with a sigh. "She needs to be brought round gradually."

"How is that?"

"She has refused to try on the ring. She says she is tired from the exams."

"She must rest," Mahir agreed. "I only want her agreement. I have chosen a very expensive set of diamonds

to match her beauty. I have come to fix a date for the engagement."

Confused, Warqa's grandmother said, "I will get in touch with you later. I shall persuade her to agree."

"I am very surprised. Why does she need to be persuaded? It is a good match. It seems she is childish," Mahir said.

"She is young, but she is also wise and prudent, thank God. She may have a different point of view, but I will make her change her mind."

Suddenly Warqa opened the door and entered the room with the small white box in her hand. Her grandmother was upset and expected a confrontation. Warqa greeted her cousin and sat down in a chair by the door. Mahir stood up to welcome her.

Warqa spoke first, "Thank you for the flowers. They were a nice present from a cousin, but I can't accept this one." She held out the box.

Mahir was stunned and was at a loss for words. Finally he said, "What do you mean?"

"I mean that we are cousins, nothing else. That is enough."

"But can't I seek a closer relation?" Mahir asked.

"No!"

"Can you tell me why? Have I done anything wrong?"

"Of course not. But it is for our own good."

"How do you know it is good for me?" he then asked.

"Because I cannot be a real wife for you. There is a barrier that cannot be ignored, so let us just remain cousins."

"If you think my wealth is a barrier, be sure that it is not important to me that you are not rich. When you become my wife all my wealth will be yours."

His words annoyed Warqa, but she tried to stay

calm. She explained, "You don't understand me. I was not referring to wealth."

"Then is it our social standing? We are both engineers."

"Please let me finish," Warqa said sharply.

"I am sorry, please go on," said Mahir.

"What I mean is that the religious situation is what makes the real difference." She sat silently for a moment. Mahir coughed to hide his confusion. Warqa's grandmother used the opportunity to say, "This is unimportant. He won't make you change your commitment, will you Mr. Mahir?"

Seeing a way out, he quickly said, "Of course, I won't prevent her from performing her religious duties. If this is her reason, there is no question of it."

Warqa smiled bitterly and said, "In short, I would like you to answer a question: How do you view marriage?"

Mahir had not expected such a question and he hesitated and then said, "A happy life together."

"You have not really given your opinion. To you, it is just an end in itself."

He laughed meaninglessly and asked, "How do you view it, then?"

"It is for you to answer!"

Warqa's grandmother interrupted, "Stop this talk. He is your cousin, and that is enough."

Warqa turned to her, saying, "At least you should understand me, even if he won't. Married life is not a business agreement or a social ritual. It is a mutual life course and a uniting of two spirits and their beliefs. Such unity cannot take place if the points of view of both sides are quite opposed. If we differ ideologically, we can't agree emotionally. This is a serious reason for marriages which fail. I don't wish to suffer in such a marriage."

Her grandmother persisted, "You can each have your own way of life."

Warqa said impatiently, "That would be a schizophrenic situation. There would be mental disorders in such a life."

"After marriage you may come to understand each other," her grandmother pleaded.

"I don't think so," said Warqa. "That would require a compromise on both sides, and I am not ready to do so. My religion is very important to me, and it should control my future."

Mahir commented, "I don't know what religion has got to do with your future. You are an engineer with or without it. I have my career, though I am not a committed person."

"You misunderstand me again. By the future, I mean the afterlife in the Hereafter. You have no thought of that life, while I am quite concerned about it; more than about my future career, which, however long it may be, will still be a limited one. The other life is everlasting."

Mahir looked pale, as if her words had affected him.

In an attempt to end the dispute, Warqa's grandmother turned to her and said, "Go to your room now. We have plenty of time to settle the matter." Warqa didn't leave the room and her grandmother insisted, "Get up and go. No more childish talk."

Mahir laughed and said, "She is 'excused. She has had an unusually complicated life. I hope to give her a long and happy life of openness and freedom. Surely she is under the influence of a bad male or female acquaintance."

Warqa's grandmother understood what he was implying and said angrily, "You should not say such things. Warqa is a good, honest girl and is well-behaved. Warqa, go up to your room."

Warqa was vexed but said nothing. She went upstairs and sat on the edge of her bed, waiting for Mahir to leave.

Her grandmother tried to apologize for Warqa's behaviour, which made Mahir determined to win this stubborn girl who refused all of his wealth. He tried to appear patient and kind, saying, "Don't apologize, I have my own ways of getting her to agree. You can phone me if there is any progress."

He said good-bye and left; his mind made up that he would either get her or ruin her life by tarnishing her reputation so that no one would marry her.

### A Conspiracy

Warqa felt better, since she thought she had put an end to the matter. She felt she had won that round of battle and she was in good spirits the next morning. Her mood surprised her grandmother, who had expected her to be angry about the previous day's discussion. Warqa was anxious to see Dr. Miyad and tell her the details, but the doctor was busy with an urgent case and Warqa returned home. Her grandmother met her at the door and whispered, "Go to your room and keep quiet."

Surprised, Warqa said, "What is the matter?"

"Sh! go up there quickly and don't come down until I call you."

Warqa went upstairs. She was disturbed, since she did not know what was upsetting her grandmother. She looked at her watch, which seemed to be standing still. After an hour had passed, Warqa heard the front door close and her grandmother called her. Warqa went quickly downstairs and found her grandmother sad and pale. Warqa was terrified. "What is wrong, grandma? By God, tell me what has happened!"

"Do you know who was just here?"

"It was Mr. Hamid, the man who took away our land."

"What did he want?"

"He wants his right to the mortgaged house. We

have no papers to prove we repaid the money, since all the papers were stolen, as I told you. He said he had been waiting until you finished college. Now he wants his money, unless..." she left the sentence unfinished.

"Unless what?" asked Warqa.

"Unless you agree to marry his son. Then he would give us back the land and the house."

"What did you tell him?"

"Allah helped me give him the right answer. I told him that you are already engaged so that he would not think about it any more."

"How could you do that?" asked Warqa. "He will find out it is not true."

Her grandmother told her, "Now you must agree to Mahir as soon as possible. In any case, Mahir is much better than the landlord's playboy son."

Warqa moaned as if in pain and did not speak. After a while she said, "I won't marry Mahir. Let Mr. Hamid take everything—I don't want the land or the house. I will sacrifice all for the sake of my religion."

Her grandmother burst into exaggerated cries of despair. She insulted Warqa, using every unkind word she knew. Warqa tried hard to calm her and then she went to her room and lay on her bed, miserable and exhausted.

The next morning, Warqa did not come downstairs as usual. Her grandmother thought she was still sleeping, so she waited for some time before going up to her room to awaken her. She went up to Warqa's bed and called her softly, but she was shocked when she touched Warqa's hand and found it was hot and she saw that Warqa was taking quick, shallow breaths. Warqa opened her eyes and looked at her grandmother, who asked her quickly, "What is wrong Warqa dear?"

"I don't know."

"Shall I call a doctor?"

"Yes please. I don't feel well."



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Her grandmother did not know who to call, and she phoned Mr. Mahir to ask him to bring a doctor. She reached him at his office and told him, "Oh Mr. Mahir, please come quickly and help Warqa. She is very sick."

"What is the matter with her?" he asked rather indifferently.

"She is sick and needs a doctor."

"Doctors are not in their clinics in the mornings."

"You can find one. Not all of them work in hospitals," Warqa's grandmother persisted.

"I am quite busy with some clients. Wait until the afternoon and if she is still sick, call me."

Distraught, Warqa's grandmother hung up the telephone. She tried some herbal remedies, but nothing helped Warqa. That afternoon, she telephoned Mahir again, but she was told that he had gone out of town on business and would not be back until the next day. She recited some Qur'anic verses and different prayers by Warqa's bedside.

In the evening Warqa's condition worsened, and her grandmother was at a loss as to what to do. She called Mahir's office, but in vain. She did not try to call any one else, but when she saw how sick her granddaughter was, she cursed herself and said, "I have killed my granddaughter with my own hands! I must do something to save her."

She dialed the number of the hospital and asked to speak with Dr. Miyad. The nurse who had answered the telephone told her that the doctor was asleep, but Warqa's grandmother insisted upon speaking to her. The nurse promised to give the doctor Warqa's phone number and she hung up. The telephone rang almost immediately, and Warqa's grandmother tearfully told the doctor about Warqa's condition, begging her to come quickly to save her.

Dr. Miyad noted her address and promised to come immediately.

After a short while the doorbell rang. Warqa's grandmother, forgetting all about her hatred, opened the door

for Dr. Miyad and welcomed her. She showed the door to Warqa's room and Dr. Miyad expressed grave concern for Warqa's health. "I must have assistance," Dr. Miyad said. "She is critically ill."

"Where can you find another doctor at this late hour?"

"My brother is in the car outside."

"Oh please ask him in. He may be able to save her," Warqa's grandmother urged.

Dr. Miyad asked her brother to come in. He examined Warqa and diagnosed her sickness. They agreed that she should be taken to the hospital, but Warqa's grandmother was terrified. "Is she that sick? Is she dying? Woe to me, I have killed her!"

The doctor said, "It is vitally important that she be taken to the hospital. Won't you agree?"

"Of course I will," said the grandmother quickly.

An ambulance was requested and it soon came. Dr. Miyad promised to take care of Warqa and so her grandmother remained at home. Dr. Miyad reassured her and said she would stay in touch by phone.

Warqa responded well to treatment but she was still unconscious. Dr. Miyad and her brother were by Warqa's bed when they heard her murmur: "It is not possible that their father is a murderer...Oh, Miyad can't be the daughter of a killer... please, grandma, make that silly man Mahir go away... let them have the house...how can I refuse her brother, I only saw him twice...I don't want..."

Dr. Miyad looked pale and turned to her brother, "You heard what she said, didn't you?"

"Yes. It seems she had a reason for her refusal."

"What shall we do now?" asked Miyad.

"Let her recover first and we can settle the matter later."

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Two days later Warqa was much better and Miyad was in her room when she awoke and looked around in amazement. She saw her friend, but closed her eyes again in disbelief, thinking she was dreaming. Dr. Miyad took her hand and said, "How do you feel now, dear sister?"

Warqa opened her eyes and asked weakly, "Are you really Dr. Miyad, or am I dreaming?"

"Oh no, you are not dreaming. Thank God you are well again."

"Where is my grandmother?"

"She is at home. I told her I'd take her place and stay with you. I will send for her now to come see you."

"How was I brought here?" Warqa asked.

"You are tired now, so rest. I will tell you all about it tomorrow. I will go phone your grandmother now."

"Please don't leave me alone; I am afraid."

"You are getting well. Why are you scared?"

"I am not afraid of sickness," Warqa explained, "I am afraid of people."

"I won't be away for long, just a few minutes."

At that moment the door was opened by her grandmother, who rushed toward her.

Dr. Miyad said, "She is all right and has asked about you." The grandmother kissed her gently and Warqa asked, "How did you get here, grandma?"

"The doctor who was with Miyad the day you became ill brought me."

Dr. Miyad was proud of her brother and said, "My brother, Sinad, is wonderful, isn't he?"

Warqa didn't understand, so she closed her eyes and said nothing.

### The Truth Revealed

Warqa's grandmother sat near her and Dr. Miyad left the room. She was very happy to see Warqa improving. Warqa's grandmother was at a loss as to how she should feel about Dr. Miyad. She explained to Warqa how she had called Dr. Miyad for help after Mahir had shown no concern. She told her how the brother and sister had worked to save her. Warqa then said, "Now you can see the difference between their behaviour and Mr. Mahir's."

Her grandmother began to say, "In fact, they are good examples of unselfish, kind people. Mahir has shown his true face, but..."

Warqa guessed what she had been about to say, but turned to Almighty Allah for help.

The next morning Dr. Miyad came and was pleased to see Warqa was quite well. The doctor told Warqa's grandmother, "You can take a rest. I will sit by Warqa in the meantime." She agreed, and lay down on the sofa with her face to the wall.

Warqa thanked Dr. Miyad for all she had done and told her, "Twice you have done me a great favour. You helped me with my belief as well as with my health. I don't know how to thank you."

"This is the duty of every sister. Actually I am grateful to your grandmother for calling me."

"Oh sister, she is very happy with you," Warqa

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said.

"You call me sister, but you don't know the details of my life," said Dr. Miyad.

"Is it a special life story then?"

"Yes. It begins years before my brother and I were born."

"Are you twins?"

"Yes, we are, but he was ahead of me in his studies because I was very ill for three years during my childhood. Did you notice the resemblance between him and me?"

"Well, I never thought much about it," said Warqa.

"I thought so," said Dr. Miyad. She continued, "The story is also about my real father, who died in a car accident a month before I was born. My brother and I were born orphans. But our father died two years ago."

Warqa's grandmother turned in order to listen better.

The doctor resumed her story, "My father, Abdul Razzaq, was a poor man, but a virtuous one. My mother married him after having refused to marry a wealthy cousin of hers who was a loose, deviated man. My mother was rich and beautiful. When my father died, she suffered a lot. The rich cousin and his mother were nearby to help, and a few months later his mother persuaded my mother to marry her son. At first she refused, but the young cousin promised to behave well and take care of her small family.

"He expressed his love and compassion until my mother finally married him. Then, when she discovered that he had attached our birth to his name, she became angry and went back to her father's old house. Her husband still did not leave her alone and he eventually took her back to his house. We grew up thinking he was our real father. We were always surprised by his cruelty towards us."

"He was unkind to you?" asked Warqa.

"Yes, he was. He never kept his word to my mother. He squandered all of his wealth and she suffered much.

She died a few years ago. When we were old enough, she told us about our father, and even gave us proof of it.”

“What kind of proof?”

“Some letters which he had written to her in which he wrote the reason why he gave us his name. She also told us of certain persons who knew the facts. We suffered from his bad reputation until he died two years ago. Then we found, in a private box, an official letter in which he confessed that we were not his own children. He had written the name of our real father. Perhaps he did not want us to inherit the wealth he had made by cheating and stealing. Anyway, his will helped us to regain our true father’s name. Now you know, dear Warqa, who our real father is.”

“Oh yes! How happy I am to find you!” Warqa exclaimed joyfully.

“Almighty Allah has returned you to me”, added Miyad and recited the Qur’anic verse: *Most surely He Who has made the Qur’an binding to you will bring you back to destination...*

(Al-Qasas:85)

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## FRIENDLY LETTERS

### PART ONE

Wafa and Raja are two sisters in religion. They exchange letters which indicate that one of them has been a religious guide to the other.

Dear sister Wafa,  
Assalamu Alaikum,

I must confess that you have been a real guiding light to me in my life...I am writing to you, while darkness has engulfed the Universe. Night has gently put out its fingers to wipe away the troubles of the day and give rest to the exhausted. Everything around me is silent; a hidden tune is being played, giving the soul the pleasure that it seeks. One wonders how darkness can be changed into brightness, illuminating the features of a new road. Rough words are changed into gentle ones, that heal the wounds of the hearts.

Faith can do miracles. Belief in Allah makes one seek His mercy. Such a call to Faith is as pleasant as a spring breeze, as clear as the blue sky, and as beautiful as a flower. It is a clear voice that dominates the soul. One surrenders to it as a prisoner to his watchman and a child to

his mother. The soul heeds it to drop anchor at its shore. I hearken to it and hear the story of a new birth. It is the echo of a Qur'anic verse that says, *Our Lord, surely we have heard a preacher calling to the Faith saying: Believe in your Lord, so we did believe, Our Lord forgive us therefore our faults and cover our evil deeds and make us die with the righteous.*

(Al-Umran: 193)

Hence I come to understand that I am newly born to lead a new life. After utter darkness, firmly knitted by torturing days, keeping the soul chained to bitter weakness, I started feeling my new life. The mind has been the arena where severe conflict randomly took place. Nothing was clear in the vast desert where everything could be lost. Darkness, throughout those years, coloured my life black. All things seemed to me utter blackness. I looked at life through dark-glasses. I suffered the rough winds and the dangerous sea waves against which my life's boat was about to crush. Allah the Merciful watched that tiny boat struggling against the fearful waves of destiny. Then kind hands stretched to save the drowning soul. Those were your kind hands dear Wafa. Allah sent you to save this tired heart and disturbed soul. I was kindly led towards the safe harbour of comfort and rest; radiant awareness defeated the disputes of the inner enemy... I prayed to Allah the Almighty for His bounties. I uttered words which no one but He is worthy of receiving. I promised Him to tread His road to the end.

I am anxious to give you this good news of my new birth...with your help and Allah's Mercy I came to understand the meaning of happiness or misery in life.

I pray to Allah to keep you safe, dear sister.

Raja

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Dear sister Raja,

Your letter has been a source of pleasure to me. Its lines and words were in a new bright frame, telling the story of a new birth. I rejoiced, just as a player rejoices over winning the first round of a game. What a game Life is! It shapes the feelings, and colours its own toys through various incidents. Hence you see when I win a round, I make a step forward to save one deviated soul, one victim of a misleading society.

I am sure your wonderful letter was motivated by Faith...yet I wished you would not have used words such as "prisoner" and "watchman"...A different expression would indicate satisfaction...I hope you go ahead, increasing your faith...you should perform righteous deeds for the sake of Allah, love the good and hate the evil. Be angry for His sake and rejoice at what pleases Him. Depend on Him and you won't face failure.

I pray to Allah to guide you well.

Wafa

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Dear sister Wafa,  
Assalamu Alaikum,

Still, I cannot explain the confusion that overtakes me sometimes. I do not say that happiness and comfort within my soul has come to an end. This has never been a temporary joy of Faith. I still feel the ecstasy of the new birth, but I still feel some pain from an unknown source. Perhaps I still live the life I led prior to Faith. Please help me pass this crucial phase. Many have tried to help me change my view of life, but I could never respond to them.

I have to confess that you are the only person who managed to make me change that black vision I had. Now, I seek your help in overcoming this pain, the source of my discomfort...So please talk, since I find the comfort and security that I seek in your words. Your talks are of Faith and its creative power. Your words fill my soul with bright righteous guidance.

May Allah keep you safe.

Raja

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Dear sister Raja,  
Assalamu Alaikum,

Pain for no special reason is a mere illusion. Everyone can destroy pain in his life, if he searches for its source in reality. Unreasonable sufferings may bring more sufferings. One should not give way to such pains which bite the weak with sharp teeth.

You should be ready to resist such feelings. Those things of the world make you forget your religious duties and take the worship of Allan with a pinch of salt. It is a pity for one to find the source of light and then be pushed away before reaching it. I pray to Allah to give you more strength to fight against your desires. At this stage you need to stand firm, and have a strong will.

Wafa

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Dear sister Wafa,

I wish I never had the word "pain", in my voca-

bulary...How wonderful it is for one to have a nice dream that comes true and brings a real not a forced smile to one's lips. You may wonder what kind of dream it is! Well, it is to enjoy happiness in the shadow of Faith and to reject the suffering of an aimless life...I wish, I could forget this word "pain" with all its reflections.

At the order of Allah, your helpful hand has broken the chains of pain and released my soul. Your kind heart has destroyed the shadows of torture. You have outlined the righteous road and scattered along it the flowers of hope whose scent touches the soul and removes dark shadows. Such hope in Allah's pleasure is most wonderful. It is a stage of transfer, not only from deviation to righteousness, or from doubt to certainty, but also from misery to happiness and from despair to hope and from darkness to light... to Allah and Religion which I am ready to sacrifice myself for.

I pray to Allah for your strength and fortitude.

Raja

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Dear sister Raja,

I am sorry to say that I missed optimistic words in your letter; words that foretell a promising new birth. I missed in your letter words that indicate achievement in destroying pains and sufferings. I frankly say that your letter disappointed me. How hard it is to see a long awaited hope vanish in front of one's eyes!

You still talk about pain. What pain is it that can stay, despite a Faith that overwhelms the soul with its light? You should rather talk about happiness which is at the threshold of your door, though you ignore it. How hap-

py one is to rid oneself of pain and purify one's soul that will soon enjoy the eternal sublime world! How wonderful it is to set up the fortress of Faith on the ruins of pain; such a fortress cannot be destroyed with the passage of time.

Oh sister, how dear you are to me. I feel that your soul, that has suffered this world's pains, has been released, rejecting this world, turning towards a great aim of all souls. It is to gain the pleasure of Allah and to get His Paradise. You should therefore pray to Allah always, for more piety and faith. Pray to Him for mercy and help, since He is ready to answer those seeking His help; He is most thanked and praised for that. Recite, whenever you can, the Holy Qur'an, which gives comfort to the troubled soul and purifies the self of its sins. Fear the Creator and seek refuge in Him. Pray to Allah, as the Qur'anic verse says: *And glorify the name of your Lord morning and evening.*

(Al-Insan:25)

Go ahead and rid yourself of all that which causes you pain...Be happy with your belief in Allah...I am waiting for good news from you, to remove my disappointment.

Wafa

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Dear sister Wafa,

I do apologize for causing you disappointment. What can I write? Well, the one who wished to die, is now interested in life. This is not for the sake of enjoying life, but for the sake of a sublime aim that one strives to attain through the worship of Allah. Hence, you see I am no

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longer disturbed by life's troubles. This life with all its hardship and suffering is of no more concern to me. This world is nothing but a tiny portion of the great universe. I feel satisfied wherever I go. Despite the unpleasant reality, the feeling of spiritual security gives me ease. I came to understand that life will go on whether one is sad or happy. The past days won't come back; time does not bother with one's tears or one's smiles. Why should one, then, demand what time cannot offer?

Now, I don't build castles in the air. I have made a new start on the firm foundation of Faith. Life's troubles won't be allowed to keep me under the domination of pain. I want to achieve a life of Faith and piety. I'll make use of this life for the sake of the other one.

Pray for me dear sister.

Raja

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Dear sister Raja,

Thanks be to Allah, your letter has been a source of joy to me. How happy I am to know one desires life after being in the pursuit of death. 'This is just what I expected of you. Now you are quite sure that life is precious despite its troubles which are sometimes too cruel to be tolerated. This is a facet of its nature, hence we should adjust ourselves to its reality with firmness.

Those lines in your letter will be your witness in the Hereafter. The Holy Qur'an says: *Our Lord, surely we have heard a preacher calling to Faith, saying: Believe in your Lord, so we did believe...*

(Al-Umran:193)

How happy I am that you are now on the right

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path. You have set out with new determinations and awareness. You have left behind the deceptive materialistic pleasures. With all my heart, I pray for you, that Allah may keep you safe.

Wafa

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Dear sister Wafa,

You have been a source of light and a means of guidance to me. I shall be strong enough to destroy pain... I'll forget all my sufferings. With the weapon of faith, I shall break down many pains that spoiled my life. My awareness is back after a long absence. I am fully awake, making my way towards the Divine light and forgiveness.

“ Oh my Lord, how great is Your mercy. How easy difficulties are, for Your sake! How wonderful is struggle, for Your pleasure! How sweet bitterness is to get near You. No aim is worthy of struggle, but Yours. Oh God, despite troubles, I find happiness in my striving towards You. However narrow this room is, I enjoy the horizons of Faith, praying to You. Oh my Lord, how wonderful it is to get free of these earthly chains, setting out towards You...! Oh God! I seek nothing but Your pleasure, I need nothing but Your forgiveness. I tread only towards Your orchard. Oh my Lord, this life is nothing but efforts for your sake. My soul, Oh God, is full of hope in Your forgiveness. It longs for Your bounties and waits for Your pleasure...Oh God, this hardship is only a means of bringing me nearer to You...Oh God, my tears are for Your sake, Oh God, how great my need of Your pleasure is...!”

Finally, dear sister, I confess my gratitude to you for all your help.

Raja

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Dear sister Raja,

How wonderful for one to place one's hopes in Allah the Almighty. Such hopes make one smile amid tears and laugh despite suffering. Hope of Allah's pleasure and forgiveness changes darkness within oneself into a bright light reflected on one's face. Such hopes help the believers to tolerate the hardships without despair or retreat. They make the bitter taste of life, sweet, and heal wounds...Imam Ali (A.S.) refers to this when he describes the believers. He says, "...their bodies are on earth, but their souls are attached to the sublime world..." How difficult life is, for one who does not seek the source of hope! How hard it is for one to tread difficult roads without the help of Divine Guidance! Faith is, dear sister, a paradise full of shady trees for one seeking refuge from poisonous life. Faith is a spring of water that can never dry up. It is man's provision in this life and the Hereafter. Keep on seeking Allah's mercy.

May Allah keep you safe.

Wafa

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Dear sister Wafa,

I have not written to you for some time...not because of feelings of disappointment or negligence...I am, thanks be to Allah, still happy with my faith. Yet I need to be assured of Allah's forgiveness. I am afraid He may chase me out of His presence...How concerned I am for such feelings! Please write to me, give me some comfort.

Raja

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Dear sister Raja,

Allah, the Almighty never drives away those who seek His door. He never turns away hearts treading towards Him with pure love and absolute worship. He never disappoints those who ask for His mercy and forgiveness. The prophetic narration says: "Whoever takes one step towards Allah, Allah will take ten steps towards him." The Qur'anic verse says: *Whoever brings a good deed, he shall have ten like it...*

(Al-Anam:160)

Hence you see, Allah never rejects the sincere words of Faith...I pray to Him to guide you well in this life.

Wafa

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## FRIENDLY LETTERS

### PART TWO

While Zahra (with her husband Barrir) are abroad she exchanges letters with Asma. Through them, Asma becomes a real sister in religion to Zahra.

Zahra's husband Barrir is a committed Muslim believer.

Dear Asma,  
Assalamu Alaikum,

I am sure that you spend a good deal of your time engaged in the worship of Allah the Almighty. As for me, I have grown a bit fat, due to the nice weather and good food. Yesterday we (I and Barrir) took a long walk but we, didn't get a bit tired. We came across an orchard full of scented flowers and I picked a beautiful one. Barrir said to me, "I wonder if you heard the conversation between your flower and its neighbour." I was surprised at his words and said, "No I have heard nothing." Barrir said, "When you put out your hand to pick it, it laughed proudly and said to its neighbours, "Oh, stay in this spot forever. As for me, I shall be taken to have a rest in a magnificent vase on a wooden or marble table...perhaps I'll

decorate the blouse of a beautiful lady or crown her blond hair! I'll get rid of these roots that tie me to the earth and get free of these branches which are supposed to provide me with water and sunlight. I no longer need wait for the gardener to water me, or look for shade to protect me from the sun's heat. Oh poor sister, now I pity you..."

I listened to him while he said, "Of course neither did you hear the answer. The flower's neighbour sadly murmured: "Oh I feel sad for you dear sister you are quite wrong. Those roots that tie you to the earth are a symbol of your life. These branches are to provide you with security and survival. You are quite misled by your supposed freedom. It will cause you to fade and die. Your petals will fall dry and be carried away by the wind. This will be the result of your supposed freedom. As for me I shall stay alive and fresh since I am still tied by my roots, which give me life."

Barrir then stopped talking, though I was very interested in his dialogue. I was very happy to have comprehended the significance of the two flowers...I feel happy whenever I learn more and increase my knowledge. I am sure you can also comprehend the significance of the two flowers.

My best wishes to you.

Zahra

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Dear sister Zahra,  
Assalamu Alaikum,

How I miss you dear sister. Your letters are a source of pleasure to me. They help me tolerate this boring time. I enjoyed reading your letter and your "flower's dialogue".

Of course I understood the significance of the two flowers; they symbolize two girls. The first one is fooled by false propaganda and supposed freedom, and is the victim of ideologies that exploit her identity, the same as the flower carried from here to there as from vase to vase until it dies.

As for me, dear sister, I am often alone...I have recently been hurt by my nearest and dearest. A stone has been thrown at me, which has caused me to seek isolation...I am now busy reading a book about living creatures and their habits. The book is very interesting and useful, and it stirred, in me a great sense of awe for the greatness of the Creator. It deals with: light-giving creatures and fire-worms that live in the sea and fire-flies that live in the farms and the bat and its strong sense of hearing. This creature can hear ultra vocal waves, with a vibration rate of 500,000 per second, and other such scientific facts which are all created by Allah the Almighty. So you see I do benefit from this isolation and have enough time for reading and writing.

I hope to hear from you soon.

Asma

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Dear sister Asma,  
Assalamu Alaikum,

I got your dear letter yesterday and was eager to read it...I sensed some feelings of distress in your words... What do you mean by this isolation? You should have a social life that will benefit you as well as others. What is this stone thrown by your nearest and dearest? Anyway, haven't you ever seen the fruiting coffee tree, called

a "Beauty Tree"? Its roots go deep into the earth, its branches grow high and green to provide a source of hope for the spectator. It bears white flowers in clusters, to decorate its branches. Such a tree is a source of pleasure to others. When someone throws a stone at it, it trembles gently and rains countless white flowers upon him.

A believer can resemble this worthy tree. He devotes his life to Allah. When he suffers injustice, he responds with good advice and gentle words, with prayers for the guidance of others. When a brother believer throws a stone at him, he wishes he could put in that hand a torch of light in place of the stone, and he is kind and loving. He wishes he could replace the stones with olive branches in order to spare the believers the difficulty of carrying stones.

A believer is all good and kind and loving. Hence you should tolerate the wrongs of your nearest and dearest. You should not isolate yourself from society. Isolation is nothing but a kind of cowardice. You must surely remember our talk about the impossibility of finding a perfect person who never gets angry at others who hurt him. Now can you try to be such a person?

With best wishes and heartfelt prayers.

Zahra

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Dear sister Zahra,  
Assalamu Alaikum,

I got your letter for which I was in real need, as it was a source of guiding light for me. Certainly women believers are expected to heal the wounds of each other and help each other. The Holy Qur'an says, *Muhammad*

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*is the Apostle of Allah and those with him are firm of heart against the unbelievers, compassionate among themselves...*

(Al-Fateh:29)

Your letter has caused me to reconsider my decision of isolating myself... I confess that isolation is not a solution...I should keep on guiding others to Islamic instructions. Our religion is in need of illustration and Qur'anic explanations and prophetic sunnah.

Have you enjoyed reading during your travel? You haven't mentioned anything about such in your letters. Can I ask: why? Nice weather and beautiful quiet surroundings encourage one to read and write a lot. I have recently had such an experience when we went for a picnic on the river bank. I was motivated to perform my duty, though it was a mere picnic with some relatives and friends. I sat under the olive and rose trees, and watched the flowing river carrying dead leaves and petals along, with its fish and other water creatures useful for people. It seemed to me that it told the story of life with all its hopes and sufferings and its hardships and pleasures.

I felt in need of my pen and paper...I got them from my handbag and started writing. I was very satisfied with that occasion.

My prayers for you, dear sister.

Asma

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Dear sister Asma,  
Assalamu Alaikum,

However beautiful nature is, it cannot make one forget one's dear friends...Hence I long to see you and the

other sisters...In fact, I am counting the days till my return... You may notice a delay in my reply to your letter. This is because we made a short trip to a nearby place. We hired a small car to go, and the driver drove as if he were sailing! Barrir asked him to slow down a bit, but he didn't. Barrir then said to him, "If you don't care for our lives, at least you should care for your own car!"

The driver answered indifferently, "Why should I? It has been insured since the day I got it."

Barrir turned towards me saying, "Did you hear him? He is not concerned for his car because the insurance company will pay for any damage or loss. That's why he drives at such a high speed. Otherwise, he would not risk it. Can you take a lesson from this?" I said, "I think it is similar to the life of a human being and the Divine insurance that is expected for any loss as in the Qur'anic verse: *...this is because, there afflicts them not thirst or fatigue or hunger in Allah's way, nor do they tread a path which enrages the unbelievers, nor do they attain from the enemy what they attain, but a good work is written down to them on account of it, surely Allah does not waste the reward of the doers of good.*

(Al-Tawba:120)

Barrir said, "But there is a big difference between the two. The Insurance company won't make up for a loss except through efforts that take a long time and much money, while the Divine insurance is offered several fold and without an appeal. The Qur'anic verse says, *Whoever brings a good deed, he shall have ten like it...* (Al-Anam:60) Hence despite the losses that a believer suffers he is still the winner."

Barrir continued talking about the conditions of the Divine contract which are genuinely good intention and straight forwardness. Then he explained the two requirements necessary to benefit from Allah's mercy. I was very interested and forgot all about the dangerous roads and the

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dreadful high speed. The place was not comfortable so our stay was short. We returned and I was happy to see your letter waiting for me. How nice of you to ask me about my reading. You may rejoice to know that I am reading an interpretation of the Holy Qur'an. I am quite fascinated by the deep meaning of the holy verses. I am taking notes in a special notebook which you will see when I return home, God willing.

Till then, may Allah keep you safe.

Zahra

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Dear sister Zahra,  
Assalamu Alaikum,

In fact, reading has to some extent spared me from boredom. Yesterday I visited our friend Dunia. There I met a host of guests for the first time. I felt uneasy and regretted being there doing nothing useful for our religion.

Then one of the guests asked about the meaning of the word Dunia (this world). Some showed interest in the name others rejected it. One said, "This word reminds me of a prison." I wondered why when the world is quite wide. She said challengingly, "It is a prison for the believers and a paradise for the disbelievers. Therefore, if we are believers we are in a prison. If we are infidels, we won't get the eternal paradise." I said to her, "Listen to me sister. This narration refers relatively to prison and paradise. If all pleasure were within the reach of a believer's hand, what he enjoys in the other world is still greater. Hence this world to him is a prison. As for the infidel, whatever disasters he suffers in this world will be nothing compared

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to the horrible suffering in the other world, hence it is his paradise here, while what is awaiting him is unimaginable.”

So you see I could benefit from that visit by explaining the prophetic narration to the guests. As for your letter, I was happy to get it after that delay. I enjoyed your conversation about the Divine insurance and Divine rewards. Such rewards make one smile despite tears. They cause the hopeless to catch sight of a ray of light in the utter darkness. The Divine promise of rewards helps the believers to tolerate sufferings and hardships with patience. Hence life's bitterness is changed into sweetness; its hardships into mercy and compassion. Such Divine rewards should be the aim of every believer, otherwise life is quite hard and its passages are quite dark for one to tread. 'Oh God, how narrow the roads are for one who does not seek your guidance.'

Our sisters, Zainab, Saliha and Inam, send their best wishes. Inam has rejected an official job. She prefers to take care of her family and perform her religious responsibilities.

Asma

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Dear sister Asma,  
Assalamu Alaikum,

I am always eager to get your letters... I feel quite happy on reading them...Yesterday we went for a walk. Our destination was a spring whose waterfall comes down a high mountain. We walked across the green fields and it was a bright day; the sky was a clear blue. We walked down the valley quite slowly; between the big rocks springs of clear water flowed musically along. We stopped to drink some water and splash it on our faces. The naked rocks of



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the high mountains had deep lines cut across their surfaces. I tried to understand something about these high rocks and I said to Barrir, "Do you think these deep lines are quite ancient." He said, "Yes, they are quite old." I said, "How old are they? It must be quite difficult for the wind to cut such deep lines on the solid surfaces." Barrir said, "It is a long process, otherwise such lines would not have existed. One can easily put one's hand in this stream and find a space for it. But as soon as one draws back one's hand, no trace is left behind. The water will go on flowing filling the empty area on its way. This easy action is nothing significant. But if one tries to cut across a solid stone, certainly one will need great efforts and a substantial length of time. One may fill the cuts with sweat or stain the stone with bleeding fingers. With firmness and determination, it may take days and nights to achieve one's aim. Then the result will be wonderful. Troubles and hardships are soon forgotten. Such an achievement produces great happiness and survives for a long time. The traces will stay to relate to future generations the story of a hard struggle. Hence, there is a big difference between an easy achievement without the least effort and the difficult one which survives the ages."

Barrir ceased talking and I thought of the effort and hardwork that produce good results, I recalled the Qur'anic verse: *...then as for the scum, it passes away as a worthless thing, and as for that which profits the people it tarries in the earth...*

(Al-Ra'ad:17)

Certainly, we are in need of making efforts to achieve good deeds that can survive for the benefit of people.

My best wishes.

Zahra

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Dear sister Zahra,  
Assalamu Alaikum,

I got your letter just in time. I was in real need of something that could give me rest and ease since I suffered a crucial stage of confused thoughts and sad feelings. I suffered days of pain, despair and bitterness and often wondered: 'How can one laugh, when others cry nearby! How can one smile in this miserable world! How can one seem happy while one hears the wailing of despair day and night!'

Some will surely collapse...yet some may fight back and refuse to surrender. Such people, of course, need a weapon with which to confront the fatal attacks in life. They are ready to fight, but they lack the weapon, hence they may give in. While I was thinking of this matter I listened to a person reciting the Holy Qur'anic verse, ...*no*

*soul knows what is hidden for them of that which will refresh the eyes...*

(Al-Sajdah:17)

I thought of this verse and found in it a source of light that removed all amazement and loss. I knew it was faith. Faith is the weapon of fortitude and the assurance of Allah's mercy in this world and the Hereafter. Faith can amend personal behaviour, can change despair into hope, difficulty into ease and fear into security. All this can happen if one knows it is for the sake of Allah and within His sight. Then I came to the conclusion that a believer should be optimistic as long as he is sure of Allah's help and content with what he gets or faces. I felt better and hopeful of relief...Your letter had a wonderful effect on me, the first sign of my optimistic theory.

I hope you won't be disturbed by this letter. With

faith I could overcome this kind of unease.  
My prayers to Allah to keep you safe.

Asma

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Dear sister Asma,

I hope you feel much better now since you have managed to rid yourself of all bitterness and pain and have tasted the sweetness of Faith and Patience. A believer should know that whatever he suffers is for the sake of Allah and within His watch. Such knowledge will strengthen his firm stance and open new roads of hope for him. However difficult the path is, and he can keep on treading it. Allah the Almighty ordered the prophets: Moses and Haroun, to go to Pharoah. The Qur'anic verses relate: *Go both to Pharoah, surely he has become inordinate, then speak to him a gentle word, haply he may mind or fear. Both said: Our Lord, surely we fear that he may hasten to do evil to us as he may become inordinate. He said: Fear not, surely I am with you both. I do hear and see.*

(Taha:43-46)

With these Divine words Allah sent two of His worshippers to Pharoah. These words indicate a serious situation with certain results. Pharoah might hasten to do evil and increase his oppression, and the two Apostles feared this possibility. They were two of the oppressed masses to face the mightiest tyrant of that time. A tyrant who claimed without the least right to be himself a god, and dared to ask the people to worship him. The two prophets were to face him and tell him to bear witness that: There is no Lord but Allah the One, with no other partners. The two prophets were in need of a mighty power though they were strong

enough to perform the mission. Hence they said, *...our Lord, surely we fear that he...* That mighty power was felt with the awareness that Allah was with them, hearing and seeing. Allah did not promise to fight for them, but just informed them that He was near them, hence they were ready to take all risks and rush into a difficult situation.

When the believer thinks he is striving along the road marked by Allah the Almighty, Who knows everything about that road and observes the performance of His creatures it becomes easy for him to carry on his way, despite the rough terrain. Allah does not provide man with an easy passage along a paved scented road. It is enough for a believer to know that Allah is with him, for him to feel happy and strong. He then tastes happiness despite hardships. Every believer may face a lot of obstacles throughout his life's course, struggling for the sake of Allah. Sometimes he gives in and wonders: 'Why is all this, Oh my Lord? I am striving for Your sake, treading Your path... but...?'

Such a person should know that, it is not an easy task at all to get to the happy end. One, therefore, needs great spiritual determination and has to pass many stages. Throughout his drive to achieve his aim, a person needs certainty (in Allah's help), persistence, fortitude and sincerity. He must be aware of such qualifications manifested in his life, and should prove himself worthy, of such qualifications with satisfaction. One can not achieve the apex of happiness without going through difficulties. However great the troubles are, one should consider them nothing compared to the sublime aim and worthy reward... those troubles indicate the expected good rewards.

Finally, I am happy to tell you that we are coming home within a few days, Allah willing.

Zahra

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## HAD I BUT KNOWN

Anfal, a rich young girl, sat waiting impatiently at the doctor's clinic to get the results of a medical test. She was in a hurry to attend a party and feared she might be late for her appointment with the hairdresser. She never thought the result would be anything important. It was just a precaution insisted upon by her family. She had never suffered any serious illness, apart from the odd ache in her

never suffered any serious illness, apart from the odd ache in her limbs. Then, it was her turn to see the doctor. She hurried inside to get it over with as quickly as possible. She was surprised to see the doctor look sad and concerned as he asked, "Is this yours?"

She answered, "No, it is my daughter's."

She wanted to know the truth, and thought that perhaps he would hide the truth, if she told him it was her own. He asked her to have a seat, so she sat feeling somewhat afraid. She looked at him anxiously, as he said, "Why did not you sent a man to get the results?"

Anfal said, "It was on my way so there was no need to send someone else."

The doctor looked sadly at her and said, "You seem an educated girl. You understand the nature of life." He stopped talking, and she began to tremble. She asked, "What do you mean doctor?"

The doctor said, "The result indicates that there is a blood disease." He looked down at his papers and remained silent. Anfal had to ask him to give her more information. She cried in fear, "Is it cancer?"

He did not look at her, but a cloud of sadness covered his face. It was as if he was sentencing her to death. She said in a broken voice, "I am finished then." The doctor knew then that she had lied, but it was too late to hide the truth. He looked kindly at her and said, "I am sorry for you. Why did you lie? Anyway life and death are matters within Allah's power. Many sick people live long and many healthy ones die."

Anfal felt as if she were drowning, as if a hard fist was cruelly squeezing her heart. She tried hard to regain her strength and said, "I do apologize. Thank you doctor."

The doctor encouraged her saying, "Be strong and optimistic. Medical science is constantly progressing. Some of today's incurable sicknesses can be cured tomorrow. I still have hope. Leave me your telephone number." She repeated the number automatically without knowing what she was saying. Feeling great shock and bitterness she again thanked the doctor and left.

At home she kept the truth to herself. She did not know how to share it. Anyway, every one was busy, getting ready for the party. Her mother asked, "Have you been to the doctor? Why did not you go to the hairdresser?" It was just a by-the-way question, needing no answer. She briefly said, "I am not going to the party!" She went upstairs, into her room, and locked the door. She stretched out on her bed fully clothed and listened to her family's voices, as if they were coming from a far away place. The wind seemed to her to be a funeral sad tune, lamenting her approaching death. The bedroom seemed strange to her as she would be leaving it soon. What about the house? It would not remember her. She was just a guest. Others would take her room and soon

forget her. She tried to cry but tears did not help. She looked around her in pain. Those curtains which she had tried so hard to get, would stay after her. It would not have mattered if they had been made of the roughest fabric, she would leave them for others. She wished she had not troubled herself for such things. She wished she had saved her time and money for more useful things which could have been helpful to her in her difficulty. She wondered, "What is useful to me?" She was young, beautiful and rich with everything her heart could desire. Could anything help her and save her from death? She had always longed for an official job with a good salary. She had it, but could it save her from death?

An idea struck her. She hurried to the phone while everyone was away. She dialed the doctor's number and asked eagerly, "If I travel abroad can I find a cure?"

He said, "There is nothing new abroad. It is a waste of money."

She put the phone down and sat on a nearby chair. Her salary would not change matters. She walked through the house's rooms as if saying her fare-wells. She paced the small garden and looked at the trees. She whispered, "I wish these trees knew I am leaving them, those stones, walls...I wish these doors knew my hands will soon no longer open them. I wish those flowers that I planted and watered knew. How often the thorns and hardstones tore my hands! How often I watered those dying flowers with my tears when there was no water. I wish they knew the meaning of my departure. These fruiting trees were tiny when I planted them. I did my best to help them flourish until they grew up healthy and fruitful. Will they know I am soon leaving? Will they remember my days in their company? What about these seats, I used to rest on. Will they miss my presence? Will they be ready for someone else to settle on them? My writing desk felt my writing in tears and in smiles, does it know I am leaving? Will it

miss my pen and papers in its drawers?

I wish they all knew I am leaving. I wish I had known I was leaving, then I would not have cared so much for this life. I would not have felt proud and arrogant. Had I known I were a guest in this world I would not have been cheated or tempted by its luxuries. Had I known this I would have been aware that leaving a simple life is easier than leaving a luxurious one. Had I lived a simple life, I would not have found it difficult to cross from this world to the next. My family is now enjoying the party—how often I longed for such parties, how much I cared for fashion and hair styles! Can they help me now?" Anfal threw herself down on the nearest chair as if she had realized a truth previously unknown to her. She said, "What shall I take with me? Nothing but the coffin and my deeds. What kind of deeds will go with me on my long journey? Nothing! Yes, nothing!" She remembered her friend Sarra, who used to advise her and guide her to the right path of Allah. She used to remind her of the Qur'anic verse: *...and make provision, for the provision is the guarding of oneself.* (Al-Baqarah:239). She had never considered the importance of good deeds. Now she was in need of such deeds to present to Allah. She would stand to give her account, but what would she say? How could she expect Allah's mercy when she disobeyed His orders? How could she ask for forgiveness when she never even thought of obeying Him in her life's affairs? She wished she had read the Holy Qur'an instead of all those cheap novels. She wished she had gained some knowledge of her religion instead of reading film-star magazines. She continued wishing she had done some things, and not done other things. She wished she had not angered this person or that, and had never lied or gossiped about anyone. She wished she had not been proud and despised the poor. She said, "I wish I could start my life all over again to make-up for my errors and



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to obey Allah's orders. I worshipped my desires and ignored my Creator. I wish I could live for a while to make up for my sins."

She remembered a Qur'anic verse, her grandfather used to recite: *Until when death overtakes one of them he says: Send me back, my Lord. Haply I may do good in that which I have left. By no means! It is a mere word that he speaks, and before them is a barrier until the day they are raised.*

(Al-Mominoon:99)

Here she said, "Oh God, I do mean it..." Tears burst from her eyes. She cried bitterly in repentance, not pain. She decided to obey Allah in all His orders if she lived a bit longer. The phone rang and she walked towards it lazily. Tears in her eyes she said, "Yes?"

Someone said, "Can I speak to Miss Anfal?" She knew the speaker. It was her doctor. She said, "Yes, speaking."

The doctor said cheerfully, "Congratulations my daughter! There is nothing wrong with you. Thank God!"

She was stunned with surprise. She did not know what to say. "No disease? How? You are joking, doctor!"

The doctor said, "May Allah protect me I am not joking. I have just got an apology from the analyst. He explained that there was a mix-up with the names. Your name was written instead of someone else. I have your medical report here in front of me. You are quite well. Be thankful to Allah my daughter."

Excitedly she said, "Thanks be to Allah, Thank you doctor."

She put the phone down, feeling as if she was new born. She knew she was safe for a while, but death would certainly come one day. She had no time to waste. However long she lived she was a guest. The first thing she

did was to perform her prayer which she had neglected for a long time. She promised Allah to obey His orders to pray, fast, and stick to wearing decent clothes. She would also give up whatever Allah had forbidden. In order not to forget this, she wrote the Qur'anic verse on a placard and hung it on the wall. On the other side she wrote a wise saying:

“Repent the day before you die. Because you do not know when you will die, then always be repentant.”

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## THE DANGEROUS GAME

Asia sat waiting for her friend Baidah who was coming to visit her. She was surprised at her friend's demand for a private meeting. Asia thought Baidah must have a serious problem, so she was anxious to see her friend, when she arrived a few minutes late. Asia waited for her to start talking while Baidah tried to appear composed. Then she said, "Can I ask you a question?"

"Yes, with pleasure!" said Asia.

Baidah said, "I want you to answer frankly."

"Now you know I am always frank!" Asia assured her.

"Why did you refuse Foad's proposal of marriage?" burst out Baidah.

Asia was taken aback by the question. She was silent for a while, and said, "Can I also ask you a question?"

"Of course, you can," said Baidah.

"Why do you ask me a question that might upset me? You know he is my relative and I have refused him for certain reasons."

Hesitantly Baidah said, "Well, he has proposed to me. That's why I want to know your reasons for refusing him."

"Oh, I see!" said Asia, and went silent. Then Baidah began to plead with her saying, "I must know, I am your friend, aren't I? Don't you care for me?"

"Yes, you are my friend and I do care for you, so I will tell you the reason. But first of all, what do you know about him?" Asia asked Baidah.

"I know that he is a handson, gentleman, educated, and well mannered with a good social position."

"That's right, " said Asia. "He is also wealthy. But is that enough?"

Baidah, pale faced, murmured, "He is not a committed Muslim!"

"You know this and yet you still ask me my reason for refusing him?"

"I know that religion is very important, but he might change",said Baidah.

"How?" asked Asia.

"Have you ever thought that he might be guided to the right path?" proffered Baidah.

"Is this what you think?" said Asia.

"I think ", began Baidah, "that refusing him is a kind of cowardice. I think we can bring Foad and the likes of him back to religion, and that we should strive for that."

"O.K., but how are you going to do it?" Asia said.

"I have means " said Baidah. "Anyway why should I refuse him when he has all these good qualifications? If I leave him, he may marry someone who will increase his disregard for religion. If I accept him, I may bring him back to faith."

"That's your opinion" said Asia. " I won't impose mine on you. However, it is a very dangerous game, or marriage at risk."

"Oh, please do not exaggerate so Asia. Marriage is an adventure. I feel I can tolerate the experience."

" You are quite wrong! Experience does not make a fool wise. There is a great difference between marriage to a committed believer, who is careful of his religious duties which protect him from deviation, and a non-committed Muslim, who cares for nothing but earthly pleas-

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ures, that change with the times."

"It is a risk" said Baidah, "but if I succeed it would be in the best interests of religion."

"You say: 'If I succeed', this 'if' indicates your doubts. Marriage should start on a firm foundation." Asia told her.

Baidah looked down as if in inner conflict. Then she said, "What is your opinion?"

"I don't know what to say" said Asia. "I am afraid you will suffer as a result of such an experience. It is a dangerous game. A husband does not usually accept his wife's opinion and he may even make her accept his. Then the wife may find herself standing at a cross-road leading either to the failure of her marriage or the loss of her religion. You know both are terribly hard to tolerate." Asia stopped for a while and waited for Baidah to speak. When she did it was in a choked voice, "What then?"

"I think you can spare yourself such trouble!" said Asia kindly.

"Suppose I am forced into doing it. What should I do then?"

"That's for you to decide Baidah. No one can impose their will on you, whoever they are!"

Baidah was silent, then said challengingly, "I shall take the risk. I hope that I will be successful."

Asia looked at her and said coldly, "You are free to do what you like. I hope you won't be sorry afterwards."

Baidah got up saying, "I apologize for having taking up your time."

Asia, "Nothing to apologize for, I feel sorry for you!"

They shook hands and Baidah left the house. Asia felt she had just lost a friend.

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A few weeks later, Baidah sat, waiting anxiously for her husband. It was nearly 11 p.m. and she was very worried. She looked at the clock every other minute, and at half past eleven she heard the door open and close softly. She got up and saw her husband enter. Her face became bright with happiness. She said, "Oh Foad, you are late!" She was scared when she saw he looked disappointed. He said, "Why haven't you gone to bed yet?"

"How can I sleep when you are still out?" asked Baidah.

While he was taking off his suit and putting on his pyjama, he murmured, "That will cause you a lot of worry."

"How?" asked Baidah.

"Because I shall often be late. There is no need for you to stay awake and alone."

She was disturbed at his answer and could not believe her ears. So instead she said, "Your supper is ready."

Smiling he said, "I ate out. Some friends invited me to a club. They held a party in my honour."

"I hope you enjoyed it. But why didn't you tell me about it before?" asked Baidah.

"There was no need to tell you, as you won't go with me to such places," said Foad.

"Well, at least I wouldn't have got so worried."

Foad said, "You should have known that I was at a social engagement. I live amongst educated liberals, and cannot be isolated at home with a woman..." he uttered the last words in a sharp tone and then said, "Now, go and have your supper."

With tears in her eyes, she sadly said, "I am not hungry."

Foad said, "Then let's go to bed."

Baidah said, "I expect you've already done your prayer?"

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Coldly, Foad said, "It is after mid-night. Prayer time is over."

"No", said Baidah, "It is not yet mid-night. Anyway it must be done even if it is late."

"You don't know how tired and sleepy I am!" said Foad.

"Fatigue doesn't exempt one from one's religious duty."

Mockingly he said, "Allah will accept my excuse".

"No matter—if you love me you must do your prayer."

Angrily Foad got up saying, "Please do not mix-up my love with praying and fasting. Let me love you in my way not yours. Anyway, I will not allow you to call me to account about my prayer every night!"

He threw himself on the bed and fell asleep leaving Baidah shocked at his words. She recalled Asia's words which had apparently come true.

She hurried to the Holy Qur'an to seek comfort and refuge. She opened it at random and read the first verse of the page which said: ... *We did them no injustice, but they were unjust to themselves.*

(The Bees: 118)

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Days and weeks passed. Baidah could find no way of getting Foad to come to her way of thinking. Whenever she talked about religion, he either mocked her or turned a deaf ear. She tried her best to give him comfort and happiness at home, but she found him more and more interested in spending his time outside. One night she waited long time for him to come home, and when he did he seemed happy, so she thought it would be a good time for her to talk to him. She said gently, "Don't you see that I am unhappy?" Foad surprised said, "You are un-

happy? Why? Haven't I provided you with all the means for your comfort?"

"Yes, I must admit you have! Anyway, happiness is what matters; without it, there is no comfort."

"Why aren't you happy then?" asked Foad.

Baidah, "How can I be happy when you are so physically, spiritually and emotionally far away from me?"

"That's partly true," conceded Foad, "but I love you so I do not completely agree with what you say."

"If you loved me you would please me. You know I am not happy about your behaviour."

"Have I hurt you in any way?" asked Foad, much surprised.

"You have not hurt me physically, but you have hurt me mentally by your disregard for the belief that you promised to respect. You are not careful enough about religion, to bring us closer to each other."

"Well, I am afraid I cannot change my life style. I cannot give up my friends or my social life. I cannot be cut off from others just to spend my life behind these walls. I cannot perform my prayer in a mosque just to please you. Faith stems from personal satisfaction. It would be nothing but hypocrisy if I worshipped Allah just for you. You know that I am an honest, straight-forward person, both in my personal and business dealings. What more do you want? "

Baidah listened, while her heart sank. She said in broken voice, "What about me? Have I no place at all in your life?"

"You are my beloved wife. I love no one but you. Come closer to my heart and you will know real happiness."

"What do you mean?" said Baidah.

"I mean give up ideas that keep you from enjoying life's pleasures. Turn to me whole-heartedly, and I will make you taste a life which you are still unaware of. You are at cross-roads—either you put your hand in mine and



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I'll take you into a world of happiness, or you stay a prisoner in your house, content with it."

"Isn't there a third choice?" she asked.

Foad was silent for a while and then said, "Yes, there is. We can separate ; and though it would be hard for me, it would be less harmful than if you decided to refuse my suggestion."

Baidah was silent. She wanted to scream and run away, but she was helpless. She spent a long sleepless night, feeling as if she was between two fires both of which could burn her. She was about to choose a divorce, but then thought of the tiny creature moving in her womb. This innocent creature tied her both to the house and her husband. She was soon to be a mother. She felt dizzy with thinking and, throwing her head on to her hand, she went into a dreamless sleep. When she woke up her husband said, "Baidah, why didn't you sleep in your bed?"

She opened her eyes to see him standing near her with a cheerful face as if he was ignorant of the reason why she hadn't gone to bed. She looked at him silently. Anxiously, he said, "Why are you pale? Are you sick?"

He put his hand round her and sat nearby. She said, "Do you really not know why I am sad?"

He laughed gently saying, " Even if I know, what can I do about it? I have offered you my heart, so is it my fault if you reject it? By the way, today I have some visitors, so be ready for the occasion."

"Who are they?" said Baidah.

"Just some friends with their wives." He was silent waiting for his wife's reaction.

She said, "Will it be a mixed meeting for men and women?"

"Of course, you do not really expect me to stick to the old tradition of having a separate room for women, do you?"

"What about me then?" asked Baidah.

"You are free to do what you like," said Foad.

She was silent for a while; then, wishing to compromise and thus show some understanding, she said, "O.K. I shall be present."

Her husband was happy—he kissed her warmly saying, "Do you mean it? How happy I am. I shall be the happiest husband. I shall be so proud of your beauty. You are the sun that will outshine their dim lights."

"What has my beauty to do with anything? To please you, I have decided to be present but I will wear hijab."

Foad drew back in disgust, "In decent hijab? No! I do not want you to be mocked. Just prepare dinner and leave the house. That will be better. I can find some excuse to explain your absence."

Baidah could not tolerate such an insult. She got up saying, "It is better if I leave the house at once."

"What about the guests?" asked Foad.

"You can take them to a club".

"When will you come back?" asked Foad.

"I may never come back!" retorted Baidah.

"What about my child?" asked Foad, calmly and deliberately. Those words were strong enough to remind her of the bitter reality, the great dilemma she was in. She despairingly murmured, "Oh, what a fool I was! How right Asia was!" When he heard Asia's name, he said laughing, "Oh, that snob! I proposed to her just to crush her pride and religious vanity. Now you remember her; what has she or her advice ever done for you? You are on the verge of destroying your marriage and your family life is about to fail because of this backward Asia!"

Baidah angrily said, "No, I won't allow you to speak ill of her. Had I listened to her advice I would have spared myself such an experience. Anyway, it is my own fault."

I must bear the consequences.”

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Two years later, Asia sat thinking of her friend Baidah. She had heard a lot about her which she found difficult to believe. She could not believe that after a bitter struggle Baidah had given in to her husband. She had heard she no longer cared for Islamic hijab but accompanied her husband to parties and night-clubs. She had given birth to a boy, Farid and they said she was always sad and hardly ever smiled. Asia heard such rumours and wished she could see Baidah and learn the truth from her.

That morning the door-bell rang and Asia hurried to open it. She was surprised to see Baidah herself standing in front of her. She was pale and unhappy. Asia welcomed her and led her into the living room. Baidah sat silently, not knowing what to say.

Asia said, “Oh, Baidah, how I hoped I'd see you; I've heard so much about you, but I was anxious to hear from you yourself.”

Baidah cried bitterly saying, “I have no news except of disgrace and shame! I have been the victim of foolishness and self-deceit. Anyway I am not worthy of your friendship. I have fallen to the bottom of the abyss and am hopeless, may Allah forgive me!”

Asia felt great pity for her and kindly said, “You are still my sister and I must help you, to overcome this awful experience. Now, please tell me everything frankly as you did in the past.”

Baidah, “Well, you know that I never listened to your advice. I believed in a dream and ran to get it; I tried hard to get Foad to come round to my way of thinking but failed. He never accepted my religious commitment, and treated me cruelly, humiliating me often. Sometimes,

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he was gentle and kind and sometimes he was frightening. I thought about divorce, but my son caused me to give up that idea, so I gave in, and obeyed him meekly. He exploited my weakness and increased his domination over me, drawing me ever deeper into disgrace. I accepted everything just as a prisoner accepts his sentence. Now, you see me here!"

Asia could not blame her seeing her as she did and asked, "What's the problem now then?"

"He divorced me a week ago, because he blamed me for the death of our son", said Baidah. "Why?" asked Asia incredulously.

"Because I fasted in the month of Ramadhan."

Asia asked, "Did your son die of hunger?"

Baidah replied, "Of course not. He was both breast-fed as well bottle-fed. He died after an illness."

Asia was greatly moved and felt sorry for the bereaved mother who had suffered humiliation and disgrace.

"So you see, I have lost every-thing," continued Baidah.

Asia hugged her warmly and said, "You have not lost everything. You still have your religion calling you back through repentance, and I am still your loving friend. You still have the broad road of the future ahead of you. Perhaps this experience will help you to make a new righteous start; a future that is built on firm foundations. Don't despair, ...*surely none despair of Allah's mercy except the unbelieving people.*"

(Yousef:87)

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### SPIRITUAL SURGERY

Ikhlass considered her sister-in-faith, Wafa, to be a real help to her in understanding life as being a righteous attempt towards achieving perfection. She could never be out of her company for even a short time, and Wafa was always near by to support her in times of crisis. She would remind Ikhlass of her duties, if ever she forgot, and was, to her, like a mirror, gently reflecting any defect or weakness in her character. In fact Ikhlass felt uneasy and suffered spiritually, whenever Wafa did not call or turn up at meetings. Waiting would cost her a lot; therefore she rushed anxiously to enquire about her friend's absence but could get no news of her. There was nothing for it but to go herself.

Wafa, looked rather pale, but welcomed her friend with a smile. Ikhlass kissed her saying, "Oh dear sister, why haven't you come recently? I hope there is nothing wrong?" Gently Wafa said, "Nothing, but a little surgery." Shocked, Ikhlass said, "Oh dear, surgery? Where? When? Why?..." Calmly Wafa said, "Oh sister, you have raised many questions that cannot be answered all at once. Let us answer the first question, 'Where?', the answer is here at home!"

Ikhlass wondered, "Here? At home? Who was the doctor, who performed the operation? Where is the pain? You look, quite well, thank God!" Wafa said, "You have

again raised many questions, I shall therefore, follow your style in my answer. As for the doctor, it has been myself, as for the wound, it is unseen."

Ikhlass thought Wafa was joking; she said, "When did you become a surgeon? We know you as our spiritual guide." Wafa spoke in a serious calm tone. She said, "Every person should be his own surgeon. A sick man is ready to resort to the doctors to rid him of a tumour or a rotten limb. Why does he do that? Why does he risk his life at the hands of someone else? Of course to be saved from a disease which is eating up his body. As for spiritual diseases, the case is different. When a person feels such diseases keeping him from happiness he should do something to cure himself. Surgery with a difference is necessary, in this case. He himself, must be the doctor. By means of faith he can perform the operation, and hence the house replaces the hospital. So I was not joking when I referred to the reason for my absence."

Ikhlass was excited at this. She was about to cry out of fear for her friend. She anxiously said, "How do you feel now dear sister? Shall I congratulate you on your recovery?" Wafa did not answer, but was silent for a while. Ikhlass was greatly concerned. It was not easy for her to see her best friend suffer such a dangerous disease and she was relieved when Wafa said, "I think I am quite well again."

Ikhlass wanted to learn something from her friend, so she asked, "How do you know that you are safe, sister?" Wafa said, "Life's incidents have helped me to recognize the disease and its cure. Don't you see that these incidents are the experimental tools which operate upon the human personality?"

Ikhlass, "So I see, but still one should not forget the other surgeon's knife." Wafa nodded saying, "That's a fact. Physical treatment is as important as spiritual."

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### THE GIFT

She spent an uncomfortable day anxiously waiting for, she knew not what. Her beloved husband had left her shortly after their marriage. She was waiting for the gift he had promised her, before he went into death's eternal sleep, into the bright world of heaven. His gift, (whatever it was) would be dear to her. It would be a token, a symbol of the love, emotion and harmony that filled their life together. Yet it was a unique gift; one prepared by the husband to be given to his wife in the wake of his death. It would be one of the most precious presents he had ever given her, and she was anxious to know what it was. She wondered who could tell her something about it. He had mentioned it first during his arms training, whilst preparing to fight for the rights and the dignity of his people, to either achieve victory or enjoy martyrdom. He did not give it her then but left her, waiting for his sake return. But he never returned. How could he come back? Those who rush to fight against the satanic enemy do not come back. They always expect victory or martyrdom. They desire either death, to vex the enemy, or life that pleases the friends. There are many who come and go..., but can a life of compromise and weakness, be considered a real life? It is really only death. Her husband achieved martyrdom in the battle of Al-Karamah ( a village in the occupied Palestine). He fell whilst defending his homeland

that had been seized by the Zionists. They did not even celebrate one wedding anniversary as he left during the early days of their married life.

Her beloved husband knew that someone's precious life, was worth sacrificing for a noble cause. He left her and joined the combatants in the battle-field, promising her his gift. He was away often and for long periods of time, but she got news of his struggle. She prayed to Allah to give him strength, patience and fortitude with which to face the brutal enemy...then, she was awaiting his return. But now she no longer waited. He had enjoyed martyrdom in the battle of dignity and justice and she would never forget his promised gift. His bright figure was etched deep into her heart and his martyrdom had increased that brightness. He was her love whether dead or alive, and she lived with him and for him. She was proud of, and happy with, him. She had a right to anxiously await his gift.

At last, after waiting for what seemed ages, but was really only a few days, the gift was brought to her. She looked at it as if she were looking at his angelic luminous shadow. She remembered him when he was her hope in life, the man of her dreams. He went for the sake of her and every oppressed wife, every unhappy child, every lost young man... He went in order to liberate his country, for her and for all the people. He sacrificed himself for the sake of the country that was invaded by imperialists and strangers. He was worthy of her love and high respect. She got the gift. She was both happy and sad. She looked at it. It was balm for her wounded heart.

What could it be? It was a green board on which was fixed in big letters, the following Qur'anic verse:

*...who when a misfortune befalls them say: surely we are Allah's and to Him we shall return... (Al-Baqarah:156)*



She hung it on the wall where she could see it every morning, when she opened her eyes and every evening when she went to sleep. She looked at it and promised Allah the Almighty, and her martyred husband that she would tread the road of struggle till the banner of justice could be raised in Palestine.

Whenever she longed for her husband she read the Qur'anic verse and a feeling of calm crept through her.

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## A BAD BARGAIN

Early on in their engagement, he sat near his fiancée saying, "Oh, how I love you...in fact I adore you, you are my life..." He uttered words of love which she vainly enjoyed listening to. He told her that he could hardly wait for their wedding day, as life away from her was meaningless to him. He wondered how he had managed to live before knowing her. He assured her that she was the source of happiness in his life. He was sure to rent a great house which would match his feelings. They would spend their honeymoon abroad, in one of the western capitals.

He carried on talking, repeating words of love, while his girl was lost in her day dreams, which had at last come true. Suddenly she was aware of her hair dropping across her forehead. She raised her hand to put it in place and said flirtatiously, "You were in such a hurry that you did not even give me time to have my hair done."

He said, "Your hair is lovely anyway, and you are quite beautiful." She smiled, proudly encouraging him to praise her still more. She said, "You did not even wait for me to get my new dress from the tailor."

He said, "Have not I said that this does not matter. I never worry about such things as my real aim has been reached."

She eagerly said, "Are you quite sure?" He said, "Yes. I swear by my love, that I mean every word."

She said, " I am very happy. I have always hoped to get a husband who does not care for material things..."

He said, " I am just like that, you can be sure."

She went on, " You know that money is something that comes and goes. I don't care much for it. In fact, I give all of my salary to my father who suffers financial difficulties."

At first he did not answer, then he said: " It is nice that you help your father. Financial problems cannot be tolerated. Then I suppose we can't rent a big house!"

She said, " Whether big or small, it does not matter. It should at least be comfortable."

He said, " Yes, there should be all the necessary amenities: a refrigerator, a cooler, a washing machine..."

She interrupted him saying, "Such items can be bought one by one. At first we can start a simple life. You know that at present my father cannot help us."

He was silent again. He looked at his watch and then said, " Simplicity is nice. I think we should not go abroad!"

She answered, "Yes, that is much better. You know I must pay back my debts!"

No longer he could conceal his disappointment, so he said sharply, "Then, your salary is already spent in advance!"

She said, "Nearly!"

He moved in discomfort saying, " I, myself am in debt, so, I'd better not marry at present."

Standing up he said, " We may not meet again. I wish you good luck!"

He left quickly as if running away from a monster! Only few minutes before he had spoken words of love and claimed that he could not live without her. The waiter came to her with the bill which the young man had not paid.

Amused she said to herself, " I gussed right! I was right to lie about my wealth. How stupid he is! He never thought I was testing him. My bank balance is good and I am not in debt to any one! Anyway, it was a good experience for me, even if it was a bad bargain."

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## THE LAST DAYS

In despair Sarra wept saying, "Oh! I didn't know that those were her last days or that that was to be our last meeting with her! Had I only known...", her tears choked her. Saliha, the friend who had brought her the sad news, was brave enough to have carried the message. She offered condolences to her friend and stretched her cold and shaking hand in comfort, to Sarra. She said, "It would not have made any difference . She kept it to herself and suffered in silence, patiently awaiting her end. She tolerated the horrors of waiting death. What could you have done, had you known?" Sarra said, " I would have learnt much from her, I would have learnt lessons that would have helped me to find my way in life. I would have said farewell to her, and have assured her of my undying love and respect. Oh! I am lost since her departure..."

Saliha said, "She knew how much you appreciated her friendship, that is why she left you her writing." Sarra dried her tears and said wonderingly, "Her writing?"

Saliha said, "It seems to be her diary...I've come to give you this precious trust."

She opened her hand bag and got out the diary. Sarra took it and noticed on the cover the holy Qur'anic verse: *We are Allah's and to Him we shall return.* On the first page she read:

...So, my life will come to an end soon. It is a matter

of just a few days. Only yesterday was I informed of this fact. Anyway, it is the end, but I am not thinking of the end so much, as I am thinking of the beginning, and the incidents that have filled the space between the beginning and the end. Those incidents will strongly affect the end. They indicate the end, as it says in the Qur'anic verse:

*Allah is the Guardian of those who believe. He brings them out of the darkness into the light...*

(Al-Baqarah: 257)

Thus, I must review my past deeds and call myself to account, in order to know what is awaiting me. Light or Darkness, joy or sadness, chains or freedom... In fact, I am seriously thinking of the beginning. What was the beginning? When and where should I start? Should I start at my childhood? Oh, no. I don't want to write my life story that takes the time of whoever reads it. I shall express the feelings of one who stands at the crossroads of this life and the hereafter. My childhood has nothing to do with that. It has nothing to do with what is waiting for me now! Childhood is a break in man's life, before he is required to perform his responsibilities. Yet, childhood signifies many meanings. I have heard and read about childhood. They say it is the happy joyful world of hopes and wishes. They say it is the time when a child gains the necessities for a life that will give him satisfaction. They say this and more. Though I have read about childhood, I have never realized the meaning of my childhood as defined by others. My childhood was a stage in life, I crossed it with no weapons of knowledge or faith. Hence I suffered a lot and was bewildered at the conflict between my inner self and the tiny body, between my great responsibility which was ahead of me, and the limited range of my thinking. Childhood means nothing to me but a fruitless expanse of frozen time. So I won't put those days of childhood on trial. I will start with

the early days of youth and girlhood. What is youth to me? It is a film full of images; some are dull and heavy, some are light and bright. It is a theatre where one's story is told; the story of someone searching for perfection; one who looked all around for the thread that would lead to it. I tried to understand life. I was never satisfied with its outward face. I dived deeper to reach my aim. I came to understand, through this universe, that there is a mighty Power with firm laws that regulates its movements. That is why it is so wonderful, so magnificent. I strived to understand people, but faced amazement, hesitation and disappointment most of the time. How often I returned home crying and broken-hearted; but, it was not always like that. Thank God! Through experience I gained more knowledge and more understanding of human nature and personal habits. I persisted in the pursuit of knowledge and understanding. Where did I find it? It was in Islam, in my Qur'an which is the message from Heaven. I felt so thirsty that I hurried to this spring. This was my early youth which I intend to record in this diary...I shall write down its hours whether of happiness or sadness, satisfaction or disappointment. I will consider my life's course and whether or not it was on the right path. I must tell the truth, whatever that may be. I am now standing at the doors of other world. What was my reaction to incidents and events in those past days? What was my reaction to faith and belief in Allah the Almighty? Hiding, or running away from the truth won't help. I am on my way to stand in front of a Just Judge. There is no room for denial or lying. The Qur'anic verse says: ***On the day when their tongues and their hands and their feet shall bear witness against them as to what they did...*** (Al-Nur:24) I need to be frank and put myself on trial. I must be serious in calling myself to account, for haven't I known that death is the certain end of every human being? It is written on every person clearly as a necklace on a young girl's neck. Did I not hear that

Imam Ali (A.S.) said, “ Oh people! you are chased by death...!?” Then it is not only I who should call myself frankly to account. Everyone should know that he is created to achieve perfection through the worship of Allah the Almighty. When one dies, one will reap what one has sown.

Oh, you who think you are safe, be careful! You will not be spared.



### HARD TIMES

I must admit that I suffered poverty in my early youth. There was nothing to eat or drink, no home no clothing! Poverty is a cruel situation. It brings all kinds of misery and pain. How did it affect my life? Did it destroy me? Was I strong enough to pass the experience successfully? In fact, it was an experience that caused me to learn the importance of faith in the human life. It made me understand the great Prophet's (S.A.W.) saying: "Whoever does not comprehend the Qur'an is not among my followers."

Anyone can undergo the experience of poverty and financial difficulty and if one lacks tolerance and self-control, one may suffer an unimaginable situation. Tolerance and self-control stem from faith which can help man to successfully overcome difficulties. It teaches him to be master of himself and of others. Whatever earthly pleasures a man gets, will soon come to an end. It is no wonder that I was content with the little I had. I never thought poverty meant disappointment or failure. On the contrary, I tried to benefit from my spiritual strength and make use of it in fruitful deeds. I lacked the material necessities to help me carry on in life. Hence it was necessary for me to stand on the firm ground of constructive and creative values and ethics which help one to form a character completely aware of the dimensions of one's existence. I came to under-

stand the real meaning of poverty and richness. I came to know that a poor person is one whose social worth depends on his wealth. It is high when one's bank balance is high, and low, when it is low. He needs money to prove his social existence , property to make people point at him, and luxuries to make others gather around him. He considers money as being the pivot of his existence and his dignity. He is careful to keep it because its disappearance means his own non-existence. I never let such thoughts about poverty poison my life with weakness and gullibility. I never allowed it to make me look at life with feelings of deprivation. I was happy despite my poverty. I was carefree, busy gaining religious knowledge which could shape my personality. The very little knoweldge that I gained gave me so much pleasure and self-contentment that it gave success it's real meaning. I was, thank God, happy with the little I had. It is a Divine Blessing in a believer's life.

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## IDLENESS

This was a period of inactivity. Thank God, it did not last long. Now that I see my end approaching, before the fulfillment of my aim, which is to worship for the sake of Allah, I feel sad about that period of idleness. Man's life is worthless, unless it is devoted to work for the sake of Allah, the Almighty. How despicable idleness is! How strange that man is careless of his religious duties and neglects religious rituals! Now, I feel those past days blame me for neglecting them. They are sorry for having passed by without the performance of anything but the ordinary duties. Nothing more has been recorded in the pages of good deeds. Those days are ashamed to demand Allah's pleasure, on the Day of Judgment. What can I do? Whatever passed away, won't come back. I should have made up for those days later. I know that one's days are counted. I wonder if I did my best. Only Allah the Almighty knows that.

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### A NEW START

However, because of Allah's mercy, my idleness did not last long. Something happened to shock me and inject new life into me. It caused me to understand my responsibilities more fully. Usually one gains experience through hardships and difficulties. Thank God, such hardships caused me to understand the importance of faith in my life. Thus, I thank God, for His trying man with troubles and hardships which must be considered as some of His bounties. Such hardships and difficulties must not be considered in terms of their cruel appearance alone, but rather through whatever good lessons are gained from them. We should consider them spiritual benefits and face such situations with strength and determination.

I recall such an experience and how deeply it affected me. Its effect was so great that I was on the verge of hopelessness. All that time I dragged myself from the house and strolled the streets, as if to escape the barbs of that experience. I found that I was wrong. The house had nothing to do with that difficulty. Leaving the house did not make any difference. I was defeated and at a loss as to where to go or what to do. Then suddenly I listened to the Qur'anic words that came from a distance, as if I was hearing them for the first time:

*Until when the apostles despaired and the people became sure that they were indeed told a lie, Our help came to them*

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*and whom We pleased was delivered and Our punishment is not averted from the guilty people.*

(Yousif:110)

On hearing those words I was made aware again, I woke up as if from a sleep that could make me despair. I remembered that Allah, the Almighty never leaves His faithful believers in trouble. Those troubles are nothing but a means or a method towards perfection. To a human being they are the same as a laboratory where the real nature of man is analyzed so that he can learn things about himself that he ignores and discover his weaknesses and defects.

After that experience I continued my life amid hopes and pains, flowers and thorns. Thorns are only found near flowers. Hope comes from pain. Hence I found myself in harmony with various roles and incidents. Good things did not tempt me, neither did bad things lead me into despair.

I waited for the relief after hardships and expected darker times after happy days, as if those happy days warned of what might follow.

The years passed on and I enjoyed Allah's mercy in full. I felt I was too unworthy to receive such mercy and compassion. I belittled whatever I did for the sake of Allah. My pains increased due to my shortcomings in serving Him. Such shortcomings seemed the result of weakness or laziness. I felt uneasy in my surroundings as if I were an intruder. I tried to keep away. How hard it is for one to feel handicapped in the performance of one's duties. I was overwhelmed with sorrow and pain that tarnished my spiritual pleasure in serving Allah the Almighty...It was Allah's mercy that engulfed my innerself and helped me to overcome the obstacles in life. Thanks are due to Him Who keeps the doors open for His worshippers.

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## THE LAST HOURS

Now I must write about the last hours which have been imposed on me. There is no way out; death spares no one. The Holy Qur'an says, *Wherever you are, death will overtake you, though you be in lofty towers...*

(Al-Nisa:78)

Is there any escape from Allah's order? The Divine narration says, *Whoever rejects My rule, should leave My Earth and Heaven.* Every believer should accept death willingly; with whatever pleases Allah, the Almighty. Am I sorry to be leaving this world? The answer is : Yes and No.

I am sorry at leaving it because it is the way that leads to Allah's pleasure and mercy. Its days are trials offered to man in which to make his choice. Had I to live longer I might achieve a better level in the worship of Allah. There is another reason for my sorrow. My friends and relatives will feel sad and miss me; but this is the nature of life.

I am not sorry, because it is not worth a feather, as a poet says,

...one should be careful of its plots.

Divorce is thrice (three times in the Islamic Religion)  
yet I divorced it a thousand times...

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Its changes are fearful,  
 its promises are false and its hopes are wornout.  
 I wonder how some hold onto such a hope  
 Don't they know, good deeds are the best provisions  
 and that the final settlement is in graves?...

Oh, how sorry one feels when the last hours draw near. How regretful one is for past errors! How one wishes for a new chance to make-up for them! One is ready to give whatever one has, to make-up for those sins. How wonderful it is for one to call oneself to account. How wise it is for one to consider the result of each step one takes in life, so that one may not feel sorry at the last hours. The Holy Qur'an says, *...most surely (one's) self is wont to command evil except such as my Lord had mercy on, surely my Lord is Forgiving, Merciful.*

(Yousif:53)

*Oh God, I do love Thee, the same as I fear Thee... Oh God, grant me Your mercy and forgiveness, deprive me not of Your pleasure...Oh Mighty God, how happy I am to be released of the chains and concerns of this world. I am happy to becoming free of its evils and sins. Oh God, grant those who loved me patience and double their reward. Oh God, keep them on the right path, so that they can continue their good deeds through which I may survive...Oh God, grant me mercy... surely Thou art the most liberal Giver...*

(Al-Imran:8)

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