

## Chapter 6

Upon Ahmad's return from his business trip, he hastened to his fiancée's home.

"How happy I am with you", he told Sumayah.

Sumayah replied, "I fear something may spoil our happiness. I wish it could last forever.

Ahmad assured her, "Real happiness can overcome anything. Neither the passage of time nor any incident can harm true love. The angelic brightness of your face overwhelms me. Love that changes like the weather is not real love. It is only an illusion, which vanishes in the end.

Happiness that stems from materialistic pleasures is sure to disappear. It is just a dream, after which one awakes to reality.

Be sure, my dear, that our marriage will be wonderful. Our souls are mingled and our hearts are close. Our ideas and beliefs are in harmony. Nothing can spoil our relationship."

After Ahmad left her, Sumayah felt comforted by his words and dreamt of a joyful future.

Meanwhile, Fitnah's house was ablaze with colored lights. She had invited a special group of close friends to celebrate her husband's birthday. She dressed carefully, in the latest fashion, and precious stones encircled her neck and wrists. Fitnah looked quite beautiful as she smiled and welcomed her guests, who arrived one after the other.

Salah, a young photographer, was one of her guests and was in love with her. Fitnah had given up all other lovers for his sake. He tried to keep as near as possible to her throughout the evening, however, among the guests there was a new face who was attracted to the beautiful hostess, but was too embarrassed to begin a conversation with her.

A friend of Fitnah joked, "Imagine Fitnah, my friend was reluctant to come to your party."

Fitnah asked, "Really? Why?"

The friend said, "He feared you might ignore him!"

Fitnah, in order to arouse her lover's jealousy, said flirtingly, "Oh, how could I ignore such a well-known engineer?"

Sami, the new friend, expressed words of thanks and Fitnah found it easy to make him attracted to her. She decided to use him as a threat if her lover, Salah, even threatened to leave her. She continued to chat with the young man until she was certain of his interest in her. Then she left Sami and went in search of Salah, who had left the group.

Fitnah knew he was annoyed by her conduct. She looked everywhere, and finally discovered him in the arms of one of her close friends in a secluded corner of the garden. She was quite upset at having lost him so quickly.

She came near the couple and exclaimed, "How wonderful! You have left the party to hide here and enjoy yourselves."

Salah was taken by surprise and the girl was very embarrassed.

Fitnah remarked, "I knew that you were occasionally unfaithful to me, but not to such a degree in my own home!"

"Fitnah please..." Salah began to say.

"Stop your nonsense, you, who change your partners like you change clothes."

Salah said, "But, it is you who..."

"I know what you want to say, so don't bother to explain yourself," Fitnah told him angrily. "It is my own mistake. I trusted you. Now I see you are no better than any other playboy."

Salah pleaded, "Oh, Fitnah, you never thought about my feelings. You lavished all your attention on that engineer."

Fitnah said, "What has that to do with you? Have you ever tried to behave, at least in my house? Go, you mean nothing to me!"

"Please, be fair to me, let me..."

She turned away before he could finish his sentence. Salah was very unhappy, although his companion tried to cheer him up. He rejoined the party and begged for Fitnah's forgiveness.

In fact, Fitnah had planned to enjoy the evening with her lover, but she found that her husband was missing.

She went to his room and saw him sprawled on his bed, quite drunk. Her maid was sitting near the bed.

Fitnah asked, "Why has he come here?" Nadia told her, "I brought him."

"How could you have dragged him along?"

Nadia replied, "He was not drunk at that time."

Fitnah exclaimed, "You gave him too much to drink. How dare you? You tricky..."

Nadia interrupted, "Please, my lady, I am not a tricky person. I am the same as you are, no less or more. At least I am satisfied with one, while you..."

Fitnah began, "Shut your mouth you stupid little..."

"I am not as stupid as you think I am," Nadia defiantly said, standing up.

Fearing that her guests would notice her absence, Fitnah ordered Nadia to wake up Hamid, since it was a matter of politeness to say good-bye to his guests.

Feeling hatred and disgrace, she joined the others: Her lover tried to speak to her, but she gave him no chance. Hamid was too intoxicated to wake up, so the guests left with only Fitnah to bid them good night. Salah alone remained. He knelt in front of Fitnah and swore that he didn't care for anyone but her. He was clever enough to articulate words of love and she finally forgave him. After he left, she went to her husband's room to find him in a deep sleep, so she went to her own room.

Fitnah could not sleep, and thought of Ahmad, and how she would get her revenge. She again thought of how to drag her cousin into her corrupt way of life. She felt sure that many men would be attracted to Sumayah's beauty and reasoned that no woman can resist temptation. She finally fell asleep, and awoke to see the sun high in the sky. She did not call her maid to assist her in having a bath. Fitnah bathed, dressed and tried to leave her home without attracting the attention of Nadia, but the maid surprised her by saying,

"What? are you leaving without breakfast?"

Fitnah did not answer, while Nadia continued, "Why haven't you called me to assist you this morning? Are you still angry with me?"

Fitnah replied, "Oh, no, I am not."

Nadia then said, "Have you seen my master?"

"No, how is he?"

"He is not feeling well, and plans to stay at home," her maid replied.

Fitnah felt a surge of jealousy, but managed to control herself.

"Take care of him," she told Nadia. "I have an important appointment and I must leave now."

Fitnah hurried out and drew a deep breath, as if she had escaped from a prison. Her house was like a hateful cage of trouble and pain.

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