

Chapter 5

Fitnah felt quite worn out as she entered her room and thought over what had passed between her and her cousin. She was afraid that Sumayah noticed her hesitation and saw the confusion on her face when she glanced at Ahmad's picture. She stretched out on her bed and released the reins of her thoughts. She realized the risk of visiting Sumayah's house. What if Ahmad had seen her there? Her designs would have been in vain.

Fitnah decided it was best to remain on friendly terms with Sumayah in order to carry out her revenge. Her aim was to spoil her cousin's future. Fitnah was well aware of her own corrupted conduct, therefore, she wanted to drag Sumayah into the same swamp. That night, she slept fitfully.

The next morning, Fitnah bathed, dressed and called Nadia, her maid. Nadia, a young, pretty girl in her twenties, entered her mistress's room and greeted her.

Fitnah cast a long look at her, then asked: "Has anyone phoned me?"

Nadia replied, "The master is at home. He answers all calls."

Then Fitnah asked, "What about yesterday afternoon when I was out?"

"He was at home at that time as well."

"Was he at home last night?"

Her maid answered, "Yes. He did not leave his room."

"Is he sick?" Fitnah inquired.

Nadia told her, "I don't know."

"Has anyone visited him?"

"Not that I know of. In any case, I am not a spy, paid to keep an eye on him!"

"Have I asked you to do such a thing? Get out, you impudent girl!"

Nadia turned to leave the room, but Fitnah told her to stop.

"Look, Nadia", she said, "I don't like your make-up and how your hair is done. One would think you are on your way out to a party. Wear a simple hair-style and do not use heavy make-up."

"But why, my lady? Am I not free to dress, as I like?"

Fitnah replied, "Well, have you ever seen anyone with such make-up and hair at such an early hour of the day?"

Nadia answered, "You, my lady, usually do such a thing."

"I am a married woman and society expects me to dress so. In any case, what business is it of yours? You are only a servant, and I can dismiss you any time I please."

Nadia replied, "Can you really?"

"Yes, I can!"

"Why don't you do it now?"

Fitnah looked sharply at her, "You make me angry. That's enough nonsense and impoliteness. Go, I cannot tolerate seeing you!"

"It makes no difference to me," Nadia shrugged, leaving the room.

Fitnah was quite upset. She controlled the urge to slap Nadia in the face. She knew Nadia was quite aware of all her secrets, so she thought it best to control her feelings.

Fitnah told herself, 'What a poisonous serpent she is! She blackmails me with what she knows about me. I am a coward! Why should I fear her? What can she say?

Men and women have the same rights. Why should I fear a scandal? Everyone around me lives scandalous lives. Yet I do fear one thing, my husband, Hamid, who is unaware of the extent of my mischief. He is the only source I have of wealth and riches... Money dominates everything and can overcome all obstacles. Hence, I must tolerate Nadia's devilish challenge. I know what her looks mean.

Hamid stays at home for her own sake! I

should have fired her long ago, before it became too late. Anyway, she is my maid and it is my own mistake. I should go to Hamid's room.'

Fitnah put on an expensive silk robe and entered her husband's room without knocking on the door, in order to catch him by surprise. She found him relaxing in a comfortable chair. Soft music was playing.

"Oh, what a surprise to see you! I thought you were ill", Fitnah exclaimed.

Smiling.

Hamid asked, "What makes you think so? I am quite well."

"But you have not left the house for two days. This is not like you."

"How can you say that? You are always the first to leave and the last to come home," Hamid told his wife.

Fitnah then asked, "Is it possible that you spend all the time in the house?"

Hamid replied, "Well, nights are enough for me!"

"Oh, Hamid, you irritate me by your indifference!"

"Do I? Anyway, lately I have found that I prefer to stay at home."

"How do you spend your time?"

"Reading books and listening to the news."

Fitnah laughed, "That is wonderful! Since when do you read books and listen to the news?"

"Oh, you do me a great wrong. Am I so stupid and uninformed?"

"Now, be frank and tell me why you are really staying at home more often than usual."

"I told you, I have always done that."

"But why?"

Hamid said, "I have some important matters to take care of here."

Fitnah said, "Now, speak out; do not make me nervous. What are these important matters?"

Hamid asked, "Why should you be upset about them?"

Fitnah replied, "Of course, I know what you are talking about, but I want you be honest with me."

"Have you been frank with me?" Hamid asked his wife. "When I recently asked you to come on a trip with me, did you give a good reason for declining to accompany me?"

Fitnah paced back and forth, "So, you are trying to get back at me."

"Does your behavior call for revenge? You know me quite well, I am free to have my own way. Keep in mind, this is my house!"

Getting to the point, Fitnah said, "But Nadia is my own maid!"

"Yet I pay her salary and I am her master."

"Well, I can send her away whenever I like", she told him.

Hamid stated, "You won't do it!"

"What do you mean?"

Hamid, "I mean, we should not quarrel. Let us have a truce!"

"Why are you bargaining?" Fitnah asked.

"Call it whatever you like."

Fitnah said, "Oh, you get on my nerves!"

"What about mine? Am I made of stone? Have I no feelings?"

"Your nerves are made of iron," Fitnah told him.

"But you can crush iron"

"Really, am I such a strong person? Then we are equal."

Hamid disagreed, "Oh, no, you are ahead of me."

"I am proud of that!" Fitnah smiled.

Hamid said, "Then enjoy your pride. Now what good fortune has sent you to my room? I don't believe love has brought you here. You have not entered my room for ages. Surely you are in need of money."

"You don't want to see me!" Fitnah pouted.

"Oh, no, I always long for a visit from you. Be sure of that. My love for you has taught me patience. To speak honestly, I am quite miserable with your love. But there is no way out; I do love you."

Fitnah tried to respond to his words although she despised him and felt no love for him. She wanted to dominate him for the sake of his wealth. She even felt no humiliation knowing that her maid was her husband's mistress. The false civilization she lived in had stripped her of all dignity and female pride. All she cared for was money, so she smiled and spoke passionately to her husband.

Fitnah moved close to her husband and whispered, "Oh, Hamid, you have no idea how much I love you. But believe me, it is life's concerns that keep me away from you." Her sweet words made Hamid forget her indecent conduct, his girl friends and his mistress, Nadia.

"I am your slave. I can't live without you", Hamid assured her.

Fitnah found it hard to exchange words of love with him, but for the sake of money she carried on the

role of a loving wife.

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