

Bint-Al-Huda Stories

PART ONE



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Chapter 1

The Red Alert

When Ahmad returned home, his wife Maryam was still out. He sat down next to his children and joined them in their game. Afterwards, he picked up a book and passed the time reading. Finally at 10 o'clock that evening his wife returned home. She did not even allow Ahmad to greet her, but quickly rushed passed him to her room and took off the mask that transfigured her natural form. She looked less beautiful but more gentle. From her behavior, Ahmad knew that she had something to tell him.

As soon as the children went to bed, she said to her husband, "Oh, Ahmad, you have not asked me about my visiting today."

Ahmad smiled and said, "I hope you have enjoyed yourself." Maryam said, "...I had a wonderful time! The house and the garden were magnificent, and their table was rich with delicious foods. My friend, Hana, had the most beautiful wig. Dr. Iram's wife wore an expensive suit. It was quite beautiful."

Her husband smiled ironically and asked, "The suit or the Dr.'s wife?"

"Oh, the suit was wonderful! But I was too embarrassed to enjoy the visit," she added. Ahmad silently beseeched Allah to give him patience and said to himself, "This is just the beginning; Allah will help me in the end." He did not answer his wife's remarks. She continued, "It seems as if you do not care for me. Am I nothing to you? You do not ask the reason for my uneasiness. You regard me as if I were a stranger."

Maryam seemed truly upset, so her husband said to himself, "I place my affairs before Allah. If I do not ask her the reason, she will cry."

He gently asked her, "Why do you think such a thing? You are my dear wife and the mother of my children. Why are you upset? Were you embarrassed by your clothing?"

"Oh no, although it was not as beautiful as the Dr.'s wife's suit. I can buy a better one in the future. The source of my uneasiness has been in my failing to ask my friends to visit me. It has been a long time since I last invited them to my home. How would they account for such delay? Surely they will think it is due to some financial hardship, or that you are a miser or ignorant of social formalities. Such ideas hurt me, since I know you are an excellent husband and a good father."

"Thank you for the compliment. Now what exactly do you want?"

Maryam replied, "Today is the fifth of the month. I can fix a day for their visit as long as we can afford to spend some money."

"You talk as if the event is a victorious battle in need of great preparation," Ahmad said. His wife laughed, "No. it is not like that, but it does cost... ."

Ahmad said, "But how can we manage until the end of the month if your party will be expensive? We are already in debt. Now you want to make matters worse." "You can borrow some money from your friends," his wife suggested. "You know I have borrowed from many of them."

How can I ask for more?" "Oh, how miserable I am! I was brought up in a rich family and lived a luxurious life. Now I cannot even afford to invite my friends over for an afternoon. Oh, what a shame! How am I to face them? Can I show myself in society? This means I must isolate myself and give up all of my friends." Maryam started crying, while her husband tried to convince her of his viewpoint. She never listened to him, but said, "Oh, surely I shall suffer from sickness. If I stay two days at home, I shall suffer a nervous breakdown and lose my appetite."

Finally, Ahmad gave in and agreed to his wife's demand. His wife arranged everything for the special day. She asked her sisters to help her arrange the rooms for the occasion. She would have never imagined that the outcome of her party could be the destruction of her family life. On the day of the party, Maryam asked her husband to stay out until a late

hour and she sent her children to her mother's house. She got herself ready for her guests, who arrived shortly before sunset. They were all dressed in the latest fashion and with full makeup. The home was soon filled, and gossip and idle speculation dominated the conversation. Each was criticized by the other. One's dress was not to the taste of the other; and this hairdo was not nice as another's. Silly talk and jokes filled the air.

At 8 o'clock, Maryam called her guests to dinner. Suddenly the phone rang and one of the guests was called. As soon as this lady put down the phone, she came to Maryam and apologized for having to leave at once.

Her husband had warned of a red alert and she had to reach home before the lights went out. Upon hearing this news, the other guests rushed towards the door. They left without even a good-bye. Maryam emerged from the kitchen to see that her guests had all disappeared. She was shocked and dismayed to see her party come to such an end, especially when she thought about all the trouble she had gone to and the dispute with her husband about the matter. She had hoped to make a good impression on her friends. She sat down and wept bitterly. She wished her husband would come home early, before the red alert sounded. She waited to hear its wailing but there was none.

At 10 o'clock Ahmad came and was surprised to see the house empty. His wife told him the whole story. She feared that he would be angry, but he was quite at ease. He said, "It may be a lie. There is no need for an alert since there are no impending raids. Anyway, I hope you have learned a lesson."

The wife said, "Indeed, I have. I won't undergo such an experience again."

The next day, Maryam's friend phoned and apologized for the previous evening. Her husband had lied to her in order to get her home early since her child had been crying for his mother.

Maryam told her friend that it had been a silly joke, but a good lesson too.

Chapter 2

The Lost Diary

It was by chance that Tuqa found a small diary lying on the ground outside the public library. When she picked it up and opened it to the first page, she read the following lines:

4.8.87

"Am I strong enough to hold onto these tiny threads of hope? Can I continue in spite of these difficulties and reach the source of light behind these clouds? Who can give me a helping hand so that I can endure this cruel life? Oh God, what darkness surrounds me!" Tuqa read another page:

26.8.87

"Again I resort to my diary to complain about my suffering. I feel as if my nerves are about to shatter... I have no one to talk to; no one at all. Oh, why can't I sleep? The moon and the stars gaze upon me as if mocking my dreams." Tuqa looked for an address in the diary but she could only find a name-Huda Najafi. She went into the library and asked to see the list of book borrowers of the past week. Finally, she found the name she was looking for. Huda's address was written next to her name, so Tuqa decided to pay her a visit to return the diary and see if she could help this troubled sister.

The next day, Tuqa went to Huda's house. As she rang the bell, she wondered if she was doing the right thing. But since she knew that her intention was pure, she was at ease. A young girl opened the door, and Tuqa asked to see Huda. The girl asked her to enter and showed her to Huda's room. Huda was surprised to see an unknown visitor, but she welcomed Tuqa with a warm smile. They shook hands and sat down. Tuqa took the diary out of her purse and gave it to Huda, who was very

29 happy to see it. She held it close and said, "Thanks God I have it -at last! Thank you for bringing it to me!"

Tuqa introduced herself and said, "Please excuse me for reading a few pages of your diary. I found it yesterday on the ground, near the library." "There is nothing to apologize for! I have suffered greatly since I lost it. I was nearly heart-broken when I realized that my diary was missing." "Why should you be so upset at the loss of a few pages?" asked Tuqa.

"These words reflect my innermost feelings; they are like a part of my soul," replied Huda.

"But such reflections are but a small part of a person's thoughts, since life is an enormous theatre comprised of countless images. Life is like a wild garden wherein various kinds of flowers fill the air with their fresh scent. Yet there are also trees and thorny weeds in the garden, which may hurt a person. The earth from which flowers emerge nourishes weeds as well."

Huda listened attentively, and then said, "Thorns cause one to bleed, and weeds hinder the growth of blossoms." "It isn't always so," replied Tuqa. "Hopes and disappointments follow each other in turn. This is a natural law of life. However, great one's sufferings are, one still hopes for the dawn which follows even the darkest night." In a weary voice, Huda said, "But this dark night may be so long that it causes one to lose hope." "You can counter feelings of hopelessness by having true faith in Allah's help and guidance. A life of hardship is of no value if one forgets about Allah and His Compassion. Master yourself, and you can direct your thoughts and actions towards the right path."

"But some things are beyond a person's control and cause pain and disappointment," Huda persisted.

"Still", said Tuqa, "Disappointment is not in itself evil. If a believer has strong faith, a new door opens when another is closed. Never give up hope."

Tears formed in Huda's eyes and she said, "I don't know. Perhaps Allah has sent you to save me from my despair."

Tuqa recited a verse from the Holy Qur'an:

?... and despair not of Allah's Mercy; surely none despairs of Allah's Mercy except the unbelievers? (Yusuf, 87)

Then Tuqa stood up, saying it was time for her to leave in order to reach home and perform the evening prayer. Huda begged her to stay a little longer and suggested that they pray together. After praying, they resumed their discussion and Tuqa reminded Huda of the Qur'anic verse:

?Do people think they will be left alone saying: We believe, and not be tried? And certainly we tried those before them so Allah will certainly know who are true and He will certainly know the liars.? (al-Ankabut, 2 & 3)

Tuqa added, "I all that we experience during our brief lifetimes prepares our soul to control itself through using good will. Some losses are considered to be disasters while, in fact, they are disguised blessings. A calamity which disrupts a happy life may be a means to crystallize thoughts and can direct a person towards faith in Allah and obedience to His orders."

"My dear friend Tuqa, I thought that I was a good believer in Almighty Allah, but I was about to fall apart."

Tuqa firmly stated, "Faith will defeat earthly concerns through submission to Allah and acceptance of His Will. Failures can teach us many useful lessons. Hardships can make a person wise if they stand firm."

Thinking that she had given enough advice for one afternoon, Tuqa tried to change the subject, "Aren't you going to ask me how I found your home?" Huda replied, "I believe Allah sent you to me, no matter how you found you way."

It was time for Tuqa to leave, and Huda made her promise to visit again soon. The next meeting between Tuqa and Huda took place a few days later. This time, Tuqa decided it was better to let Huda do most of the talking. Huda talked about her younger sister, whom she said had a great desire for learning. Huda said, "She studies continuously, but I fear that she may one day give up her studies."

Tuqa asked, "What makes you think so? I think that she may become even more interested in acquiring knowledge as she gets older." "But life is not generous enough to help one achieve one's dreams and wishes," Huda replied. "Pessimism should not dominate anyone's thoughts. If evil has an effect on a person's life, goodness is still more effective. Rays of sunlight can penetrate the thickest clouds," Tuqa said. She felt that her friend still needed encouragement, so she added, "Muslims know the origin of life, the story of creation. Almighty Allah gave all human beings the opportunity to perform good deeds in this life and has given them the chance to worship Him. This worshipping of Allah gives us the opportunity to evolve into more, which will benefit us in the next life, the Hereafter. Therefore, if one comprehends the aim behind this worldly life, the death of a dear one can be tolerated.

"As for suffering due to material poverty, a wise person should know that true poverty is embodied in spiritual shortcomings, which can bring about various illnesses," Tuqa concluded." Nevertheless, poverty can cause one to be ashamed,"

Huda said, "There is nothing shameful about poverty," Tuqa told her. "One should be ashamed to be rich and dishonest. A poor man who remains virtuous and rejects dishonest means of living enjoys self-respect. Poverty not only is not a source of shame, it is an aspect of the lives of righteous believers. As Allah states:

?And We will most certainly try you with something of fear and hunger and loss of property and lives and fruits,' and give good news to the patient.? (al-Baqarah, 155)

Tuqa continued, "A Muslim is not envious of another's good fortune. He feels optimistic that he will have his turn one day. A wise believer has a strong will, and if he is betrayed by a friend he will not regret the loss of such a person. Perhaps such an experience will cause him to choose his friends more carefully."

"But one can be hurt by ingratitude or even aggression when one tries to help another."

Tuqa answered, "This is not the case with a true Muslim who does not trade his good deeds. He is ready to help purely based on his good faith

and expects nothing from anyone but Allah. It's better that good deeds be rewarded in the Hereafter."

"What you're saying is true. You have been so kind and helpful to me that I can hardly find a way to express my gratitude", Huda said.

Tuqa told her, "There is a narration from our Prophet (pbuh&hh) 'If one cares for a fellow believer, one should manifest one's concern.' The best thing you can do is to respond to Islamic ideals and think over my words. As material concerns bring about unhappiness, so do spiritual values lead to happiness. Imam Ali (a) says: 'If a man behaves properly in matters concerning himself and Allah, Allah keeps proper the matters between him and other people; and if a man keeps proper his affairs for the next life, than Allah keeps proper for him his affairs of this world... ' " (Nahjul Balagha)

Feeling much better, Huda said, "Due to your helpful words, I feel optimistic about the future. I shall never feel hopeless again. I will use my faith like a weapon to confront hopelessness and to strengthen my will."

Tuqa happily replied, "Faith produces security and calmness. Faith itself is obedience to Allah's commandments. Through faith, earthly concerns are shaped and invested with various meanings. Hence, sickness can alleviate sins and disappointment can lead to victory. The Qur'an says:

?Surely We have made whatever is on earth an embellishment for it, so that we may try them (as to) which of them is best in work.? (al- Kahaf, 7)

"We are tested by Allah throughout our lives. Now that you have helped me out of my difficulties, will you remain my friend?"

Huda asked. "Of course! Our common faith has sealed our friendship. The best sort of friendship is based on spiritual harmony and righteous ideals. Such a foundation is unshakeable. The faith that floods a believer's heart is enough to flood the entire universe with mercy and compassion."

"Have you noticed how few establish relations based on faith and common ideals?" asked Huda.

"Yes that is precisely why the majority fail and friendship so often turns into enmity. But since we are inspired by faith and we have good intentions to reform society, Allah will surely help us."

Chapter 3

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... Its changes are fearful, its promises are false and its hopes are worn out. 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.**? (Yousef, 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...

Chapter 4

The Last Days

In despair Sarah 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 Sara. 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?"

Sarah said, "I would have learnt much from her, I would have learned 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."

Sarah 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 handbag and got out the diary. Sarah took it and noticed on the cover the Holy Qur'anic verse: **?We are Allah's and to Him we shall return.?** (al-Baqarah, 156)

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 that 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... ' 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) 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.

Chapter 5

The Homeless Aunt

Khadijah listened as her aunt tearfully complained to them about her miserable situation. She was saying, "So you see, I have received nothing for my trouble. Both of my children disregard all that I have suffered for their sake. I sold my last gold ornament to send my daughter abroad. I have mortgaged my house twice to enable my son to become a doctor. I sold a valuable carpet so that I could buy a colour T.V. to please my daughter. Do they appreciate or even remember such sacrifices? No. My son wants me to stay away from his home since his wife can't tolerate my presence in the company of her aristocratic visitors. She says she wants to be free in my son's house, as if I deprived her of her freedom."

"I thought that my daughter would be happy to have me live in her house. She is my only daughter. You remember how I helped her to live a life free from worry. Do you know how she treated me in return? Like a maid in her service who should clean her house for her and look after her child while she and her husband spent their time at theaters and clubs. Yesterday, she was out until one in the morning. Her child cried and cried and I couldn't calm him. When she finally came home, I was tired and complained about her behavior. I wanted her to treat me like her mother, not like a servant or a baby sitter...."

"Can you guess what she said to me? Without any shame, she told me that since she gave me shelter and food, I had no cause to complain. She also told me that she valued her freedom and was not ready change for the sake of either her child or her mother."

She wept bitterly, unable to continue. Khadijah gave her something to drink and Khadijah's mother tried to comfort her sister. Khadijah told her aunt gently, "...It is a pity that you have taken so much trouble to raise your children. You have brought them up in such away that you

yourself produced the present state of affairs. Your daughter did not learn what her responsibilities were towards you. You helped her neglect her religious duties. Your methods have backfired. She enjoyed life to the utmost without the least concern for Allah, and she forgot the high position Allah the almighty has assigned to a mother. She forgot the Qur'anic verse: **?And your Lord has commanded that you shall not serve but Him, and goodness to your parents. If either or both of them reach old age with you, reprimand them not, nor chide them, and speak to them a generous word. And make yourself submissively gentle to them with compassion and say: Oh, my Lord! Have compassion on them as they brought me up.?** (Al Isra verses 23,24)

And the Qur'anic verse: **?... and keep up prayer, surely prayer is timed ordinance for the believers?** (Al-Nisa verse 103)

"You should have taught her the verse in the Holy Qur'an concerning hijab," continued Khadijah, **?... and let them (women) wear their covering over their bosoms and not display of their ornaments... ?** (Al-Nisa verse 31)

"You have sold your gold ornament," she continued, "and sent your daughter abroad, but you have forgotten that such travel can uproot all good instincts still buried within her conscience. She has returned to you a figure empty of compassion."

Her aunt sighed deeply and said, "You are quite right, Khadijah. It is my own fault, but I have realized this too late. I followed my husband's advice, which was to raise my children free of all complexes, and to allow them to have whatever they desired. Now, I see how mistaken I have been. Your parents, who brought you up with much attention to religious instructions, are quite happy with you." Khadijah replied, "They are happy as well with my husband and with my brother's wife. My husband encourages me to fulfill my duty towards my parents in order to please Almighty Allah."

Her aunt then said, "I wish I had chosen a righteous husband for my daughter to help her rid herself of all deviation. She should not have married a man who gambles and drinks."

Khadijah then asked, "Why did you agree to such a marriage?"

"It was his expensive car that attracted my daughter, and the high dowry impressed me and prompted me to accept him as a son-in-law," replied her aunt. Sorrowfully, Khadijah said, "Oh, how frank you are, dear aunt! It is a pity that you have realized the truth too late. May Allah save you from this loss, since you admit your fault."

The aunt spent a week in her sister's house, and during that time neither her daughter nor her son showed any concern for her well-being. Khadijah's mother wanted her sister to live with them, but their house was small. The aunt was seriously pressed for a place to live. One morning, Khadijah and her husband said to her, "Please come and stay with us. We really would like to have you. Don't disappoint us."

"Oh, I am a broken-hearted woman. What can I do for you?" her aunt replied. Then she accepted their kind offer gratefully. Khadijah mentioned a narration of the Prophet of Islam (SAWS) in this regard, which states: A Muslim believer came to the Prophet (SAWS) and asked what he could do to please Allah. The Prophet (SAWS) asked him if he had a mother, and the man said: "No". Then the Prophet (SAWS) asked if he had an aunt, and he answered: "Yes". The Prophet (SAWS) recommended that he should look after her and love her because she had the same position as mother. The aunt feared that she would be a burden to them.

But Khadijah's husband said, "Please do not say such a thing. I lost my mother too early in life to enjoy her love and care. Perhaps Allah has sent you to make up for that loss. You can live with us and you can receive your son and daughter here whenever you like."

Khadijah's mother, who was seated nearby, said, "They are quite serious about wanting you to live with them. I would be very happy to know that you are near my daughter."

The aunt moved to her new home and was comfortable and at ease for the first time in her life. She never felt like an intruder, and Khadijah accompanied her when she attended religious meetings. The aunt benefited very much from these meetings and enhanced her religious knowledge. She compared Khadijah's happy marriage to her daughter's. She could feel the harmony and spiritual understanding between Khadijah and her husband, and recalled her daughter's life, which was full of

quarrels resulting from jealousy, selfishness and indifference. She could easily differentiate between the normal, healthy life of her niece and the disturbed, unnatural one of her daughter. She could do nothing but pray to Allah to guide her daughter and son to the right path.

Early one morning a few months later, the doorbell rang continuously, and Khadijah hurried to open it. She was surprised to see her cousin standing at the door, carrying her child in her arms. Her eye was black and she looked pale. Khadijah welcomed her cousin and took her to her mother's room. The mother was surprised to see her daughter, and she rushed towards her to take her in her arms. She thought that her daughter longed to see her and she had regretted her past behavior. But her daughter sat down on the nearest chair without the faintest idea of her mother's feelings.

The daughter said, "My husband has turned me out of our house, as if I were a piece of used furniture that could be replaced." Her mother's face grew pale and she said, "He turned you out? When? How?"

Her daughter replied, "Oh, mother. You know how he is. He returns home late every evening, quite drunk. He throws himself on the bed dead with sleep. When I object to his behavior, he reminds me of our deal that we should respect each other's freedom. I can do nothing but keep silent, since this idea of freedom was my wish from the beginning. But things have grown worse recently. He has started to help himself by my salary and deprived me of my rights in my house.

"Yesterday he said he would no longer tolerate the chains of marriage and made me leave my own home. I spent the night in the garden. I have nowhere to go! My only brother won't allow me to stay in his house. I have none to turn to but you."

Her mother did not know what to say. She thought her niece was kind enough to have her in her house. Could she bring someone else to live with her? It was too much a favor to ask. Khadijah, who had heard everything, knew of her aunt's hidden suffering. She decided to save her the trouble. She told her cousin, "You have done the correct thing by coming to your mother. She will be happy to have you with her until things get better."

The distraught young woman thanked her cousin for her kind help and said, "Oh, how grateful I am to you, Khadijah! You have been so kind to my mother. Now you are doing me a great favor."

Khadijah smiled and said, "Oh, don't say such things. You should consider this house as your own." The aunt was so moved that she rushed to Khadijah and kissed her. She said, "How wonderful you are, my dear! What great faith you have."

Khadijah whispered into her ear, "Please aunt, tell your daughter to wear her hijab as long as she is in our house." The aunt answered immediately, "Oh, yes, I have Already decided to do so."

She settled herself near her daughter and said "I have never felt such comfort in my life as I feel here. I have found in your cousin Khadijah and her husband love and care that I never found in you and your brother. You are my own children, but you showed ingratitude towards me, while my niece and her husband flood me with kind feelings. I wish you knew the reason." She was silent for a while. Then her daughter said, "Oh, mother, surely it is faith in Allah that dominates their life, while we lack such faith."

"Praise is due to Allah the Almighty that you have realized the truth by yourself I" said her mother. "Therefore, you should start to show regret for the past and return to religion by first wearing your hijab." The daughter looked down at the floor and was silent. Then Khadijah said "..I think she has found out what happens when one neglects one's religion. She now feels the importance of Islamic ethics."

Her cousin looked up at her and said "You are right, Khadijah. I am tired of this life of pretence. I need someone to lead me and teach me true faith and real salvation with no submission to other's wishes and desires. But I can't help wondering what people will say about me."

Khadijah replied, "You always tried to please people in the past. You have gained nothing from that but false happiness. You have wasted years, running the wrong way. Now, it is time for you to come back to your religion and understand Islamic values in order to gain happiness in this life and the Hereafter."

"Will Allah accept my repentance after years of deviation?", her cousin asked.

"Yes, of course, Allah loves those who repent and hates those who insist on doing wrong." Then Khadijah recited the Qur'anic verse: **?Do they not know that Allah accepts repentance from his servants and takes the alms, and that Allah is All Compassionate? Say: Work and Allah will see your (good) work and so will His Apostle and the believers ... ?** (Bara'at, verses 104, 105)

The cousin spent a few weeks with her mother. She was greatly affected by Khadijah's strong faith. Khadijah did her best to help her. Khadijah's cousin eventually became a good Muslim, and she knew she could no longer live with a man addicted to drinking and gambling. She filed for divorce. She gave up all her rights to her home in return for keeping her only child. She intended to raise him to be a good believer.

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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)