

# SUNNAH WEEKEND

Hafsah B. Nurein

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Designed and Published by:

Hafsah B. Nurein (Ummu Hurayrah)

[talesbyhurayrah@gmail.com](mailto:talesbyhurayrah@gmail.com)

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## One

### Friday

Haleemah awoke with a start, her dhikr on her lips. *Alhamdulillah ladhee ahyanaa ba'da maa amaataana wa ilayhin-nushoor.* It was as if her own internal alarm went off five minutes before the daily alarm she always set for 4:00 am, so she could commune with her Lord via *Tahajjud*. She pulled the blankets off her body and swung her legs over the side of the bed. She looked up at the wall clock. 3:58 am.

“I am a few minutes late today.” She said to herself and made a mental note to fix it. Lateness must not be condoned. She got out of bed, stretched and proceeded to the bathroom. A few minutes later, Haleemah was on her prayer rug crying her heart out.



Hours later, Haleemah, after having had a breakfast of boiled yam with fried eggs, prepared for her journey. Packing a few clothes and other essentials into her drab, grey laptop bag was easy and five minutes later, she was set. Haleemah always tried her best to avoid *tabarruj* (undue display of adornment) so she was not one for fancy, shiny things. Her bag packed, she began preparing the house for her departure.

She was to spend the weekend at her friend's family house in Iyana-Ipaja area. Her parents were away in their hometown at Oshogbo, Osun state

to attend a family function. Her cousin, Shaakir was getting married. As Haleemah could not be bothered by such ‘worldly activities’, she was left on her own at their home in Festac town.

When Ameenah, her friend and course mate at the University had found out, she had graciously invited her over to spend the weekend with her family.

Ameenah had also mentioned something about her brother getting married on Sunday but it was an *aqd* and Haleemah was sure that her friend’s family would not go overboard because they were ‘sunnatic’.

After double checking that all taps and windows were closed plus all electrical appliances unplugged, she locked the front door and headed out for the bus stop muttering the dhikr for going out under her breath.



The bus rumbled to a halt as it screeched when the driver applied the brakes. The sudden movement made the passengers lurch forward and some of them even hit their heads, Haleemah being one of these. She was seated on the front row, directly behind the driver and she hit her head on the back of the driver’s seat (which was worn out and had metal rings sticking out of it). Righting herself also connected her head with the window by her side.

*Subhanallah. What is all this?* She thought as she felt the beginnings of a headache.

“Alimosho *la wa yi o*. We are at Alimosho. *If you wan get down make you come down now o*”. Shouted the conductor. He opened the door

with a flourish, hitting the elderly man sitting right by the door on the elbow as he jumped down.

“Careful.” the disgruntled man said, hissing as he rubbed his elbow.

“*Ah Baba mi*, sorry sir.”. He apologised before calling out to the commuters that had rushed over to the bus, to test their survival skills in hopes of securing a space in the bus as it stopped. “Iyanapaja, Iyanapaja! Enter with your #150 change o.”

“*Tufiakwa, ole* conductor. The distance from here to IyanaIpaja is not much but they will extort people because today is Friday and there is a crowd.” The young girl sitting by the driver said to no one in particular.

“Conductor, come and give me my change o, make I no forget am,” someone else shouted from the back row.

Haleemah looked at the paper with the address she was holding. Alimosho bus stop; it was her cue to alight. She adjusted her *jilbaab* and proceeded to alight from the bus.

“Are you coming down?” The woman with the baby next to her asked. “Yes I am,”

Haleemah protected herself by hugging her bag to her chest before she squeezed through the sea of people by the door. After a bit of struggle, she was out on solid ground once again, in the warm glow of the setting evening sun. It felt good. The bus ride had been traitorous; with bumps, scratches, squirms, squishes and every manner of inconveniences, one could conjure.

Walking to the side of the road enabled her to get her bearings. It also helped her stretch her aching joints. She needed to find the landmark that her friend had described because she could not call Ameenah as her

phone battery was dead. Leaving her with only her memory to rely on in locating her friend's house.

Ameenah had described the route to her when she had handed her the address. "When you alight at Alimosho, cross to the other side; there's a Close-Up billboard at the beginning of the street; enter the street and walk straight down. Our house is a cream-coloured storey building on the right. Number 121A. Black gate. You can't miss it."

Haleemah spotted the billboard and crossed the busy road. A middle-aged woman sat just at the foot of the billboard, selling roasted corn and fruits. Haleemah decided to ask her for directions.

"Good evening. Please is this Folarin street.?" She inquired pointing to the street behind the trader.

The woman nodded. "Yes it is. Won't you like to buy some fresh corn.?"



The aroma of freshly roasted corn wafted into Haleemah's nostrils as she walked briskly down the tarred road, making her mouth water. She had bought some corn along with some oranges and pineapples intended for her hosts. The street was noisy, bustling with people. A few children played here and there, some people were returning home from their workplaces, others (shopowners) were preparing their stalls for the night's sales.

Motorcycles, cars, and tricycles zoomed to and fro. A few shops blasted loud music from their speakers.

Haleemah lowered her gaze and wished she had her phone to listen to the Quran with so she could drown out the cacophony of sounds. She began to recite her evening dhikr under her breath instead. Haleemah continued walking and soon got to a part of the street that was quiet. It was populated mostly by residential houses with just a few stores in sight. She could hear occasionally, the sounds from the Television sets. Suddenly, the T.v sounds also ceased and there were shouts and cries from all corners of the street before everywhere fell silent. The people at the Power Holding Company had interrupted supply.



Haleemah was getting tired of her trek but she had to go on. She soon spotted a cream-coloured house a few steps ahead. *That must be my destination, Alhamdulillah.*

A black saloon car was parked just before the gate with a man in his late thirties standing beside it. A comely young woman in a blue scarf, about Haleemah's age, stood with him and they were conversing.

Just when Haleemah arrived at the gate, the man and woman smiled and hugged each other. She was taken aback. *Subhanallah! All this scarfite, iborun sisters sef.* She had heard stories of Muslim girls dating older men, but she was yet to see it for herself. *Mtcheww*, she hissed silently and didn't bother to greet them, she just entered the compound as the gate was ajar.

The yard was vast and Haleemah paused to take in her beautiful surroundings. The house was set far back in the centre. To the left of it



was a roofed shed where two cars were parked. Also, to the right was a small detached building, which she presumed to be the mosque because it had a minaret fixed on its roof. A guava tree stood to the right beside the gate, in the middle of a patch of well-tended grass. A cow sat chewing the cud under the tree.

The low heels of her shoes made little sound as Haleemah took quick strides on the stone walkway, toward the front door. She was about to climb the steps to knock when the door opened, and a man stepped out. He looked up and saw Haleemah and with a quizzical expression made the *teslim*, gently asking her who she was and what she wanted.

“*Waalaykumsalam warahmatullahi wabarakatuhu*. My name is Haleemah and I am a friend of Ameenah’s. She’s expecting me. I would have called but...”

“Alright. Give me a minute and I will get her for you. She’s upstairs.” He disappeared back into the house.

Haleemah’s cool demeanour did not match the turmoil going on inside her. *Subhanallah! that brother is fiine*. Alhamdulillah, she had managed to lower her gaze on time, or he would have caught her staring. Tall, dark, handsome and soft-spoken. Definitely her type. She thought he was a practising Muslim too, for she had noticed that his trousers stopped just above his ankles. The complete package.

*Astaghfirullah*. Haleemah shook her head to clear away such ‘sinful’ thoughts. If that was Ameenah’s brother whom she spoke about often, then she doubted if getting through the weekend with her emotions intact would be an easy task for her.

*“O you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumptions are sins. And do not spy or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Accepting of repentance and Merciful.” Q49:1*

## Two

### Friday

“Haleemah darling! Come here”.

Ameenah squealed with delight as she bundled down the steps and enveloped her friend in a bear hug. They had only been apart for a week, but an onlooker would have thought they hadn't seen each other in ages.

“I- can't-breathe.”

It was no wonder. Haleemah was at a disadvantage. Where she was of medium height and was a little on the plump side, Ameenah was tall and lithe.

“Oh, sorry dear.” She released her, smiling sheepishly. “I missed you *ni*.”

Suddenly, she closed her eyes, tilted her head back and inhaled deeply:

“I know what that delicious aroma coming from your bag is.”

“*Barawo*. You can't even ask me how my trip went. For your information; Thy nose shall only smell, but thy teeth shall not touch.” Haleemah said

“Ah, ma se be jo. Don't do that please. I know your trip was fine now, *shebi* you are here in one piece. *Oya*, let's go inside.”

Ameenah took her hand and led her up the steps. Just then she noticed her brother standing at the top of the steps, watching with his arms folded

across his chest, a small smile on his lips. She had completely forgotten that he had been standing there.

“Oops! sorry.” She giggled “Sweets, meet my big brother Ahmad. *Egbon* this is ‘*mon Amie*’, Haleemah.”

Haleemah lowered her head and mumbled; ‘Nice to meet you’ in a low voice. She heard Ahmad’s deep but slightly husky voice say;

“It’s nice to meet you Haleemah. I hope you enjoy your stay with us.”

To Ameenah he said:

“You are practising your French on me, right? Anyway, I’ll be in the mosque. Don’t bore our guest with your non-stop chatter, okay?”

He began to descend the stairs.

“*Eyin le mo jo. Sha* pray for me”. Ameenah called after him, laughing.

“He likes to stay in the mosque especially after Asr on Fridays. You know the hadeeth of the prophet that says; “*There is an hour (or a moment) of particular significance on Friday. If it happens that a Muslim is offering a prayer and invoking Allah for some good at that very moment, Allah will grant him his request.*”

“Yes, I remember. I also made *dua* while walking down here.” She threw her friend a suspicious glance; ‘How about you? You know I have always told you to say ‘*Subhanallah*’ or something close whenever you exclaim.”

“Hmm, ‘Leemah Thatcher is back.” Ameenah raised her hand in a mock salute.

“I’ll have you know that I was actually on my prayer rug, supplicating before my brother notified me of your arrival. As for the other matter; who cares? It’s not like I said anything vulgar. See, the number of

*Subhanallahs* I have said today *ehn*, far surpasses the exclamations I have made... so I guess I'm good.”

‘Now,’ she linked both their arms, ‘let’s get you inside. You look worn out, so you must rest. And we need to take care of that ‘stuff’ in your bag before it gets too cold.’

She winked at that and both girls went into the house laughing.



Upstairs in Ameenah’s room, the duo sat facing each other at the foot of the bed, on the cream-coloured tiled floor; devouring the roasted corn between them. Haleemah had already stopped by to pray Asr at a masjid in Ikotun, so she had only relieved herself and splashed some water on her face.

“It’s delicious, truly fresh,” remarked Ameenah, biting into the soft cob, “You bought it from that woman at the bus stop, right?”

“Yes.”

“By the way, *Jazaakillahu khayran* for the fruits. Abu Ahmad loves apples.”

“*Wa anti, fa jazaakillahu khayran*. It was nothing really.”

Haleemah took in the décor of the room “I like what you’ve done with your room. Is that wallpaper?”

“Yes o. I prefer it to paint *jare*.” Ameenah stood up, went over to the window and slid it closed leaving enough gap for air. Stretching her arms, she pulled the curtains together. They were also cream, like the couch

just by the door; all matching the wallpaper and tiles. Only the duvet, pillows and cushions were a warm lavender colour.

Ameenah stepped away from the window and walked to the light switch on the wall by the wardrobe. Haleemah blinked at the brightness of the fluorescent light.

“Sorry. I’ll reduce it or switch it off when we are about to sleep.” Ameenah apologised.

A knock sounded on the door at that moment and a voice said through the door:

“Dolapo, may I come in?”

Ameenah opened the door. “Bimpe, what’s up? He’s gone right?” Bimpe stepped into the room and closed the door.

“Yeah, he’s gone, I am missing him already self” Ameenah squeezed her arm.

“Anyway, Abu Ahmad asked me to call you. And me, I want to ask: what should we make for dinner?”

Ameenah shrugged. “I don’t know. You are the head chef. Where is Abu Ahmad?”

“He’s on the balcony. He asked me to call you as I was coming inside the yard.”

Haleemah looked up and was shocked to see that the girl she had seen outside was related in any way to her friend.

“I saw her outside by the gate while I was coming in”. She stood up and walked towards the other girl, her arm outstretched for a handshake.

“Assalamu alaykum. My name is Haleemah. I am Ameenah’s friend from the Uni. She invited me over for the weekend”.

Bimpe accepted the handshake. “Waalaykumsalam Warahmatullah. My name is Dhikrah but everyone calls me Bimpe. I am Ameenah’s sister. Nice to meet you.”

“Well, Bimpe let me leave you and ‘*mi amiga*’ to get acquainted.” To Haleemah she said “I’ll be back soon”; before she walked out of the room.

“What is the meaning of what you said *o*?” Bimpe called to her retreating back

“That’s ‘my friend’ in Spanish!” Ameenah shouted back from the corridor.

Haleemah was glad that she was left alone with Bimpe. It would give her a chance to give *da’wah* to her. It was her duty. Did the prophet not say: “*Convey from me, even if it is one verse?*”

“*Erm*, Bimpe. A word if you don’t mind?”

“Sure. Let’s sit”.

They sat on the couch.

Haleemah cleared her throat and began: “I just wanted to admonish you. Allah said in the Noble Qur’an, Chapter 17, verse 32”; she recited the verse and translated: “*And do not approach unlawful sexual intercourse. Indeed, it is ever an immorality and is evil as a way*”. *You can also check Chapter 23 verses 5-7 for emphasis.*”

She paused and continued: “Our beloved prophet Muhammad; peace be upon him; also said in a hadith reported by al-Tabarani in Saheeh al-

Jaami that: *“If one of you were to be stabbed in the head with a piece of iron it would be better for him than if he were to touch a woman whom it is not permissible for him to touch”. This also applies to women as well.”*

“The point of all I am saying is this: What I witnessed outside, you hugging that man is a sin and....”

“Hey, hey hold it right there. I know your type very well. You walk around haughtily with your ‘holier than thou’ attitude. What right do you have to judge me without getting your facts right? Not that it concerns you nor do I owe you an explanation, but I will educate you regardless. That man you saw me with, is my BLOOD BROTHER.”  
Haleemah was dumbfounded. “Subhanallah, I had no idea. I am...”

Bimpe interrupted Haleemah again:

“Save it. Now it is my turn to admonish you. The prophet, peace be upon him said in a hadith reported in Sahih Bukhari that: *“Beware of suspicion, for suspicion is the most false of speech. Do not seek out faults, do not spy on each other, do not contend with each other, do not envy each other, do not hate each other, and do not turn away from each other. Rather, be servants of Allah as brothers.”*

“You can also check up the Quran, Chapter 49, Verse 12. The same message is contained therein. Now you chew on that while I go downstairs to start dinner.”

Bimpe turned to leave, but at the door, she paused and added as an afterthought: “One last thing, please stay out of my way for the duration of your stay in this house, okay? I think it’d be best. Goodnight.”

She was gone.



Haleemah stood rooted to the spot, her mouth agape. She had committed a grave error. *How could I have been so wrong?* Close to tears now, she covered her face with her hands. She vowed to seek repentance from Allah, but giving Bimpe's final request would she be ready to forgive her?

*Say, "This is my way; I invite to Allah with sure knowledge, I and those who follow me. And exalted is Allah, and I am not of those who associate others with Him." Q12:108*

*"Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is [rightly] guided." Q16:125.*

## Three

### Saturday

Haleemah stirred as a phone alarm went off. It was Ameenah's and she reached out, groping for it, without opening her eyes. She found it under the pillow and turned off the alarm. Haleemah yawned and sat up in bed, her groggy mind starting to clear. She had fallen asleep after praying Maghrib last night when Bimpe had left her alone in the room.

Ameenah had returned to the room sometime during the night because they were side by side in the bed. Being her usual sweet self, her friend must have decided not to wake her so she could get some rest. She had been fagged out yesterday and learning that she had been wrong about Bimpe had made her spirits plummet. Now, however, she was feeling refreshed albeit very hungry, as she had skipped dinner...and *Solatul-Ishaa*.

Glancing at her friend's phone screen, she checked the time. 4:05 am. Late again. *What was the matter with me these days?*

She shook Ameenah gently "Wake up. Let's pray *Tahajjud*."

"Off Solah." Mumbled Ameenah before she drifted off back to sleep once more.

Haleemah stood up and unplugged her phone from the socket where she had been charging it yesterday. The alarm on hers must have gone off as well and she hadn't heard it. Not wanting to disturb her friend's

slumber by switching the lights on, she turned on the torch on her phone and headed for the bathroom.

The room was en-suite, and Ameenah had told her it was the same for the other four bedrooms in the house. Stepping into the spotless bathroom, she closed the door and prepared herself for prayer

After about eight *rak'aat*, during which her stomach rumbled continuously, Haleemah decided that she had to eat something, or she would faint. She went to rouse her friend.

“*Ore*, get up. *Abeg* come find me something, I *dey* H.”

Ameenah only rolled over and continued snoring softly.

“Get up, please.” She tapped her harder.

No response.

“*Subhanallah*, I will have to get a snack myself if I don't want to collapse.”

Haleemah whispered to herself.

Her friend had given her a rough layout of the house yesterday: It was a duplex with four bedrooms upstairs. The living room, kitchen, utility room, and guest room were located on the ground floor. That meant she had to take a journey downstairs.

Donning her khimar, she reluctantly opened the door and tiptoed down the hall. Not that her feet would have made any sound anyway, the floor had been laid with a very soft rug. Thankfully, she remembered the way they had come in yesterday so her task would be relatively easy.

Ameenah's room was the furthest down the hall, so she had to pass by the other rooms on her way to the stairs. The door to the room closest to the top of the stairs was ajar, and although the corridor was dark, the

lights were on inside hence she could not help but glimpse a figure in Khimar on salah. It was Bimpe. Who would have thought that someone like Bimpe who did not observe the full hijab could pray a voluntary *solah*? And *Tahajjud* at that. Good for her, *Baarakallahu feeha*.

As Haleemah descended the stairs she prayed not to come across anybody on her way to and from the kitchen. Just a quick snack. Maybe some of the fruits she bought. Or perhaps they had some biscuits or bread in the fridge. *I'll just breeze in and out. Quick as lightning.*



The adhan for *Subh salah* woke Ameenah. She yawned and stretched, reciting her *dhikr* under her breath. She looked down and noticed Haleemah at the foot of the bed, seated on her prayer rug reclining on its frame. Her hands were raised in *du'a* so Ameenah decided not to disturb her. Instead, she made her way to the bathroom.

When she returned to the room, several minutes later, her friend had already finished her *solah* and was folding the prayer rug.

“*Ma Soeur*, Assalamu alaykum. Hope you enjoyed your first night here?” She asked smiling.

Haleemah rolled her eyes. “*Waalaykum salam warahmatullahi wabarakatuh. Alhamdulillah*, I slept well.” Plopping down on the bed, she added; “I have told you not to speak to me in a language I don’t understand. What is ‘*ma suwe*?’”

“No- ‘*Ma Soeur*’, it means ‘my sister’ in French. Plus, you and everyone close to me have no choice. I will continue to practice on y’all, so live

with it.” Ameenah smiled, nodding at the plate on the floor: “*Warrapen*, you go raid kitchen for night?”

Haleemah eyed her “No be your fault? I tried to wake you, you no gree get up and I was ravenous.”

“I’m sorry.” But you of all people should know not to disturb my beauty sleep - especially when I am off.”

“Beauty sleep *ko*, ogre snores *ni*. Anyway, I found some bread and buttered three slices.”

Ameenah gave her the thumbs up sign while she rummaged in her closet. She soon produced a small, fancy bag, and she sat cross-legged on the floor preparing to empty its contents in front of her.

“What’s that?”. Inquired Haleemah.

“Oh. I want to complete the necklace I am making so I can wear it tomorrow. Look I already finished Bimpe’s own. What do you think?” She stretched the beaded necklace towards her friend.

Haleemah collected the necklace and inspected it. It was an elegant piece of work- made from silver coloured Crystal beads. Ameenah had interlocked them in separate flowery patterns before stringing them together. A single pendant hung from it.

“It’s beautiful”. Haleemah breathed handing the necklace back to her.

“Does it have matching earrings?”

“Yes, it does. I even put it up on my Instagram page and many people have already requested for it.”

“I guess those classes you took last holidays paid off. *Baarakallahu feeh*. But what’s happening tomorrow?”

“I told you *now*. My brother is getting married.” Ameenah answered without looking up. She was determined to finish her own necklace as well. She felt her friend tense.

“He’s getting married?”

Ameenah didn’t miss the disappointment apparent in Haleemah’s voice. So Haleemah fancied Ahmad already. *Amazing*. “Calm yourself *querida*. It’s not Ahmad that’s getting married. My other brother, Basheer is.”

She thought she heard Haleemah sigh in relief.

“I don’t believe I have met him. And I AM calm”

Ameenah leaned back and glanced at her friend skeptically. “I hear *o*. You think I didn’t notice your reaction just now.”

“What reaction? Your mind is playing tricks on you. Can we change the subject, please?”

“You like him!”

Ameenah tilted her head back so she could look her friend in the eyes. Haleemah refused to meet Ameenah's.

“What! I am a Muslimah and have no time for such frivolities.”

Ameenah clicked her tongue against her teeth. “You’re getting it all wrong. Islam did not come to abolish our feelings. It’s not bad if you are attracted to someone of the opposite sex, or if you develop feelings for them. That is the normal basis for marriage anyway. Sometimes it’s beyond our control. After all, Allah fashioned us that way. Males and females are a fitnah to one another. It’s the manner in which you channel or handle those feelings that make it forbidden or otherwise.”

“Hey, madam channeler, please drop it.”

“Let me tell you more about him ...

“No thanks. Not interested.” Haleemah changed the subject: “Tell me more about your family instead because I am confused here. Are you and Bimpe twins.? It seems you are the same age. Plus, you have never mentioned another brother.”

“You can deny it all you like. I’ll be here waiting *sha* when you decide to speak out. And you had better make haste because there is a waiting list o.”

“Unserious somebody. Tell me what I want to know *jo*.” Haleemah shook her head laughing.

“Ok. About my family *abi*?” She was through with the necklace and while putting it away, “Once upon a time...”

“Here we go again”.

Ameenah was undeterred, so she continued in a sing-song voice; “Once upon a time, a widower lived with his two children; Ahmad and Ameenah. One day, he met a widow at an event at the local masjid. It so happened that this widow also had two children: Basheer and Dhikrah. The widower and widow liked each other so much they decided to tie the knot. Two years after Allah blessed them with a son, Ayyub. And the family are living happily, ever after.”

“How sweet. It all makes sense to me now. It must have been Bro Basheer that I saw with Bimpe yesterday.” Haleemah exhaled a deep sigh. “See *ehn* yesterday, *mi wo bata puma*. I wrongly assumed Bimpe was with... a lover because I saw her hugging a man. I suppose I thought the worst because she was in a pashmina scarf.”

Ameenah was laughing so hard, she had to hold onto the closet for support.

“What is so funny? I told you how I messed up and you are laughing”.

*“Excusez-moi.* First of all, you ‘wear Puma’ almost all the time. Knowing you, you must have tried to ‘give her *da’wah*’ when I left both of you yesterday... and I am pretty sure Bimpe must have let you have it.”

“That she did, and it was well deserved”.

Ameenah proceeded to clue her friend in: “Listen, some sisters- like Dhikrah - are still struggling ok? The fact that they still put on scarfs does not mean that they are bad. Although that does not lift the obligation to wear full hijab from them, at the same time it does not give us the right to judge them.”

Ameenah walked over to her friend and put her arm around her shoulders. “You see, when we all started living together as a family, Bimpe was what I will term a ‘city girl’. She was not a practicing Muslim at all. She knew all the places in the town where ‘fun’ could be had and all the works.”

“Old habits die hard, they say, but *Alhamdulillah* she began to change gradually when the truth became clear to her. Gone were the tight, skimpy clothes, she replaced them with loose-fitting ones. She ditched her jahiliya friends, she started to cover her hair when she went out. She has even graduated from a sound Arabic school.” She stopped and looked at her friend who was listening with rapt attention, with a sad expression on her face.

“You of all people should understand that,” Ameenah added gently.



In school, before they had both become friends, Haleemah had been drowning in *jahiliya*. Being the most coveted chic on Campus was no small feat. She was smart as well as beautiful and made no bones about it. Herself and Haleemah were both in the same department but they rarely ever spoke. In fact, Ameenah hadn't known that she was Muslim, as she went by her other name- Bunmi.

When Haleemah had come to class unexpectedly one day, in full *jilbaab*, Ameenah had been dumbstruck. Their friendship had budded and flourished ever since then as they were the only ones alike in their class. When Ameenah had inquired what caused the change in her, Haleemah had replied that she has had a dream that scared her. Now, Ameenah often wondered why she was always so hasty to make judgments, given her own journey.

"I'm truly sorry. Do you think Bimpe will forgive me?" Haleemah spoke finally.

"Bimpe? Don't worry she's not malicious. She'll warm up to you".

Ameenah looked up at the wall clock. "It's almost 8'o clock and the household is stirring. Come on, let's get you downstairs and introduce you to the rest of the family. You've met Bimpe and Ahmad. Only Dad, Mum and Ayyub to go."

Holding her friend's hand, they both left the room. Ameenah was sure her parents would like her, but she prayed to God that Haleemah had left her 'Puma footwear' behind in the room.

*"Beautified for people is the love of that which they desire - of women and sons, heaped-up sums of gold and silver, fine branded horses, and*

*cattle and tilled land. That is the enjoyment of worldly life, but Allah has with Him the best return". Q3:14*

*"See the bad inside yourself and see the good inside others." - Caliph Ali ibn Abi Taalib. (RA)*

## Four

### Saturday

The meeting with her parents had gone well without any embarrassing incident. Haleemah had been overly courteous and Ameenah could tell that her dad and step-mum liked her.

“How are you, my dear?” Ummu Basheer had asked

“Welcome to our home. Make yourself at home, and don’t be shy”. Abu Ahmad had also added.

As for Ayyub, he had been engrossed in his PS4 football game in the sitting room and had only acknowledged them with a smile, nod and a wave.

Now Ameenah and her friend were both in the kitchen, making lunch after having a light breakfast and completing a few house chores.

“Your dad and step-mum are very nice.” Haleemah said as she wrapped up a leaf containing semi-liquid ground beans and placed it in the large pot on the gas cooker.

They were making *moin-moin*, bean pudding, and Ameenah poured the beans while Haleemah wrapped. The food was enough to feed a small army.

“Yes, they are,”

Ameenah had noticed that her friend had seemed a little intimidated, for her dad was tall and imposing with a very deep voice. But despite appearances, he had a gentle personality and was well loved by many.

“But shouldn’t your brother, Ayyub be busy with the Quran, reading hadith or something. Why playing so early?” Haleemah asked again

Ameenah knew it was only a matter of time before her friend mentioned this because her countenance then had been disapproving.

“Well, rest easy. All work and no play, makes Ayyub a grumpy chap. He takes memorisation and Arabic classes at school and I am positive A.Y must have helped with his revision after Subh. They do so every weekend when he’s around while we take over during the week. He’s memorized five *juz*’ and counting.”

Ameenah gushed. She was proud of her baby brother.

“Who’s A.Y?”

“Ahmad. His other name is Yemi. So, most of the time we call him A.Y”

“Doesn’t he live here?”

“*Hmm* listen to my friend *o*, that said she’s not interested in my brother. Anyway, I will give you your answer. He lives alone in Ikeja. Comes around on weekends and sometimes when dad asks him to. Want to know more?”

Haleemah gave her a side look that shot daggers at her. She snorted

“Stay there. Like I don’t know you are building a profile of him.”

“Why are we cooking so much food *sef*?” Haleemah asked abruptly changing the subject.

“Ummu Basheer wants us to cook for the caterers and other workers.”

“*Ehen* about that. This *nikkah* seems big *o abi*. This one you people are killing cow...”

Bimpe entered the kitchen just then.

“Assalamu alaykum. How far *aburo*? My one and only little sis? I can see that you are almost through with cooking”. Peering into the pot, she asked: “Hope you garnished it well”.

“Walaykumsalam warahmatullah. Yes *o*, we did and who is your *aburo*?”

Bimpe loved to tease Ameenah about the fact that she was a few months older even though they were both born in the same year.

“Three months no be beans *o*. You *fit buy am* for market?”

Ameenah laughed and Bimpe asked yet again

“Have you finished my necklace?”

“Yes, I have. I didn’t remember to hand it to you yesterday. I will give it to you later.”

“Ade-dolapo mi owon, my beloved. Thank you. You’re the best sister in the world. *Mmmwah*.” She planted a wet kiss on Ameenah’s cheek.

“*Mon Dieu!* (My God)” Ameenah exclaimed laughing. “You almost made me spill the beans. Anyway, you are welcome, *mi amor*.”

Ameenah watched as Haleemah shifted her feet uneasily. It was obvious that Haleemah was feeling uncomfortable because Bimpe was pointedly ignoring her. She tried to include her in the conversation. Glancing from one to the other, she spoke:

“Haleemah saw it this morning and thought it was beautiful, and she has an eye for classy things. Don’t you?”

Haleemah nodded and muttered: “Maa shaa Allah, it’s really quite nice, Bimpe. It’ll definitely look good on you.”.

“Hmm, thanks.” Bimpe only gave Haleemah a passing glance, before turning her attention to Ameenah. “Let me leave you to it. A.Y is outside seeing to the butchers. I’ll go and see if he needs a hand.” With that, she left the kitchen.

“*Te veo pronto!*” (See you soon).” Ameenah called after her.

She squeezed Haleemah’s shoulder. “She’ll come around”.



“*Ekale* ma, Good evening”. Ameenah greeted Mrs. Baruwa, their neighbor, who lived a few houses away.

“Bawo ni Dolapo? How are you? How are the preparations going and how is your mum?”

“Fine ma, Alhamdulillah.”

“Okay. *Emi naa a tete ji wa laaro ola.* I will come very early tomorrow.”

Ameenah nodded and moved on. It was after 8 pm and she and her friend were on their way to the bus stop to purchase some ‘*dun-dun*’, fried yam for Abu Ahmad. He could hardly go a night without it. Perhaps it was the smoky taste. Or the diced onion, pepper and tomato stew that went with it. Whatever it was, it would be safe to say that her dad was addicted to Iya Luku’s late night *dun-dun*.

The street was bustling as usual and there was even a party going on somewhere on the street. The voice of a popular ‘juju’ musician filled the air from the giant speakers.

Haleemah winced and pronounced:

“I don’t like going out at night. So much decadence, Subhanallah. If not that you dragged me out here....”

“Neither do I, *querida*. But my dad has sent me on an errand, and I must oblige him. I just have to lower my gaze and be focused on my business.”

“*Hmm*, my parents know better than to send me out at night. They know I won’t go. Me I cannot *irikuri*” Haleemah remarked.

Ameenah waved in reply to a young girl who had greeted her from the balcony of a house before she replied incredulously.

“*Ehn-hen* so you have turned yourself to some kind of ‘god’ in your house.”

“No, I just have boundaries, and they have learned not to cross them.”

“Me I don’t think that’s nice o. Let me ask you; that ‘*Irikuri*’ don’t you come across it when you go out in the afternoon? Besides, you can’t confine yourself in a box without practising what you learn about the deen. And certainly not at the expense of obeying your parents.”

Haleemah didn’t seem convinced. “I hear you”.

They had reached the bus stop now. Iya Luku’s stand was a few meters ahead. They soon arrived there and positioned themselves a few yards away from the small crowd that was waiting impatiently for the still frying yams. Present, were also other people who were there to buy other stuff iya Luku had for sale.

“I want to buy *akara*, #150 worth” A young boy shouted.

“*Nne*, give me bread and *akara*. *Package am as usual abeg*.” Another man pleaded. He was in a suit, probably just returning from a hectic day at the office. Ameenah couldn’t help but think that perhaps he was a bachelor, buying a quick dinner because he had no wife to cook him one.

Although Iya Luku and her assistant; Luku, were attending to many customers, she still spotted and greeted Ameenah.

A short while later, the *dun-dun* was ready, and with a big slotted spoon, Iya Luku scooped it from the hot oil, into the waiting tray on the table. Chaos erupted. People pushed, shoved and slapped one another, all in a bid to get attended to first.

“I was here first.” Someone yelled, holding on to Iya Luku’s table for support.

“*Ta!* Get away you. I have been here *siiince*.” Another person snapped, clicking his thumb and middle finger for emphasis as he tried to push the first person out of the way.

Amidst the hubbub going on, Iya Luku meticulously placed a good amount of *dun-dun* and stew in a disposable paper plate, packed it in a nylon bag and gave it to Luku. “Go and give this to Ameenah.” She told him. Turning to her customers she pleaded: “Make una no worry, I go answer all of you.”

Luku came over and handed the package to Ameenah.

“Assalamu alaykum aunty Ameenah. Take, it’s the usual... with extra.”

“Thank you, Luqman. Here”. Ameenah collected the package and handed him some money. “Don’t worry keep the change.”



Ameenah and her friend made their way back into the street and began their trek back home.

“You see that was not so bad.” Ameenah began.

“Indeed. Tell that to the people we left there. You are First-class customers now.” Haleemah giggled.

Before Ameenah could reply, she heard a voice greet with the teslim from behind them.

“H-assalamu H-alaykum warahmatullahi, Dolapo.”

*Oh, God.* She could recognize that infernal ‘h-factor’ anywhere. She stopped and nudged her friend to do the same.

“Walaylumsalam warahmatullahi wabarakatuhu, Alfa Habeeb. What do you want?”

“How did you know h-it’s me?”

*I don’t have time for this nonsense.* “See, it’s getting late and I am on an errand for Abu Ahmad. Good night.” Ameenah made to leave, and at the same time whispered to Haleemah; ‘Let’s go’.

“*Haba*, wait now. What h-about h-our talk now.? H-i love you” Alfa Habeeb implored.

Ameenah rolled her eyes. *This brother is hard of hearing.* Habeeb was one of the Arabic teachers at the mosque down the street. He had been bugging her to ‘go out’ with him for a while now. She had told him off politely, telling him that she was not interested and was not that kind of girl anyway. Her reply had fallen on deaf ears and Habeeb had persisted. Because of his incessant badgering, she had stopped going to the mosque

and she always tried to avoid him. It seemed tonight wasn't one of her lucky days.

“I have told you severally, that I DO NOT ENGAGE IN SUCH...”

“Excuse me, sorry for the interruption, but is this what I think it is?” Haleemah chipped in. “But *shebi* you are called an ‘Alfa’ now. You ought to know right from wrong. In Islam, romantic relationships outside of marriage are forbidden. Because it encourages young men and women who are not mahram to engage in prohibited acts like being alone together, touching etc. She’s caught your fancy and you want to profess your love for her? Then do it in the way that Allah accepts: Go to her father or other male relative and seek her hand in marriage”.

She paused and eyed him from head to toe: “Skulking around in the dark, waiting for a chance to apprehend and pester her is not the way to go.”

Ameenah was grinning from ear to ear, although no one could see from under her *niqaab*. *Alhamdulillah for besties*. This moment was one of the few times that she was grateful for her friend’s ‘Puma shoes’. She most certainly did not want Alfa Habeeb to come and ‘see’ her father for anything, but at least, maybe this tirade would put him off her back for good.

“*Taleyin o*, who h-are you, if I may h-ask.?” Alfa Habeeb inquired from Haleemah.

“I am her...”

“Assalamu alaykum.”

Ameenah turned to see her brother walking towards them. He stopped when he reached her side and put his arm around her shoulder. “What’s going on here? Alfa Habeeb, I hope there’s no problem.?”

He turned his attention to Ameenah. “Are you alright? Has he been harassing you again?”

*Ya Allah, thank you for my brother.*

“Jazaakallahu khayran A.Y, I am fine. I just want to go home.”

“H-erm-h-erm Brother Ahmad.” Alfa Habeeb was shaking like a leaf.

“H-i thought h-i left you h-at the mosque...”

“Alfa Habeeb. Quit stalking and harassing my sister. I won’t warn you again.”

Ameenah could tell from Ahmad’s countenance that he was trying to control his anger. Ahmad had confronted Alfa Habeeb once about the issue and warned him to stay away from her. He wasn’t a man of many words, but the few he spoke resonated with authority that broached no argument.

“Let’s go home.”

With that, the trio left Alfa Habeeb standing in the middle of the street with his mouth hanging open.

“Thank you, *mi hermano*, for rescuing us.” Ameenah sang.

“Anytime small girl. Although it seemed you had the situation under control. Isn’t that right Haleemah?”

Ameenah pouted and spoke before Haleemah could respond. “Well, I am lucky to have you both in my life then. Come on let’s get this to Abu while it’s still hot.”

*“And come not near to unlawful sex. Verily, it is a Faahishah (i.e. anything that transgresses its limits: a great sin, and an evil way that leads one to hell unless Allaah Forgives him)” Soorah al-Isra’, verse 32.*

*Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and protect their private parts....And tell the believing women to lower their gaze, and protect their private parts...” Surah al-Noor:verses 30-31).*

*Some people have modesty in their clothes, but arrogance in their hearts. Hassan al-Basri.*



## Five

### Sunday

The following morning after *Subh*, Haleemah sat alone in Ameenah's room reciting her dhikr. Ameenah was downstairs helping out with the *nikkah* preparations. She couldn't concentrate though, thoughts of Ahmad constantly plagued her mind. Last night she had almost embarrassed herself -her tongue had refused to obey her when he had spoken to her. She had only been able to nod. She slapped her forehead. *He probably thinks I'm daft. I'm always a bundle of nerves around him.* She had to get a grip on herself. Becoming enamoured was not on her priority list right now. She had to find a way to get Ahmad out of her mind - for good.

Seconds later, she received a call from her mum.

"Assalamu alaykum warahmatullahi, ma"

*Waalaykumsalam warahmatullahi wabarakatuhu my daughter. How are you and your friend?*

"We are fine. How is the Groom-to-be?" She giggled.

*He is fine. He has been asking for you, though. Come to think of it, you can still make it o. It's a 3-hour journey. You can arrive here just in time for the wedding.*

Ameenah entered the room just in time to hear Haleemah's reply.

“*Audhu-billah*. I have told you before that I am not coming for that event. I don’t have the patience for the rubbish they do at such events. You and Daddy should return home instead.” She hissed.

“*Ah-ah. Iyen emi naa?* How dare you? I wonder what kind of religion you’re practicing that teaches to be rude to your mother. Anyway, we will see when we return to Lagos.” Her mum disconnected the call.

Haleemah pouted defiantly. She looked up and saw Ameenah, who was shaking her head at her.

“Do you know that was very impolite?” Ameenah said.

“It’s not my fault that they have refused to listen. How many times do I have to tell them to stop throwing or attending lavish parties?”

“You can go about convincing them in a better way. Remember the words of Allah in the Quran...” and Ameenah recited part of the eight verse from Suratul Ankabut, translating to: “We have enjoined on man to be good and dutiful to his parents...”

“I am afraid that you have only succeeded, with your attitude, in pushing them away, and their hearts will only harden to any *da’wah* you may wish to give them in the future.” She finished.

“Thank you for your advice. By the way, I have been meaning to tell you that I won’t be attending your brother’s *nikkah* as well. I will go home when you people are leaving for the venue.”

Ameenah shook her head. “No way. My parents will never hear of it. In fact, I came here to ask for your assistance downstairs.”

“But I...”

“No buts. Get up and let’s go.”

Ameenah took her hand and pulled her out of the room.

The house was bustling with people. Trays clanged, and people bumped into one another. Ummu Basheer rolled out orders like a seasoned general.

“You there. Be careful with those plates. Make sure you mark and count every single one of them”

“Bimpe, go to our room upstairs and bring me my purse. I have to pay the man who brought those cartons of juice.”

“Ahmad make yourself useful and load those drinks into the bus.”

“Haleemah dear, come with me to the store. Let me find you some more coolers so you can assist Ameenah in washing them outside.”

Haleemah obeyed and followed her. In truth, she had been praying for an opportunity to be alone with Ummu Basheer. In the store, the coolers were stacked on the top shelf, so Haleemah climbed a stool and asked:

“Ma which one should I pick?”

“Bring that blue one with the tyres down first. Then do you see that big, red one at the far end?” Haleemah nodded. “Bring it down too.

“Ok, ma.” She began to clear the path to reach the coolers by bringing some of them down.

“Please, ma I have been meaning to tell you something, but haven’t had the opportunity.”

“Go on my dear.” Ummu Basheer urged.

“It is about the wedding ma. I can see that you have used a lot of funds trying to make the day a special one for your son. You see, the prophet (*sal Allahu alaihi wa sallam*) told us in a hadith reported by Bayhaqi that:



"*The most blessed nikkah is the one with the least expenses.*"

"In my own humble opinion ma, all that money would have served a better and more rewarding purpose if it had been spent in charity than on a lavish wedding ceremony," Haleemah concluded, feeling proud of herself.

"So, tell me. In your humble opinion, what do you think should be done now? Seeing as today is the d-day. Do we cancel?"

Haleemah was glad that her friend's step-mum understood her.

"That would be the best course to take, ma. The messenger of Allah *sal Allahu alaihi wa sallam* also said in another hadith reported by Ahmad that; 'You will never leave something for the sake of Allah, but Allah will give you something better in return.' I believe you should have a talk with Abu Ahmad as well."

"Ok, I have heard you Haleemah. But can I ask you a quick question?"

"Yes, ma."

"Has Islam taught you to be disrespectful and tactless? Or are you just plain stupid?"

Haleemah had not expected such a response and was shocked, to say the least. She opened her mouth to speak. No words came forth, so she closed it. Ummu Basheer continued:

"Listen, little girl. I have been giving charity since before you were born. Second, how I choose to handle my son's *nikkah* is MY business. I owe you no explanations. However, let me give you a piece of advice that I hope you will follow: Dabble less into matters you have little or no knowledge about. It will save you from committing avoidable sins"

“Now, pass me the coolers and let’s forget this conversation ever took place alright?” She smiled.

Haleemah nodded her head like an agama in a trance. She obeyed and did as Ummu Basheer asked.



Haleemah sat beside Ameenah at the very last row in the wedding hall. It was a strategic choice, for her friend and Bimpe were needed occasionally for something or the other, so they wanted to be able to move around easily without causing a stir.

Haleemah was still smarting from her encounter with Ummu Basheer. *How come my recent efforts at helping have been disastrous?* To cap it all up, Haleemah was irritated by the antics of the *alaga iduros and ijokos*. “Why did they have to hire this kind of MCs?” She couldn’t hide the irritation her voice

Ameenah smiled wistfully. “*Hmm* may Allah grant our parents proper understanding of the *deen*. It’s a long story. You see the bride and groom never wanted anything as elaborate as this, but the bride's family presented her two difficult choices. The first was to allow them to handle the *nikkah* as they saw fit and in ‘return’ she could wear her hijab and niqab at the occasion. The other was to plan it her own way but dress up as they saw fit. The bride chose the former.”

“But that’s unfair!”

Ameenah shrugged. “Her family never really accepted her choice to wear the hijab and niqab. But she’s an only child so they turned a blind eye. Until now. That was why we had to plan it this way as well. The only thing they allowed her was to choose and invite the officiating Imaam”

Haleemah was annoyed. She listened as the *alaga* started to sing when it was time to introduce the bride:

*“Ise le ran mi” (2ce) I’ve been sent on an errand.*

*“Emi a gba owo ijise” I will get paid for running the errand.*

*“Ise le ran mi.”*

As the *alaga* sang, she made a round of all the groom’s family members, filling her bag with cash. When she was done, she turned to the bride’s family.

*Is this a wedding or a begging ceremony?* Haleemah decided that she had had enough. This was totally wrong on all levels. Had *Rasoolullah* not told us in that hadith from Muslim:

*“Whosoever of you sees an evil, let him change it with his hand; and if he is not able to do so, then [let him change it] with his tongue; and if he is not able to do so, then with his heart – and that is the weakest of faith.”*

Enough of this needless spectacle. She resolved to change this particular evil with her hands.

.....

Ameenah had been watching her friend hiss, stamp her feet and shake her head all through the display by the *alagas* and when she got up from her seat, she knew Haleemah’s ‘Puma’ had taken over. She had to stop

her from disrupting her brother's *nikkah*. At that exact moment, Bimpe returned from her errand.

Ameenah looked at Bimpe over Haleemah's head. They shared a look which they both understood very well. Without warning, and before Haleemah could take another step, Bimpe slumped to the ground in a lifeless heap at Haleemah's feet.

*“And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. And that you be dutiful to your parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of disrespect, nor shout at them but address them in terms of honour.” (Quran 17:23)*

*Anas bin Malik narrates that the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu Alayhi Wa Sallam) has said: “Treat people with ease and do not be hard on them; give them glad tidings and do not make them run away (from Islam).”*

*[Bukhari and Muslim]*

## Six

### Sunday.

“Don’t just stand there, help me with her!”

Haleemah was jolted into action by Ameenah’s voice. She bent over Bimpe as well and they both lifted her up. As they were at the very last row, no one noticed what was going on.

‘*Subhanallah!* What has happened to her? She was fine minutes ago before she went on the errand.”

“I don’t know, maybe the stress of the past few days have taken their toll on her.”

They placed her on their joined seats. Haleemah picked up the programme of events leaflet and started fanning her with it.

Bimpe gingerly opened her right eye, and she looked around. When she got a nod from Ameenah, she opened her other eye and took hold of Haleemah’s hand and sat up.

“Where did you think you were going?”

Haleemah was shocked to the marrow. *Is this how easily someone who’s fainted regains consciousness?*

“What? How? I thought you were...?”

Bimpe did not let go of her hand. “You thought what? I am perfectly okay, I only did that to prevent you from disrupting my brother’s

*nikkah.*” She continued “I asked you a question. Where were you headed?”

“I wanted to stop the *alagas...*” Haleemah said in a small voice.

She was still trying to process the information. A glance at Ameenah trying to stifle her laughter told her she was in on it too. Both of them had succeeded in fooling her.

Bimpe tugged at Haleemah’s hand and almost yanked it from her shoulder. “Come *o*, are you alright? What did you hope to achieve by doing that? And I warned you not to get in my way, didn’t I?” If you had actually made it up there and started any kind of commotion *ehn...*” she shook her head. “*Ma ti lo na e ju*, I would have beaten you blue and black.”

“I am sorry, I was only trying to help. Those people were...”

“Please shut up. Look at this one *o*. Are you the only conscious Muslim in this hall? You are only an invited guest and you had no business...”

“What is going on here?”

Haleemah had never been so glad to see anyone as she was to see Ahmad at that moment.

“*Ese o* A.Y. Thank you for asking,” Bimpe answered. “This...” she eyed Haleemah... “busybody here tried to disrupt Bro Basheer’s *nikkah*”

“How?”

Bimpe explained everything to him, with Ameenah supplying bits of information at intervals. Haleemah just stood there, head bowed. When Bimpe finished, Ahmad turned his attention to Haleemah.

“Is this true?”

Haleemah forced herself to speak. “Yes. But believe me, I was only trying to help by following the words of the prophet...”

“Iya Sunnah, hold it right there before I decorate your face with slaps. Did the prophet ask us to be tactless *ehn?*”

“Bimpe please calm down.” Ahmad pleaded. “You know what? Allow me to handle this, hmm. Let me have a word alone with Haleemah.”

Bimpe acquiesced in Ahmad’s decision and she and Ameenah moved to another seat, a few rows ahead. Ahmad led Haleemah outside towards his car. He opened the back door and made her sit with the door ajar while he leaned on the front passenger door. As per Islamic etiquette, they were not facing each other directly but could hear each other speak. People moved in and out of the hall.

“*Bismillah wa solatu wa salaam ‘ala Rasulullah. Ama ba’ad.* Sister Haleemah, I am not one to talk much so I will go straight to the point and keep this brief. I decided to have this talk with you because I am your friend’s older brother and you would respect me as she would. Am I correct?”

Haleemah nodded. *But I wish you could be more than a brother to me.*

“Thank you.” Ahmad continued. “I think it’d be safe to say that, although you meant well, you handled the matter in the wrong way. It is okay if you are all fired up and the Eeman is pumping through your veins like adrenaline, but you can’t afford to be impulsive. Being patient and thinking things through, are key characteristics a *da’ee* must have. Yes, Allah and his prophet laid down rules for Muslims to live by and it’s easy for individuals to implement. Getting others who may be reluctant or

ignorant to follow suit, however, takes wisdom and a healthy dose of tact...”

Haleemah listened as he lectured her. He explained to her how crucial it was to be unassuming and less suspicious about other people. To always see the good in others and not seek out their faults. Everyone including her was flawed, he told her, and they were all hopeful for Allah’s mercy. She was beginning to see the folly of her ways.

“Finally, you have to put yourself in people’s shoes. If you were the bride, would you appreciate it if an over-ambitious sister that you did not know, decided to create a scene on your big day?” Haleemah shook her head. “I thought so. Learn gentleness and consideration from the prophet, you’d be better for it.”

“*Jazaakumullahukhayran*, Brother Ahmad. You have indeed opened my eyes to recognise the error of my ways. I will try to change bi idhnillah. I believe I owe Bimpe and indeed your family an apology.”

“No worries, sister. Perhaps you’ll like to stay here for a while? I’ll get Ameenah to come and join you.”

*So thoughtful and wise.* Haleemah watched Ahmad as he walked back into the hall. A few minutes later, her friend joined her.

“Assalamu alaykum. Have you dropped your ‘Puma’?” Ameenah asked her. Her expression was serious.

“Waalaykumsalam warahmatullah.” Haleemah sighed. “Yes, my ‘Puma’ is gone. I am sorry for being a pain in the neck. Forgive me?”

“Your apology is accepted.”

“Thank you, Jazaakillahu khayran.”



Haleemah hugged her friend.

“*De nada* (you’re welcome), *wa anti fa jazaakillahu khayran.*” Ameenah sat beside her friend. “So, I can see that my brother was able to convince you to stop acting like an ‘I too know’ somebori?” Ameenah joked.

Haleemah smiled wistfully and nodded.

“*Hmm, na wa o.* You have refused to admit the truth. It’s written all over your face that you like my brother... a lot. Let me initiate this process now”

“In fact, I would marry him tomorrow, if he asked me to, today.” Haleemah immediately covered her mouth with her hands. She hadn’t meant to say the words out loud. She glanced at Ameenah, who was grinning like a satisfied cat.

“I didn’t mean...” She started. Ameenah gave her a stern look. Reluctantly, she said: “Ok, I like your brother. There, I said it. Happy now?”

“Yes. You see, it wasn’t that hard. I will work on the intel you have provided me. But first let’s get back inside, I am hungry” She pulled her friend up and putting her arms around her shoulders, they began to walk back into the hall. Ameenah continued:

“You see a lot of sisters have been trying to get Ahmad’s attention for a while now, but he’s not interested. Maybe Allah was keeping him for you...”



Hours later, when the bride and groom had left the venue to begin their new life together, and the hall was finally emptying, Haleemah and Ameenah, helped the caterers to clear away dishes and other utensils.

‘I am so happy for them, Baarakallahu feekuma’ Haleemah said

“Me too. Hopefully, yours with ‘you know who’ will be next in shaa Allah”

Haleemah was pleased, but she didn’t want to get her hopes up. She didn’t even know if Ahmad liked her.

Bimpe walked towards them with a message for Ameenah from their mum.

“Dolapo, mum said you should keep an eye on those caterers and make sure her plates are complete. She loaned them five dozens” She turned to leave.

Haleemah seized the opportunity. It was now or never since she would not be returning home with them. She cleared her throat.

“Bimpe, please I want to talk to you.”

Bimpe stopped but did not look back at Haleemah. “I want to apologise for my actions. I was wrong and foolish. Please find it in your heart to forgive me.”

The seconds ticked by and it felt like forever for Haleemah. Finally, Bimpe turned.

“I accept your apology. After all, to err is human, and to forgive, divine. I can see you are full of remorse and have learned your lesson.”

Haleemah was overjoyed. *Alhamdulillah*. “Indeed, I have. Thank you.” She held out her hand. Can we be friends now?”

Bimpe smiled and instead of taking her hand, she stepped up to her and pulled her into her arms. “Not friends but sisters. Forgive me for the way I acted too. I was only being protective.”

“It’s alright, I understand. I would have done the same... if not more”. They both laughed.

Haleemah pulled out of the hug and asked Bimpe to take her to their mum. “I want to thank her,” she told her.

Ummu Basheer was standing by the bus, overseeing the packing. Haleemah walked to her and began tentatively:

“Ma, I am glad the event was a success. I want to thank you for your hospitality over the weekend ma. I also want to apologise for my statements earlier. It was completely thoughtless of me. Please ma, forget I ever uttered them.”

“I don’t know what statements you are referring to dear.” Ummu Basheer replied her with a wink and a smile before she continued with her supervision.

Finally, Haleemah was satisfied. *I’ve made peace with everyone here, I will make sure I do the same with mum and dad.* She went over to where Bimpe and Ameenah were standing.

“It’s getting late girls, I have to get going. Thank you for a wonderful and transformative weekend. I won’t forget it for a long while” All three girls giggled.

“You want to leave this venue on your own? *Kama ni*, I won’t hear of it.” Bimpe said. “I will go and get A.Y now and he will drive you home. We will come with.”

She left to fetch their brother.

Haleemah gave Ameenah a knowing look. Maybe the events that occurred over the weekend marked the beginning of a sisterhood that would last for a long time.

*“ . . . and let them pardon and overlook. Would you not like that Allah should forgive you? And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.” Quran 24:22*

*It is not permissible for a man to forsake his Muslim brother for more than three days, each of them turning away from the other when they meet. The better of them is the one who gives the greeting of salaam first. al-Bukharee*

*...Allah does not want difficulty for you, but He wants to purify you, and to complete His favour upon you, that you may be grateful.” Quran 5:6*

*“The Messenger of Allah, peace, and blessings be upon him, said: Charity does not decrease wealth, no one forgives except that Allah increases his honour, and no one humbles himself for the sake of Allah except that Allah raises his status.” Abu Hurayrah in Al-Bukharee*

THE END

## About the Author

Hafsah B. Nurein aka Ummu Hurayrah is a Nigerian writer, and blogger. She loves to share writing tips and web series on her blog at: [www.ummuhurayrah.com](http://www.ummuhurayrah.com).

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