

## Chapter 21

Hamid felt a great struggle taking place within his self. He thought about how to free himself of his wife's domination and start a new, clean life. He reasoned that he wouldn't succeed until he was free of Fitnah's influence.

Hamid had previously believed that all people were corrupt to some extent until he saw the goodness embodied in Sumayah. The experience had started as a failure, but it led him to ultimate success. He felt very hurt by his wife's behaviour, and he wondered if he really could still love her. Could he go on living with her while she had no concern for morals?

A few days later, Hamid decided to visit his grandmother, who lived in a nearby village. Fitnah saw him packing a suitcase and getting ready for a trip.

She asked, "Where are you going, Hamid?"

Hamid told his wife, "I'm going to pay Grandma a visit. She has been seriously ill recently and has asked for me."

Fitnah asked sarcastically, "Are you a doctor who can cure the aged?"

Hamid answered, "I am not a doctor, but I am all that she has. I'll get her a good doctor."

Fitnah continued in her sarcastic tone, "Since when do you think of others with such concern?"

Hamid stated, "Since I recovered from my blindness."

Fitnah didn't understand what her husband meant, but she thought he was joking. "How long will you stay?" she asked.

"As long as she needs me," he replied. "I may stay longer than a week if necessary. I haven't seen Grandma for ages," Hamid said as he carried his bags to the car. He got in and sped away.

Fitnah said to herself, "I know that you are not really going to your grandmother. Enjoy your week with Sumayah. Let this be a farewell week. Ahmad is coming back soon."

Hamid was truly concerned about his grandmother's health. He drove at a high speed to reach her before it was too late. He hoped to be able to ask her for her forgiveness. At last he arrived at her home and knocked on the door.

A servant opened the door.

"How is she?" Hamid asked as he brushed past the maid.

She told him that the old woman was dying. Hamid explained that he was her grandson.

The servant said, "Oh you are Hamid! She has been asking for you often."

The maid led him to a door. Hamid entered and found an old friend of his grandmother's at her bedside.

She recognized him and said, "At last you have come. This will mean a lot to her."

Hamid asked, "Has a doctor seen her?"

"Oh yes," answered the maid, "but he cannot help her."

Hamid bent over his grandma and kissed her hand.

He cried, and the sick woman moaned.

He called her gently, "Dear Grandma, it's me, Hamid. I've come to see you."

With great difficulty, the old woman opened her eyes and a smile appeared on her face.

"Grandma dear, I am very sorry that I did not come sooner. Would you forgive me?" Hamid said as he held her hand gently.

The old woman nodded her head slowly and seemed to be whispering a prayer. Hamid held her hand until it became cold. At last she died and Hamid was grieved.

He attended her funeral ceremony the following day and returned home at a late hour.

The house was engulfed in darkness, except for Nadia's room. Fitnah's room was empty and he was sure that Fitnah had gone out. He tried to sleep but uneasy thoughts kept him awake. He went to his wife's room to see if she had come. It was after midnight. Hamid called for Nadia to ask about his wife.

"Where is your mistress," Hamid questioned her. Nadia did not reply and he repeated his question.

Nadia decided to get revenge. She was no longer interested in staying in that house since she had lost Hamid's love. She told him, "Fitnah left the house yesterday evening."

Then Hamid asked, "Do you know where she has gone?"

Nadia answered, "No, she told me nothing."

"Be frank. Don't you know where she is?" Hamid persisted.

"She went to the theatre," Nadia said.

Hamid asked, "Alone?"

Nadia answered, "No. With Salah."

"How do you know this.?" demanded Hamid.

Nadia admitted, "I followed her and learned everything."

Hamid asked the maid why she spied on his wife.

"She has destroyed my life. She made you leave me." Nadia told him with tears in her eyes.

Hamid replied, "Oh no. You are mistaken. She had nothing to do with that. Now tell me, did Fitnah spend the night in Salah's house?"

"Yes. I saw them both. They were drunk." the maid said.

"Do you swear to that?" Hamid asked.

Nadia said, "I swear by God that I have seen them. You can go now to his house and make sure for yourself."

Hamid was very angry. Although his wife had flirted with many men in the past, she had never been so openly disrespectful and careless enough to do what she had done that night. Hamid decided to dismiss Nadia, and to make up for the wrong he had done her.

He said, "Nadia, you are clever and young. I'll help you find a suitable job. Tomorrow I'll give you two week's pay and you may leave."

Nadia thanked him and went back to her room.

Hamid waited anxiously for his wife to return. He felt he should try to advise her as Sumayah had suggested, even if his wife was unlikely to change.

At last he heard Fitnah's car enter the garage. As soon as she entered her room, Hamid knocked on her door and entered. Fitnah was surprised to see her husband standing in front of her.

She murmured, "Hamid."

"Yes, Hamid the cheated husband." Hamid said.

Fitnah tried to control her feelings and spoke calmly, "Oh, you are back soon. How was your trip?"

Hamid ignored her question and said, "Yes, I have come back soon, to find that you spent the night in your lover's house. You have lost all your pride and self-dignity for the sake of your desires."

Fitnah asked, "What is the matter with you? Are you drunk'? Do you talk about pride because you failed?"

"I am not drunk, rather I am more aware than I have ever been before. I am trying now to advise you," Hamid told his wife.

Fitnah said with contempt, "Keep your advice for your own self."

Hamid asked, "Where were you last night? When did you leave your boyfriend?"

"What has that to do with you'? I am free to do what I like," she retorted.

Hamid spoke, "Freedom does not mean cheating or deviation."

Fitnah laughed, "The cheating one claims he has been cheated. Why don't you tell me where you were last night?"

"I have nothing to be ashamed of," Hamid stated.

Fitnah tried to change the subject. She asked, "Why have you come back so soon? Have you quarreled or has the traveler returned?"

Hamid said, "I don't understand what you are talking about. I am back, and that is enough. I can't tolerate your behaviour any longer."

Fitnah sneered, "Why are you so angry? Is it because of your failure in your love affair with Sumayah?"

Hamid was shocked, "What love affair!? What failure'? Who is this Sumayah you have just mentioned?" Anyway, I have decided to rid myself of you, and the disgrace and shame I feel due to you."

Fitnah continued, "How soon you forget her name?"

"I don't know a name to forget. Now I want you to justify your indecency and give up your disgraceful behaviour." Hamid said.

His wife exclaimed, "You are indeed crazy! Do you think a young, beautiful woman like me can be content to live with you and stay at home, to spend her life serving you? I am free and have the right to enjoy myself! I won't waste my life for a husband like you."

Hamid became angry, "Instead of apologizing, you speak like this to me!?"

Fitnah shouted, "I won't apologize! What are you going to do? We both have affairs and all of a sudden

you sit in judgement against me!?"

Hamid was more calm now, "I am your husband. I'll make my decision now unless..."

"Yes'? Unless what? I won't change. We are both free to go where we please. I'll see Salah whenever I choose," Fitnah said defiantly.

Hamid asked, "Do you know what that means? Are you aware of the consequences of what you are doing?"

"You're sounding like an old man who repeats out-of-date expressions. Have you learned them from your girlfriend, Sumayah? She is Ahmad's fiancée", Fitnah said angrily.

Hamid finally realized whom she was referring to. He shouted, "How dare you talk of her!"

Fitnah glared at Hamid, "Now you confess that you know her."

Hamid said, "I didn't know that was her name until now, since you mentioned Ahmad's name. She is an angel in human shape. She is truly an example of virtue and goodness.

Fitnah was taken aback, "What do you mean?"

Hamid said, "You wouldn't understand. How can someone like you know such a virtuous girl?"

Fitnah asked, "Isn't she now your mistress?"

Hamid exclaimed, "I seek refuge in Allah. She doesn't even know who I am. She is a pure, chaste girl and she has her own man, who is no doubt worthy of her . You have tried to lead me along a deviated path. I was in darkness and now I am no long lost. This girl whom you falsely portrayed as being a corrupt person like yourself, is an angel. God has purified my soul. I am no longer a deviated, sinful person."

"You never tempted her?" Fitnah laughed.

Hamid insisted, "I am not her lover. I only respect her. She is a torch guiding my lost soul. At first, I was foolish enough to believe you. I tried to tempt her and failed. She could have called a policeman, but she tried to guide me. She felt pity for you when she saw the wedding ring on my finger."

"Does she know of me?" Fitnah asked, frightened.

Hamid replied, "How could she know you? She only knows I am a married man. As I told you, she does not even know my name."

Fitnah, greatly disappointed at this turn of events, remarked, "So you couldn't seduce her."

He replied, "Can the devil mislead the righteous? I have decided to divorce you. I have always been wrong. I have never loved you and I won't love you in the future. I am tired of living as an animal, with animal desires. Now you are nothing to me. I'll give you your dowry, which can help you find another fool. I have tried to help you but you have rejected my attempts. You are still following your deviated ideas."

Hamid left Fitnah alone. She understood that her wicked plan had backfired, destroying her life. She had lost everything.

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