

## 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 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 apart 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, 12:87)***

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, 29:2, 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 your 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-Baqara, 2: 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 is 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 (SAWS) '*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, spiritual values lead to happiness. Imam Ali (A.S.) 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, 18: 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."

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