

Bint-Al-Fluda Stories

PART FOUR



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Chapter 1

Firm Stand

As the first rays of dawn shone on the horizon, Sumayah awoke. She had spent the previous night in tears. Sumayah felt certain that the dawn had come to dispel her bitter suffering and open the door of hope, through prayer, to her; a door which would direct her towards her Creator. She hurried to get ready to pray, as if she were on her way to meet a loved one. Forgetting the suffering and pain she had experienced for many years, Sumayah merged with her prayer, giving all of her attention to Him.

Sumayah finished her prayer and thought once more about the two paths open to her—one leading to happiness in this temporary life; the other ending in spiritual happiness in eternal life. She was well-aware that true peace could only be found by remaining a faithful Muslim and adhering to Islamic principles, thus avoiding any deviation from Islam.

The first path would take her to a world of luxury filled with misleading comforts and illusionary happiness. The other road would guide her along the path of Islamic guidance. By following this path, she would taste victory and be crowned with the laurel of firm belief and determination.

Since she was a Muslim, naturally she rejected the first, misleading road. But still, Sumayah sometimes felt weak in the face of threats and temptation.

Sumayah silently beseeched God: “Oh God, You know I am an orphan who lost her parents at an early age. My only brother is studying abroad.

Europe, with its so-called civilization, has trapped him. He has forgotten me and is busy running after amusements. God, Your blessings caused my soul to be flooded with the light of Islam. My conscience is clear. You

have armed me with the weapon of strong faith, which enables me to remain steady and have a pure heart neither stained by pseudo-civilization nor attracted to the glittering results of false progress.

I am not fooled by any poisonous, imported ideologies. Oh God, help me to be content. Help me to find joy in assisting misguided Muslim girls so that I forget my own unhappiness and the painful loss of my parents.

Such happiness, the result of helping others, can compensate for my uncle's cruelty." Sumayah's troubles had begun when a stranger a young man, had become acquainted with her uncle, who was her guardian. The young man was wealthy and fascinated Sumayah's uncle with his fast cars and various properties.

This man had made life hell for Sumayah ever since he had become attracted to her and had asked her to marry him. Sumayah never let herself to be influenced by his wealth. She avoided his company because he was careless and wild. Her uncle was trying to pressure her into marrying the young man by describing how happy she would be with every imaginable earthly comfort. He built palaces for her based on his wishes and hopes.

Sumayah's uncle ignored her objections, and she was afraid that if she gave in to her uncle's demands, she would be deviated from Islam.

Would my brother take my uncle's side if he was here?' she wondered. She thought about how much she needed to see .her brother. She always remembered him in her prayers, and asked Allah to guide him.

Sumayah's uncle had locked her in her room for two days in his attempts to pressure her. As she sat in the room, she said to God, "O God I am afraid of what may happen, but I will stand firm. I shall keep on struggling until you help me by Your mercy." Her prayer put her at ease.

She reasoned that only real submission to God could cause her to feel such calmness and then she slept, exhausted from the previous sleepless night.

Suddenly her uncle's sharp voice awoke her. He was knocking loudly on

the door, saying, "Are you still asleep, you woman from the Middle Ages?" Sumayah sat up, shaking, and answered meekly, "Yes, I had been asleep."

Her uncle opened the door and tried to speak in a friendly tone, "You look happy this morning, Sumayah. I'm certain that you have returned to reality and have given up your impossible dreams."

"Uncle, I have always lived in reality."

"Yes", he replied. "The reality of ancient times. Now were living in the twentieth century, and if you give up your old ideas, I will keep the door unlocked."

Sumayah told him, "Oh uncle, I don't want you to open a door for me which leads to worldly pleasures and close the door to God's blessings and forgiveness. Please be kind enough to let me manage my own affairs."

Her uncle angrily retorted, "I won't let this opportunity pass by. I don't want you to stay hidden in your room constantly reading and writing. You have disappointed me greatly."

Sumayah answered him quietly, "I will always be as I have been and am now."

"Then you must leave my home. I won't let you trouble me." "Are you serious?" Sumayah anxiously asked. "Yes!", replied her uncle. "Either agree to marry this man or leave my house and never return. We shall see how much you will gain from your belief in Islam."

Sumayah said after a short while, "I have made up my mind."

"Then you will marry the rich man?"

"No. I will never exchange my principles for temporary gains."

Her uncle, greatly vexed, rushed to open the front door of his home.

"Then leave. You have no place here, you ungrateful girl. I regret all that I have done for you. Go to your Islam, or to your brother, who has

forgotten you. Leave quickly! I cannot stand your presence here any longer."

Sumayah had gathered her few belongings while her uncle was speaking. She only owned a gold bracelet, a Qur'an and some books. She turned to her uncle and said, "Uncle, you may regret this."

"Never. Go find your brother. There is no hope for you."

Sumayah walked out the door, saying, "I am leaving, and I am happy. God has given me strength. Farewell." She thought that her uncle would change his mind, but he continued to ridicule her until she disappeared around the corner. As she walked along, Sumayah felt lost. Where could she go now? She detested the corrupt society she lived in, and it, in turn, hated her attempts to reform it. Feelings of despair started to overwhelm her. Suddenly she heard the Qur'anic verse: Or did you think that you would enter the garden while yet... when will the help of Allah come? Now surely the help of Allah is near! (al-Baqarah, 214)

Sumayah felt as if she was being addressed. The verse renewed her hope and she felt victorious. She calmly thought about where to go. With an uplifted spirit, she recalled her friend Maryam. Maryam's brother was a friend of her brother, and she thought that he could surely help her contact her brother and ask him to return.

She walked to Maryam's house filled with hope. When she knocked on the door, Maryam opened it and welcomed her warmly. Maryam then congratulated Sumayah and said, "God knows how happy I am for you."

Surprised by her words, Sumayah asked, "What on earth are you congratulating me for?"

"Hasn't your brother written to you?" Maryam replied. "He is on his way home, and should be here today or tomorrow."

This unexpected news was too much for Sumayah and she nearly lost her balance." Are you sure he is coming?" she asked.

Maryam took her into the house, where she regained her strength. Sumayah soon began to feel nervous, however, as she imagined how her

brother might have changed and that perhaps he was just like her uncle, who had kicked her out of his home only an hour earlier. With a serious expression, she turned to Maryam and said, "How do you know this? What has caused him to return?"

Maryam understood her friend's fears and told her, "He recently wrote a letter to my brother. He said in the letter that he could no longer endure being so far away from you. He experienced western civilization and rejects its values. Here is his letter; read it!"

Sumayah was so overcome with joy that she could not read it. She knew that Allah had answered her prayers. Her religion, as she had always hoped, had strengthened her and brought back her brother to her.

She asked Maryam to read the letter for her. Maryam read, "Oh, dear friend, I have been misled for some time, thinking this loose life is the way to happiness. This western culture has caused me forget my responsibility towards myself and my sister. I confess, my friend, that I forgot myself. Now I have realized the truth. These great buildings where people drink until morning and these night-clubs which are full of indecency are all means to fool and mislead youths and will eventually endanger their future. This generation of women, who are proud of equality with men, is nothing but a mere commodity within the reach of all men for exposure and exploitation. This boredom and this running after whatever is called civilization and progress, contains hidden sufferings and great problems, which are flooding western society. As a result, I have regained my awareness. Now, I fear for my sister, who is a young girl. I fear she may suffer a similar fate and be caught up in the deviated currents in many Islamic countries under the false names of civilization and progress. I have decided to come home to be with her... We will both find true happiness in the instructions of Islam..."

Chapter 2

Determination

It was a gloomy, overcast night. The wind was blowing and it was going to storm. Khadijah and her three young children were sitting on an old worn carpet in their room. Khadijah looked out the window often, trying not to draw her children's attention. She was worried that the storm would break before her husband arrived. Finally, hearing the key turn in the lock, she quickly got up, telling her children to go welcome their father.

"Oh mother", said the youngest child, "Has he brought us food?" She gently scolded him, saying, "This is not important. Don't ask him this question." The children ran towards their father and, although she was upset, Khadijah, too, greeted him with a smile. Her husband had brought a few pieces of bread and cheese, which he handed to his wife. She soon served the simple meal on plates that had lost their colour through long use.

Khadijah spoke cheerfully while they ate and later the children slept, dreaming of sweets, toys and games. Their parents sat quietly for a while.

"So this year is about to end," Khadijah's husband, Hassan, said bitterly, "And I still haven't found a job. We have spent our savings and sold what we could of our furniture. We have nothing left with which to fight our hunger."

His wife replied, "We still have faith and determination, which are the keys to all which is good and brings happiness."

"What good thing or happiness has our faith brought us? Our children are wearing torn clothes and are hungry. It is this very faith that has made life difficult for us, and it is guidance, which has led us to poverty!"

In the past we were living in luxury... "

Khadijah interrupted her husband, asking, "What kind of luxury was it? Since when has gambling been a way of providing for one's family! Allah has said that gambling is forbidden to Muslims. How could we have been happy knowing that the food we ate and the clothes we wore would send us to the Fire in the Hereafter? Our gain caused others to go hungry and naked!

"Yes, Khadijah," Hassan said. "I know you are right. For these very reasons I gave up gambling, but it has brought us nothing. I thank you for helping me out of that bottomless pit. All praise belongs to Allah for His guidance. Still, poverty is bitter and the shamefulness of being needy is almost unbearable."

Upon hearing these words, Khadijah consoled him saying, "Oh Hassan, it is only temporary. Allah says that with every difficulty comes relief. The life of the Hereafter is the real and endless one. We still have hope. This future, everlasting life is the one we should care about and make ready with good deeds. Don't regret what has passed; instead, thank Allah for possessing the means of obtaining His forgiveness. Happiness belongs to those who are patient while facing hardships and avoid disobeying Allah."

"Oh Khadijah, I am not without hope, but I'm afraid that Satan will cause me to sin- then I will fall and lose everything."

"I still have my gold wedding ring," his wife said.

"Tomorrow I shall sell it and we will have money for a while. Almighty Allah will help us. Be confident that you will find a job, with Allah's help. Allah doesn't leave those who worship Him without hope of His compassion. You will surely see how the future will brighten for you, and how generous Allah is to those who believe."

With a sigh, her husband replied, "If you think so, I will believe you but what is the wisdom behind our hardship?"

"Oh, Hassan!" She cried. " Don't you know the Qur'anic verse: **And we will most certainly test you with what you fear, and hunger, and loss**

of property and lives. Therefore, give good news to the patient??

"But when will this hardship end?" he asked.

"As soon as we pass our test successfully," she replied. "Through patience, prayer, and avoiding sinful ways of getting money, we shall succeed."

At this point, the couple stopped talking and fell asleep, putting their trust in Allah. At dawn they awoke for their morning prayers. Afterwards, Khadijah began preparing breakfast and her husband sat down to recite some suras from the Qur'an. When the children woke up, their mother poured tea for them. One of the children asked for bread. He said, "My friend and his brothers have. eggs and butter every morning."

His mother, feeling great pain in her heart, smiled, kissed him and said, "Tomorrow, by Allah's will, you will have whatever you like."

The child innocently asked, "Why do you say: 'By Allah's will'?"

"Because," she replied, "It is Allah Who gives us everything and helps us to do our work. Without His will, we can't even breathe."

"Mother, does that mean Allah will give us eggs and bread for breakfast?"

"Yes, my son. By the will of Allah it will happen." The father listened to his wife. He was greatly surprised by her strong faith. He began to feel hopeful and confident. He started talking with his children about the days to come and how Allah would help him to find a good job. Then he would buy whatever sweets and fruits they like. Then there was a knock at the door. Wondering whom it could be at such an early hour, Hassan went to find out. When he returned, his face was shining with happiness. Upon seeing this, his wife said, "Hassan, I feel our test is over."

In a voice choking with emotion, he replied. "Yes, my dear wife, Allah, the Exalted, has ended our test. Praise to Allah, it has happened with your patience, efforts and faith. There is a hadith which says: 'A good woman is better than 1000 men' Our hardship is finished by the grace of Allah and your strong faith."

"Was it the messenger of Hajj Sahib?"

"No, it was Hajj Sahib himself. He said that he had been looking for someone to manage his business and heard about our situation and my past experience. Allah used him as the way to save us from despair and to give us hope, as Allah promised to the patient believers. Hajj Sahib said to me, 'You are now cleaner and purer than all of us. You are now as one newly born.'"

Chapter 3

Choosing a Wife

Seeing that his mother was in a good mood, Ahmad sat near her and said, 'Mother, I have an idea which should bring you much joy.' His mother answered eagerly, 'My son, all that you give me makes me happy. What is on your mind?'

'You know,' he told her, 'I have finished my studies and can afford to begin a family. I have decided to marry.'

His mother's face brightened with a smile. 'This is very good news! I have long awaited such a day,' she told him. 'How often I have wished you would marry one of your cousins. Praise be to Allah that you have made this decision before it is too late!' Ahmad exclaimed, 'Before it's too late? What do you mean?' 'Your cousin Maryam is now old enough to marry. Every day there is someone visiting her home, seeking her hand.'

Ahmad sat silently for a moment and said, 'Then why should we bother her suitors?'

'What do you mean, Ahmad?,' asked his mother, dismayed.

'My cousin Maryam is not fit for me.'

'Why not? No, my son, you're mistaken. I shall go and see about your engagement tomorrow,' his mother told him.

Ahmad frowned and said, 'No, mother. Please do not do such a thing. I will not agree to this.' 'When she becomes your fiancé, you will feel love for her. Put aside your fears. Maryam is beautiful, and she has a respectable job.'

Ahmad disagreed, "No. This matter only concerns me."

Ahmad's mother thought for a moment and said, "If you dislike Maryam, then there's my brother's daughter. She is as beautiful as Maryam, and she has inherited a large sum of money from my brother."

"Mother, please think about this matter from my point of view. I need someone to share my life, not a business partner."

His mother became angry and sharply asked, "What's wrong with my niece? Why isn't she good enough to be your wife?"

Ahmad replied, "She is not a practicing Muslim. I want a Muslim wife."

Ahmad's mother laughed sarcastically and said, "You speak as if you were an angel who could only marry another angel. Why don't you stop saying such nonsense, my son? You are an educated young man, you should give up your impossible ideals."

"I am neither an angel, nor do I seek a saint for a wife. I am a Muslim believer looking for a girl who also believes in Islam." replied Ahmad.

Ahmad's mother told him, "I don't know any girls who share your ideals."

He said, "I know someone who measures up to my expectations. "

Startled by this admission, Ahmad's mother asked, "You know someone? Who is she? Since when do you begin friendship with girls?"

Ahmad answered quickly, "I didn't mean that I know a girl personally, but I know of her." "I see," she said. "You have already chosen your wife. Who is this lucky girl?" "Mother, please be more understanding. I hope you will take my side and persuade father to agree with my choice."

This appeal to Ahmad's mother softened her, and she said, "I swear that I think only of your welfare. I'll help you. Tell me, what are this girl's qualifications?"

Ahmad told her, "Nothing matters except the religious aspect. She is Muslim, and wears complete hijab." "Oh, then she is uneducated!" "No, she has a high school education and her religious knowledge is extensive."

Then his mother asked, "What family is she from? Do I know them?"

"She is from a good family known for their piety", Ahmad told her. "Of what use is a well-known family if a girl has no Islamic morals?" He silently beseeched Allah to give him the patience to overcome his mother's resistance. "A happy marriage doesn't depend on fame or wealth. Happiness stems from spiritual nearness and mutual understanding." Then, in a different tone of voice his mother asked,

"What does her father do for a living?" "He is a grocer," Ahmad replied.

"A grocer?!", she exclaimed. "Yes. He is a grocer and a very righteous man. He is the head of a happy and virtuous family."

Ahmad's mother interrupted him, "You are the son of a wealthy man; with your college degree you wish to marry a grocer's daughter? What a shame! Yet you ask me to assist you! If I had chosen the daughter of a jeweler, how would you feel?"

His mother replied, "There is a big difference between a jeweler and a grocer."

"The only difference is with regard to the substance. The former sells rings and the latter sells sugar. Both work in order to earn money," Ahmad answered.

His mother lamented, "Imagine your father's reaction to this news! "

Ahmad said firmly, " This is my desire, either you help me or I'll do it myself."

He spoke so seriously that his mother laughed mockingly, saying, "Does the matter require a great effort? The least move you make, they will give their daughter to you gladly."

Ahmad shook his head in doubt and said, "Wait and see!"

"What an odd situation this is! Am I to present my son to a grocer's daughter? What special beauty does this girl possess to make you blind to every other consideration?"

"I have not yet seen her," Ahmad said.

"Then how do you know she's not ugly?" asked his mother.

"I know she is not. As far as good conduct is concerned, physical beauty is of little importance."

"Oh Ahmad, my amazement never ceases."

The next morning, Ahmad told his father of his intentions. His father became angry, but Ahmad remained determined to marry the woman of his choice. Finally his father agreed and Ahmad asked his mother to visit the girl's home to make the proposal and overcome any obstacles.

The following afternoon Ahmad's mother, accompanied by his oldest sister, went to the girl's house. On the way there, Ahmad's sister asked her mother what the girl's name was. Her mother replied, "I forgot to ask him! "When they knocked on the family's door, they were surprised to see a beautiful young girl open it. The girl was surprised to see the two unfamiliar women, but she showed them into the living room and went to tell her mother that they had visitors. Her mother welcomed the guests and waited for them to explain the reason for their visit. After exchanging greetings, Ahmad's mother asked who the young girl was who had opened the door. "It was my daughter, Zaynab," she replied. "Do you have any other daughter?" asked Ahmad's mother. "No, she's my only daughter", replied her mother. Ahmad's mother and sister were delighted to learn that the beautiful girl was Zaynab. Just then, Zaynab entered with coffee for their visitors. She sat next to Ahmad's sister and they soon found much to discuss. Then she collected the empty coffee cups and left the room.

Ahmad's mother began, "We have come with a blessed aim. We would be happy to have your daughter Zaynab as a wife for my son." She praised her son for his intelligence, his good looks and his wealth, but

she neglected to mention his firm Islamic beliefs, which was very important to Zaynab's mother. Therefore, Ahmad's mother was stunned when Zaynab's mother shook her head slowly and said, "I'm very sorry. It is difficult for me to agree to this proposal; in fact, it's impossible." With much surprise, Ahmad's mother asked, "What is impossible?"

"My daughter is still young. I'm sure your son can find a girl who suits him." Ahmad's mother protested, "But Zaynab suits him well! Would you be kind enough to justify your refusal?"

"I only have one daughter, and I should be sure of her future married life."

"But Ahmad is well-off financially," said his mother. "He is an engineer!"

Zaynab's mother replied, "Zaynab would not marry someone because he is wealthy or has a college degree."

Ahmad's mother was at a loss for words. "Then what will ensure your daughter's happiness and consent?"

"When a mother looks for a wife for her son, she should mention her son's conduct." said the mother of Zaynab. "My daughter is a committed Muslim. She wants a Muslim husband, and remember, my daughter wears hijab, and your son may want a wife, who dresses like his mother and sister."

Ahmad's mother laughed with relief and told her, "You're correct. I haven't mentioned his conduct. I thought that other aspects of his character were of more importance. My son is a faithful Muslim. He is, in fact, looking for a wife who observes hijab. Be sure that my appearance (un-Islamic clothing) is not to Ahmad's taste."

Zaynab's mother also smiled and said, "You should have told me earlier! Please give us your address so we can visit you and learn more about your son."

"We hope you can come early next week," said Ahmad's mother.

Ahmad was waiting anxiously for his mother's return. As soon as she

and her daughter returned home he asked, "Well, mother? How was your visit?"

"It was very strange," she replied.

"What was strange?", he asked. "Has anything bad happened?"

"Oh no, Ahmad. But I never expected such a thing," she answered. "Then they have refused?" Ahmad's father said, "How could a grocer's daughter refuse a wealthy young man?"

Ahmad's mother turned to her husband and said, " They did, in fact, refuse... "

"What! they refused?" asked the father. "I spoke about Ahmad's good qualities, but I didn't mention his Islamic morals. My appearance also caused her to decline my proposal because her daughter is a very faithful Muslim. When I realized their objections, I told them that you are a true Muslim as well. I have come to respect them very much. They don't care about status or wealth."

"Have you seen the girl?", asked Ahmad's father.

"Yes, she is lovely and polite. Ahmad is a lucky man to have made such a choice."

The following week, Zaynab's family paid a visit to Ahmad's home and plans were made for the upcoming wedding. They were soon married and there was much rejoicing.

Chapter 4

A Visit to a Bride

After finishing her morning prayer, Fatima usually sat down to recite a chapter from the Holy Qur'an. She always found great pleasure in reading each verse as she thought about the sublime meaning of the Divine words. At such times, she felt as if she was existing on a higher plane, a spiritual world with a sacred atmosphere. The words taught her lessons and flooded her life with new light when she read the Qur'anic verses:

?And one of His signs is that He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find rest in them, and He put between you love and compassion. Most surely, there, are signs in this for people who reflect.? (Al-Rum: 21)

?And, And they who say: Oh our Lord! Grant us in our wives and our offspring the joy of our eyes and make us guides to those who guard (against evil).? (Al-Furqan: 74)

The words reminded her of famous Muslim believers. She gave a deep sigh. She really felt quite sad when she saw some Muslims failing to continue striving towards perfection. However, there were still promising examples. She thought about her friend, Khadija, who had just begun her married life and was visiting some holy shrines during her honeymoon. Khadija was a good Muslim sister who chose her partner carefully and according to religious measures. She rejected all anti-Islamic traditions that distorted the meaning and essence of marriage. She always said that, according to Islam, marriage is the first brick of a foundation in raising a generation of good believers. Fatima beseeched Allah to guide her dear friend along the right path in her new life. She had barely finished her prayer when one of her Muslim friends rang the doorbell. She had come to tell Fatima that Khadija had returned from her honeymoon and that she had settled in her new home. Fatima rushed to put on her hijab to go

and visit her, but the sister told Fatima it was too early to go that day, and that Khadija was not quite ready to receive visitors. Fatima was surprised. How could Khadija refuse a Muslim sister's visit? She felt sad and said, "I can hardly believe this. Why don't we go and clear up the matter?"

The sister replied, "Oh, perhaps Khadija will be annoyed for some particular reason."

Fatima said, "Yes, it may be so. Otherwise, she would not refuse her sister's visit simply because she lacked furniture or some similar reason. She has never been concerned about materialistic things."

Fatima spent that day depressed. She feared Khadija might yield to the false values of society, yet she knew that her friend was a good believer and would not change easily.

At nine o'clock that evening, the doorbell rang and Fatima went to open it. She was so pleased to see Khadija standing there that she could hardly believe her eyes. They exchanged kisses and words of welcome and Fatima congratulated Khadija, and told her of her desire to visit her. Khadija expressed surprise at the delay in visiting her, but Fatima said, "Have you not announced that you are not ready to receive friends?"

Khadija replied, "Why should I? I have missed you all so much and have been waiting for your visit since my arrival."

Fatima said, "Well someone said that your house was not fit yet for visitors."

Khadija was surprised and said, "Oh, dear! Since when have I cared for such trifles? How can you believe it?" Fatima was pleased to hear this. She said, "Praise be to Allah! How happy I am to hear you say this! But such un-Islamic rumors should be stopped. We are quite happy that you have begun your married life in harmony with your religious beliefs. We shall soon visit you, God willing."

Khadija warmly replied, "You are all welcome any time. The sooner, the better."

The next morning Fatima phoned the other sisters and told them of her proposed visit to Khadija on that day. While she was thinking about telling her cousin, she heard her talking to her mother. Fatima went to her and asked her to join them, but her cousin said, "Oh, thank you, but... "

Fatima was surprised at her cousin's answer, and asked, "What is the matter with you? Didn't you say that you wanted to go with us?"

Her cousin replied, "Yes, but it is clear that you do not want me to accompany you."

Fatima was amazed. "What makes you think so?" she asked.

Her cousin answered, " How can you inform me of the visit on the same day? How am I to get ready when I need at least two days to get anew dress and buy a nice present? Do you think I can go without a gift?"

Fatima said, "Not necessarily. A present can enhance friendship and is recommended in our religion. But buying a present should not cause financial strain. A present can be something simple and still special. Our Prophet (SAWS) used to accept even a cup of milk as a present."

Fatima's cousin retorted, "Don't you think it would be shameful to give her a cheap present?"

Fatima said firmly, "A gift is not valuable because of its price, but by its being given. A useful book, for instance, is a good gift. As for anew dress, I suggest you visit Khadija in your old dress and you can buy a new one another time."

The cousin thought for a while, than agreed to go. On that day, the new bride Khadija was busy with her daily work. She baked a cake for her expected visitors.

She was active and at ease. Thinking of the upcoming visit, she recalled pleasant memories of the past. The doorbell rang and one of her relatives, who also happened to be her neighbor, was at the door. Khadija welcomed her and invited her in. They sat down and chatted a while.

Her relative told Khadija about their district, most of the inhabitants of which were wealthy. Khadija said, "I do not care much for this aristocratic district. A true Muslim does not change his or herself to fit in with any particular class of people."

The relative answered, "Well, I just wanted to tell you about some matters concerning the district where you have settled."

"Does it really matter?" asked Khadija.

"The style of your hijab is not accepted here. You look peculiar."

Khadija proudly replied, "I am happy to look different in my decent Islamic dress."

Bewildered, her relative asked, "Why should you be happy to be so different from the rest?"

Khadija said, "First of all, my aim is to obey my Creator and gain His pleasure. Also, when I wear my hijab, I surely remind others of Allah and their obligation to worship Him

"My duty is to enjoin the good and forbid evil. Through my appearance I call people to Allah's religion. "

Khadija's relative could not believe her ears. She changed the subject, saying, "You are expecting some guests, aren't you? I smell fresh cake." Khadija smiled and said, "Yes, I expect some of my sisters in faith."

"It is pity you have not furnished your home yet,"

Khadija's relative remarked, looking around the living room. "Since you have no chairs, I can lend you some, and any other things you might need."

"Thank you very much, but I do not need to borrow any chairs. I can manage without them. I consider such things to be of little value. I believe in the Qur'anic verse:

?... And the embellishment of gold, and all of this is naught but

provision of this world's life; and the hereafter is with your Lord; only for those who guard (against evil).? (Al-Zukhruf: 35)

That evening, Khadija entertained her friends, who enjoyed the visit and were warmly welcomed by the bride.

Chapter 5

A Muslim Student's Diary

I was feeling depressed yesterday because of Layla's words. She tried to prejudice the class against me, saying that my Islamic dress was nothing but immature behavior designed to attract attention. Her words were cutting and left me spiritually hurt. How difficult it is when a woman doubts her purpose in life! She often acts harshly towards Muslim women. I was shocked, dismayed and hurt by her words.

I thought about the matter at home and sought guidance from Allah. I realized that I was not immature, as Layla had claimed. In fact, being an adolescent is but a stage of an individual's physical and mental growth. At this stage, knowledge flourishes and rids itself of childhood confusion. One becomes used to life's contradictions.

Hence, my attitude towards hijab is not abnormal. I rationalized that attracting attention is not accomplished by wearing long garments, but through dressing without hijab. I used to go out in public without Islamic dress before Allah guided me to the right path. I could actually feel the sharp looks of men wherever I went. I always noticed and was embarrassed by their looks and their obvious pleasure at seeing an unlimited exposure of beauty. Now that I have my hijab on, what can they be attracted to? If they look, they see nothing to excite them. This hijab reminds them that a Sacred Law protects the blessed creatures of the Creator.

I have come to a conclusion: Layla does not understand her words and I only feel sorry for her. Her beauty may become spoiled by this corrupted society. I pray to Allah to help me guide her in understanding Islam.

Feb. 7th, 19...

Yesterday I was. waiting for my friend, Wala, to come over so we could study for exams together. She did not 15 show up, and I became worried. I waited for her to phone me but she didn't. She has just now phoned to apologize and to tell me that she isn't feeling well. I wished her a speedy recovery.

I like Wala very much because she is a good Muslim. Our beliefs, dreams and hopes are the same. We became friends at the beginning of the school years. Harmony in beliefs and ideals brings strangers together, while disputes always leave close friends apart.

Today we are going to have our weekly Islamic meeting. We shall recite some Qur'anic verses and try to understand their meaning, than we will discuss religious subjects. I wonder if Wala is coming.

Feb.12th,19...

Our meeting last week was a real success. Despite her illness, Wala attended and gave an interesting lecture about religion's sublime aim. I, in turn, spoke about the issue of obedience and disobedience in regard to Islamic instructions. One of the sisters complained of her mother's insistence that she not wear hijab. This Muslim girl wondered if she had to obey her mother's orders, since obeying parents is a religious duty. I explained to her that she should obey her parents orders as long as their rules did not violate religious instructions. She can disobey her mother and keep her hijab to please her Creator.

March 2nd, 19...

I have really tried hard to make Layla listen to me. She has often been unyielding; however, I won't give up. I feel she has changed a bit. I gave her some Islamic books about why women should dress modestly. She accepted the books and promised to read them and discuss them with me.

When I visited Layla's home yesterday, she gave me a warm welcome. I shall never regret this visit. We discussed the Islamic books and she asked whether she could continue her high school studies with hijab. I assured her that Islam has ordered both men and women to seek religious knowledge. The Prophet's hadith relates: **"It is an Islamic duty for**

men and women to learn."

March 11th,19...

How happy I am! I have seen Layla wearing her Islamic dress in school. She has become a good Muslim girl. In our history lesson today, the teacher claimed that if the Holy Qur'an were revealed today, it would not order woman to wear hijab, since woman today plays a significant role in society. She cannot be isolated within the house. I asked the teacher to allow me to answer her point of view. I told the class that: "Throughout history woman has been involved in society. In fact, she played a significant role in ancient civilizations. Women were queens and empresses. In the Holy Qur'an, for instance, the Queen of Saba is mentioned: **?Surely I found a woman ruling over them and she has been given abundance and she has a mighty throne.?** (Al-Naml: 23)

"History also tells us of Cleopatra, who ruled Egypt and resorted to suicide when she was defeated by the Roman invaders. However, past civilizations generally considered women to be inferior to men. Some religions considered woman to be unclean.

I continued, "Islam neither isolated woman nor belittled her contributions to society. On the contrary, Islam has given a woman equal rights, as is clearly stated in the Qur'anic verse: **?I will not waste the work of any worker among you whether male or a female; the one of you being from the other... I will most certainly make them enter gardens beneath which rivers flow; a reward from Allah, and with Allah is yet better reward.?** (Aale-Imran: 194)

"In another Qur'anic verse concerning hijab, Islam does not address women only; men, as well, are ordered to cast down their eyes. Had Islam aimed at isolating woman, there would not have been the necessity for such an order: **?Say to the believing men to cast down their looks and guard their private parts... and say to the believing women to cast down their looks and guard their private parts and not to display their ornaments except what appears thereof; and let them wear their head covering over their bosoms and not display their ornaments except to their husbands or their fathers or their sons... and turn to Allah all of you, oh, believers, so that you may be successful.?** (Al-Nur: 37)

"Islamic history illustrates the role of women in the Muslim community. Women were present at the Prophet's battles. They nursed the wounded and supplied water and food to the believers. Some even carried a sword and defended Islam. The Prophet (SAWS) appreciated their role and gave them their share of the spoils. We also read in Islamic history that Muslim women held meetings to recite and interpret the Qur'an. Such evidence indicates that Islam never isolated women or negated their role in the community... Further more, hijab is necessary for woman and is in harmony with her nature and man's nature too. Men are inclined naturally towards women and women are inclined to draw men towards them. Hence the exposure of woman without hijab in society can arouse the inner instincts that lead to sexual relations that affect not only individuals, but the family and the community as well. One illustration of this is in the Western so-called civilized societies where corruption and immorality are increasing and more and more homes are being broken."

March 26th, 19...

I have noticed recently that my dear friend Saffia does not look well. Though she has not missed our meetings, I feel something is wrong with her. I wish I could help her. I know nothing about her family. May be she needs money and does not want others to know about her hardship. She is quite wrong. Muslim believers do not care for an easy life, and they are kind to each other. What counts are good, righteous deeds as mentioned in the Qur'an: **?As for the scum, it vanishes as jetsam, what profits men, abides in the earth.?** (Al-Ra'ad:17)

April 20th, 19...

At last I have discovered the reason for Saffia's uneasiness. She lives in a humble house and thinks this may cause her to be ashamed among her friends. I managed to make her change her opinion. I told her our great Prophet (SAWS), the greatest man in history who achieved the most sacred mission, was a poor man. He could have lived as a king or an emperor, but he did not. Fatimah (AS), his daughter, lived in a humble house with a minimum of furniture. The Prophet's companions lived the same sort of humble life. History relates that a great fire broke out in Al-Madyin (in Iraq) when the companion, Salman al-Farsi, was the ruler. People rushed to save their valuable possessions, but Salman carried nothing but a small bundle of clothes, a Qur'an, a prayer rug and a water pot. He

was heard to have said, "In this way, light travelers are saved."

May 2nd, 19...

I came across an old friend of mine the other day. She used to be a very optimistic and active girl with tremendous belief in Islam. She trusted all her friends and was ready to help them in order to please Almighty Allah. Anyway, it had been a long time since I last saw her. I was so happy to meet her again, but I was shocked to see that she had changed into a different person with a pessimistic view towards life. She was sad to see that those around her never differentiated between good and bad deeds. She had nearly lost confidence in everything and had resorted to living a solitary life, avoiding both friends and relatives. She was spiritually depressed. When I saw her in such a state, I realized she had been a victim of our deviated society. I told my friend, "Do you really regret your good deeds?" I felt the question put her at a loss. I hoped she would say "No", but she remained silent. I said to her gently, "Say, no, please. Doing good is something wonderful and gives spiritual satisfaction. Never regret good actions. It is enough that you can examine your deeds and find that nothing shameful stains your record. Allah will surely reward you. Don't regret anything and don't be hopeless. Life is filled with promise and there are those who appreciate good deeds. Please don't let disappointment with society cause you to hate it. If you fall, try again and remove this cloud of doubt in order to see more clearly. Keep on being a good righteous believer, think of Allah's reward and you will feel much better: she listened to me attentively and I hope my words will be of some help.

May 22nd, 19...

Today a Muslim sister has asked me to explain a phrase in Du'a Kuma'il: "... **Oh, Allah! I appeal to you by your Holy Names to make me pray to you day and night...**

The sister asked, "How could one pray continuously day and night? We live in an age that requires cooperation with others in order for us to carry out our various jobs and daily work. How can we put aside our duties and resort to du'a all the time?" I said to her, "Be at ease, sister. We are not supposed to pray day and night. Though it is a good habit that gains reward, this is not everything. Many people glorify and praise Allah with their tongues but forget Him in their deeds. We can enrich our

lives with prayer easily and without neglecting our duties. "Religious rituals, such as daily prayers, can be reflected in our actions. If you are a good housewife, then you are a righteous individual glorifying II day and night. One of the Prophet's traditions relates that a woman came to him and asked "what women could do in that way of jihad." The Prophet (SAWS) said, " Righteousness and good house management are features of good Muslim woman and are well-rewarded by Allah. A woman, whether a housewife or a young girl, can be in the service of Allah All the time, if she gives a helping hand to the needy for the pleasure of Allah. Any help to others for the sake of heavenly reward is a du'a and a prayer to Allah the Exalted. Any hardship endured for the sake of elevating the Word of Allah is a prayer. Any good idea on behalf of the community's welfare is an act of worship."

Reference to Allah's bounties without the notion of kibr (self-pride), can be a prayer. A smile without the intention of flattery or pretension can be a prayer to Allah.

"Our final exams draw near and we should schedule our time wisely in order to pass them successfully and prove that Islamic activity can not hinder study or prevent reading. In fact, it can widen the scope of the brain and deepen thinking.

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

Imam Ali (as)