

Firm Stand

As the first rays of dawn shone on the horizon, Sumayah awoke. She had spent the previous night in tears. Sumayah felt certain that the dawn had come to dispel her bitter suffering and open the door of hope, through prayer, to her; a door which would direct her towards her Creator. She hurried to get ready to pray, as if she were on her way to meet a loved one. Forgetting the suffering and pain she had experienced for many years, Sumayah merged with her prayer, giving all of her attention to Him.

Sumayah finished her prayer and thought once more about the two paths open to her—one leading to happiness in this temporary life; the other ending in spiritual happiness in eternal life. She was well-aware that true peace could only be found by remaining a faithful Muslim and adhering to Islamic principles, thus avoiding any deviation from Islam.

The first path would take her to a world of luxury filled with misleading comforts and illusionary happiness. The other road would guide her along the path of Islamic guidance. By following this path, she would taste victory and be crowned with the laurel of firm belief and determination. Since she was a Muslim, naturally she rejected the first, misleading road. But still, Sumayah sometimes felt weak in the face of threats and temptation.

Sumayah silently beseeched God: “Oh God, You know I am an orphan who lost her parents at an early age. My only brother is studying abroad. Europe, with its so-called civilization, has trapped him. He has forgotten me and is busy running after amusements. God, Your blessings caused my soul to be flooded with the light of Islam. My conscience is clear. You have armed me with the weapon of strong faith, which enables me to remain steady and have a pure heart neither stained by pseudo-civilization nor attracted to the glittering results of false progress.

I am not fooled by any poisonous, imported ideologies. Oh God, help me to be content. Help me to find joy in assisting misguided Muslim girls so that I forget my own unhappiness and the painful loss of my parents. Such happiness, the result of helping others, can compensate for my uncle's cruelty.”

Sumayah's troubles had begun when a stranger a young man, had become acquainted with her uncle, who was her guardian. The young man was wealthy and fascinated Sumayah's uncle with his fast cars

and various properties.

This man had made life hell for Sumayah ever since he had become attracted to her and had asked her to marry him. Sumayah never let herself to be influenced by his wealth. She avoided his company because he was careless and wild. Her uncle was trying to pressure her into marrying the young man by describing how happy she would be with every imaginable earthly comfort. He built palaces for her based on his wishes and hopes.

Sumayah's uncle ignored her objections, and she was afraid that if she gave in to her uncle's demands, she would be deviated from Islam. 'Would my brother take my uncle's side if he was here?' she wondered. She thought about how much she needed to see her brother. She always remembered him in her prayers, and asked Allah to guide him.

Sumayah's uncle had locked her in her room for two days in his attempts to pressure her. As she sat in the room, she said to God, "O God I am afraid of what may happen, but I will stand firm. I shall keep on struggling until you help me by Your mercy." Her prayer put her at ease. She reasoned that only real submission to God could cause her to feel such calmness and then she slept, exhausted from the previous sleepless night.

Suddenly her uncle's sharp voice awoke her. He was knocking loudly on the door, saying, "Are you still asleep, you woman from the Middle Ages?" Sumayah sat up, shaking, and answered meekly, "Yes, I had been asleep."

Her uncle opened the door and tried to speak in a friendly tone, "You look happy this morning, Sumayah. I'm certain that you have returned to reality and have given up your impossible dreams."

"Uncle, I have always lived in reality."

"Yes," he replied, "The reality of ancient times."

Now were living in the twentieth century, and if you give up your old ideas, I will keep the door unlocked."

Sumayah told him, "Oh uncle, I don't want you to open a door for me which leads to worldly pleasures and close the door to God's blessings and forgiveness. Please be kind enough to let me manage my own affairs."

Her uncle angrily retorted, "I won't let this opportunity pass by. I don't want you to stay hidden in your room constantly reading and writing. You have disappointed me greatly."

Sumayah answered him quietly, "I will always be as I have been and am now."

"Then you must leave my home. I won't let you trouble me."

"Are you serious?" Sumayah anxiously asked.

"Yes!", replied her uncle. "You either agree to marry this man, or leave my house and never return. We shall see how much you will gain from your belief in Islam."

Sumayah said after a short while, "I have made up my mind."

"Then you will marry the rich man?"

"No. I will never exchange my principles for temporary gains."

Her uncle, greatly vexed, rushed to open the front door of his home. "Then leave. You have no place here, you ungrateful girl. I regret all that I have done for you. Go to your Islam, or to your brother, who has forgotten you. Leave quickly! I cannot stand your presence here any longer."

Sumayah had gathered her few belongings while her uncle was speaking. She only owned a gold bracelet, a Qur'an and some books. She turned to her uncle and said, "Uncle, you may regret this."

"Never, go find your brother. There is no hope for you."

Sumayah walked out the door, saying, "I am leaving, and I am happy. God has given me strength. Farewell."

She thought that her uncle would change his mind, but he continued to ridicule her until she disappeared around the corner.

As she walked along, Sumayah felt lost. Where could she go now? She detested the corrupt society she lived in, and it, in turn, hated her attempts to reform it. Feelings of despair started to overwhelm her. Suddenly she heard the Qur'anic verse:

"Or did you think that you would enter the garden while yet... when will the help of Allah come? Now surely the help of Allah is near!" (Al-Baqarah, 2: 214)

Sumayah felt as if she was being addressed. The verse renewed her hope and she felt victorious. She calmly thought about where to go. With an uplifted spirit, she recalled her friend Maryam. Maryam's brother was a friend of her brother, and she thought that he could surely help her contact her brother and ask him to return.

She walked to Maryam's house filled with hope. When she knocked on the door, Maryam opened it and welcomed her warmly. Maryam then congratulated Sumayah and said, "God knows how happy I am for you."

Surprised by her words, Sumayah asked, "What on earth are you congratulating me for?"

"Hasn't your brother written to you?" Maryam replied. "He is on his way home, and should be here today or tomorrow."

This unexpected news was too much for Sumayah and she nearly lost her balance." Are you sure he is coming?" she asked.

Maryam took her into the house, where she regained her strength. Sumayah soon began to feel nervous, however, as she imagined how her brother might have changed and that perhaps he was just like her uncle, who had kicked her out of his home only an hour earlier. With a serious expression, she turned to Maryam and said, "How do you know this? What has caused him to return?"

Maryam understood her friend's fears and told her, "He recently wrote a letter to my brother. He said in the letter that he could no longer endure being so far away from you. He experienced western civilization and rejects its values. Here is his letter; read it!"

Sumayah was so overcome with joy that she could not read it. She knew that Allah had answered her prayers. Her religion, as she had always hoped, had strengthened her and brought back her brother to her.

She asked Maryam to read the letter for her. Maryam read, "Oh, dear friend, I have been misled for some time, thinking this loose life is the way to happiness. This western culture has caused me forget my responsibility towards myself and my sister. I confess, my friend, that I forgot myself. Now I have realized the truth. These great buildings where people drink until morning and these night-clubs which are full of indecency are all means to fool and mislead youths and will eventually endanger their future.

This generation of women, who are proud of equality with men, is nothing but a mere commodity within the reach of all men for exposure and exploitation. This boredom and running, after whatever is called a civilization and progress, contains hidden sufferings and great problems in which are flooding western society. As a result, I have regained my awareness. Now, I fear for my sister, who is a young girl. I fear she may suffer a similar fate and be caught up in the deviated currents in many Islamic countries under the false names of civilization and progress. I have decided to come home to be with her... We will both find true happiness in the instructions of Islam..."

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