

Chapter 12

Two days later, Fitnah visited Sumayah and they sat in the garden talking. Fitnah told her cousin, "I usually have a walk in the morning. Does Ahmad allow you to do such a thing?"

Sumayah was annoyed by the question, but she acted indifferently, replying, "Sometimes I take walks in the public park near the mosque."

"You do not go to other places?" Fitnah inquired.

"No."

"Do you go alone?" she then asked.

"Usually, but sometimes I go with my father." Sumayah said, wondering why Fitnah was asking her.

"I thought you didn't go to public places due to religious traditions", Fitnah told her.

"Religious traditions do not contradict polite behaviour. Any action or practice should be in conformity with Islamic ethics," Sumayah replied.

Fitnah sighed, "Oh, what injustice. How can a pretty girl like you have such a meaningless role in life? Your beauty is hidden under this long coat and scarf. Your ideas are buried in the pages of books. You are worthy of the title "Miss Universe", but you do not know your real importance. A teenager cannot understand the influence of her beauty on others until someone whispers words of love to her. Then she will see love all around her. Why should you spend all of your time alone while Ahmad enjoys himself in Europe? You avoid the friendship of men in your homeland while he enjoys his time with European girls."

"Fitnah, be serious! What sort of life can a girl have when she becomes the object of men's desires? Most men think that the physical beauty of a girl is the most important aspect, whereas it is only temporary and superficial. Hence a girl's role is determined by men and her development is limited as a result. A girl with sound thinking and wisdom can develop without the influence of men. Religion guides girls and teaches them the meaning of life. A Muslim girl is not deprived of her freedom and she submits

to Allah only. A girl who does not respect her femininity and who has no dignity becomes a mere commodity."

She continued, "As a matter of fact, I pity you for having such a life. I think you are a slave to fashion and cosmetic sellers. I don't know how to reform you; perhaps my mother can influence you. I shall call her to talk with you."

Fitnah stood up, saying, "Oh, no. I am leaving now. I expect some guests tonight."

Sumayah also stood up and walked her cousin to her car, glad that their conversation had ended.

Fitnah went straight home and told Hamid he could sometimes find Sumayah at the park. As she had predicted, Hamid thought her cousin was very beautiful, and he assumed that the man who had been with her at the airport was her boyfriend.

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