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## 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 is 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 fiancée, 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 modern 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.

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