

Bint-Al-Fluda Stories

PART THREE



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Chapter 1

Inner Debate

As Samia was anxiously waiting for her favorite television program to begin, unusual feelings were dominating her thoughts. Although her eyes were fixed on the T.V. screen, her mind was elsewhere.

She was not feeling quite like her old self. She was disturbed and felt uneasy and the lively music of the television did not cheer her up as it normally did.

Samia said to herself, "They were only few words yet they have spoiled my evening. Why should I take the matter so seriously?" She tried to concentrate on the program, but the words still echoed in her mind. She listened to the music, but she heard a voice telling her, "This is the real loss and the ultimate weakness. Why should one let a song or a show influence one's life? One should be affected by a good deed or a wise saying.

A useful word can elevate the spirit of its recipient." Samia was troubled by this inner dialogue. It conflicted with her usual thoughts. She told herself, "This discomfort is the result of Sana's words, which are still ringing in my head. Why should I care about what she said? I have been living such a life since my childhood. I like to dance and listen to music." She moved to a different chair and settled closer to the television.

Samia tried her best to forget Sana's words and to enjoy the program, but tears involuntarily came to her eyes. Again the inner voice whispered to her "What weakness! A few minutes ago, you were laughing for no reason. You were happily enjoying the music. Now you are crying. What is this? Are you living in a world of illusions? or is it some gloomy sadness which causes you to cry for no special reason?" She recalled the unlikely source of her uneasiness. She was not used to hearing such an inner

dialogue.

Could it be the result of Sana's words, which might be truth and guidance? The music on the T.V. ended and Samia still felt an inner struggle. She tried to forget her friend's words and keep to her usual behavior, yet the word haram kept echoing in her mind. What could haram mean?

Disobedience? Allah's displeasure? Hell?

Oh, yes. She remembered Sana's recitation of some particular Qur'anic verses:

?... then be on your guard against the fire of which men and stones are the fuel, it is prepared for the unbelievers.? (al-Baqarah, 24)

?Most surely the righteous shall be in bliss; on thrones they shall gaze; you will recognize on their faces the brightness of bliss.? (al-Mutaffifin, 22-24)

?Oh, you who believe! save yourselves and your families from the fire whose fuel is men and stone.? (al-Tahreem, 6)

Samia seriously thought about how she had been spending her time in un-Islamic activities and concluded that such practices would displease Almighty Allah, and that she would eventually suffer for her actions.

She might suffer the following day or years later. She remembered how much it hurt when her finger accidentally touched the bottom of a hot iron and how she ran to find relief. Would there be a remedy in Hell?

Again she recalled some verses from the Qur'an:

?... And as to him who is given his book behind his back, he shall call for perdition, and enter into the burning fire, surely he thought that he would never return. Yea! Surely his Lord does ever see him.? (al-Inshiqaq, 10-15)

Samia left the living room and returned to her bedroom. She felt as if someone was mocking her innermost feelings.

"How shameful for one to enjoy this worldly life and forget the

everlasting one! It is a sign of the utmost weakness to allow desire and fun to dominate one's life without the least consideration for Allah's instructions' the voice told her.

Confused, Samia sat down and thought seriously about the various thoughts filling her mind. Sana could advise and guide her towards the right path. She made up her mind to see her soon. She suddenly felt great comfort and relief at this idea. She fell asleep dreaming of the next day's meeting and the meaning of true repentance.

Chapter 2

Ingratitude

Waiting is often a source of annoyance. The longer the wait, the greater the feelings of hopelessness. Aminah was waiting for her friend. Huda, who had promised to visit her that day. It was nearly nine o'clock in the evening, and Huda still hadn't arrived. Aminah could not stop worrying.

She knew that something important had kept her friend at home. She tried reading a book, but couldn't concentrate. At half past nine, the telephone rang. Aminah rushed to answer it, and Huda was on the line, apologizing for not coming. She promised to come the following day. The next day, Aminah was so happy to see Huda that she hardly noticed her paleness. They sat together to talk, and Aminah noticed the lack of warmth and animation that was usually evident in Huda's voice. She was saddened by her friend's unspoken distress. Huda was not only a sister in faith for Aminah; she was also a torch that lit the darkness for her. Huda's strong belief and worthy ideals attracted the admiration of others. She was calm and wise when she advised her Muslim sisters. Hoping to discover what was wrong, Aminah asked her friend, "Now, what prevented you from showing up yesterday?" "Sometimes I am unable to keep my promises," Huda replied, sighing. "That is not unusual," Aminah told her. "Various reasons can prevent a person from carrying out his plans sometimes." Aminah saw that Huda was too upset to even speak. "Are you crying?", she asked. Tears should be shed for the sake of Allah. What is important enough to make you so upset?" Do you imagine that I would cry for any reason other than His cause? In fact, my sadness is for the sake of Allah."

Aminah tried to reassure her friend, "Then you have no reason to be upset, because you are on the right path. You should find comfort and solace in your faith. Shouldn't a Muslim feel happiness knowing that she

is hastening towards Allah with a clear conscience? Such a person hearkens to the Prophet's (pbuh&hh) words: "How I long to meet them-the true believers."

"That is exactly the source of my sorrow," Huda replied. "I am afraid that I may stop in the middle of the road and that I will fall to meet the Seal of the Prophets with an unblemished record." "Do you feel that you are performing your religious duties inadequately?", asked Aminah.

"Oh no, I always do my best. But, sometimes one is forced to... ", Huda broke off her sentence. "Forced to disobey religious' commandments?" "I would never do such a thing, even if the world pressured me to do so!", asserted Huda. "My discomfort arises from the thought that I cannot increase my Islamic activities so that I may reach a higher stage. I sometimes feel depressed when I think that I'll never reach perfection."

Aminah admonished her friend, "How can you feel depressed? Don't you know that it is unbelievers who despair of Allah's Mercy and Forgiveness?"

Huda replied, "Of course, I do not despair of Allah's Mercy, but when I encounter ingratitude or unfair treatment, I feel that it is due to my inadequateness or to a lack of faith on my part. Hence, I feel at a loss and do not know what to do. I fear that such self-doubt may endanger my spiritual strength."

"All aspects of a Muslim's life are based upon adhering to religious principles. One should recognize one's faults and weaknesses and work to correct them. Strive to increase your Islamic activities and efforts, " advised Aminah. "I have thought deeply about this matter", said Huda, "but I have come to no conclusion.

This is why I have confided in you. A Muslim is like a mirror, which can reflect a fellow believer's faults and also show how they can be corrected."

"But I haven't seen any faults in you," Aminah answered. "So I can only advise you to continue on the right path; the one which you are on now. You have the ability to plant seeds in every sort of soil. If anyone doubts or mocks your good intentions, another person will benefit from the

fruits of your knowledge. An important aspect of a believer's life is suffering which brings him or her closer to Allah. When one has a divine aim, the negative reactions of others are not of any value. For Allah, a good deed will be rewarded tenfold. Such efforts will inspire others.

Please don't allow any pessimistic thoughts to dominate your thoughts. You are young and active, so don't lay down your weapon or leave the field. Have confidence in yourself and you will surely overcome all difficulties."

"Thank you so much!" Huda exclaimed, embracing her friend." Your words have brought me tremendous relief. I feel sure now that I will continue on the correct path and that Allah will help me to do so."

Chapter 3

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.

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 that 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 I sure that they were indeed told a lie, Our help came to them and whom We pleased was delivered and Our punishment is not averted from the guilty people.?(Yousef,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 inner self and helped me to overcome the obstacles in life. Thanks are due to Him Who keeps the doors open for His worshippers.

Chapter 4

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 (pbuh&hh) 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 that 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 understand 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 that could shape my personality. The very little knowledge that I gained gave me so much pleasure and self-contentment that it gave success its real meaning. I was, thank God, happy with the little I had. It is a Divine Blessing in a believer's life.

Chapter 5

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 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 send 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 to be 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, everyone 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 that 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 farewells. 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 hard stones 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, and 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 hairstyles! 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 Sarah, 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 few 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 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-Muminoon, 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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IGNORANCE IS A CHOICE

*"Wisdom is the lost property of the Believer,
let him claim it wherever he finds it"*

Imam Ali (as)