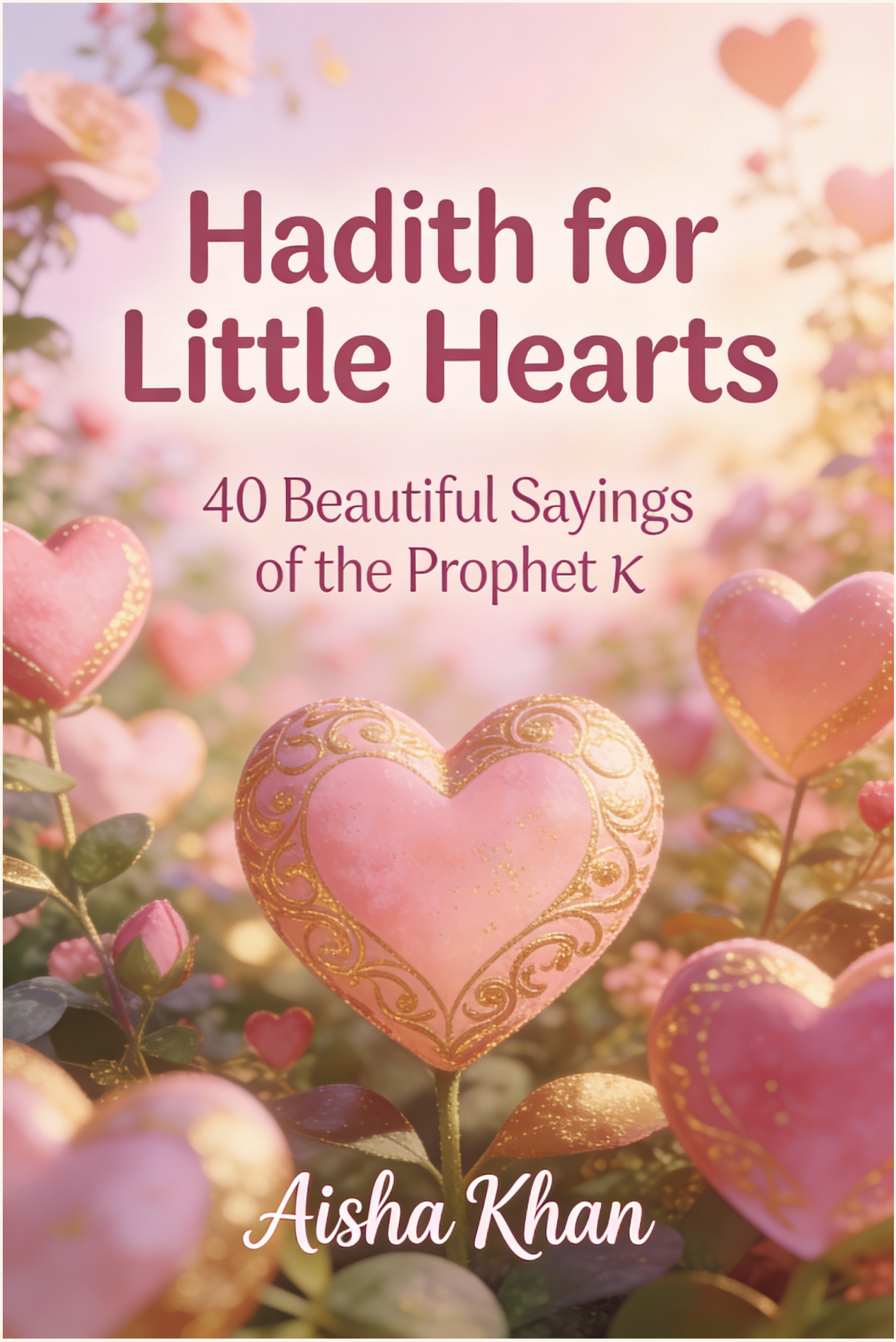

Hadith for Little Hearts
40 Beautiful Sayings of the Prophet ﷺ
Aisha Khan

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40 Beautiful Sayings of the Prophet ﷺ

by Aisha Khan

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CHAPTER I

A Smile Is a Gift

Yusuf's stomach felt like it was full of jumping frogs.

It was his first day at Al-Noor Primary, and everything was new — the blue lockers, the squeaky floors, the smell of someone else's packed lunch. He stood at the classroom door with his backpack straps gripped so tight his knuckles had gone white.

Twenty-two children looked up.

Yusuf wanted to disappear.

Then, from the third row, a boy with round glasses and a missing front tooth looked straight at him. And smiled. Not a polite, quick smile. A real one — wide and warm, like the two of them had already been friends for years.

Something unclenched in Yusuf's chest.

He found a seat. He survived the register. By lunch he was sitting next to the boy — whose name turned out to be Isa — and they were arguing cheerfully about which colour of Lego was the most important. (Yellow. Obviously.)

On the walk home, Yusuf told his mum about Isa's smile. She smiled herself and said, "You know the Prophet ﷺ told us that smiling at your brother is an act of charity."

Yusuf blinked. "A smile is sadaqah?"

"It is," she said. "Imam al-Nawawi recorded it in Riyad as-Salihin. Giving doesn't always mean money. Sometimes it means your face."

Yusuf thought about that all evening.

The next morning he walked into school and smiled at everyone — the crossing guard, the girl sitting alone by the water fountain, the teacher who already looked tired before the bell had even rung. Each time someone smiled back, it felt like passing a small, warm light from hand to hand.

By Friday, Isa told him, "You're the smiliest person in Year Two."

Yusuf decided that was the best compliment he had ever received.

The Prophet ﷺ said your smile for your brother is sadaqah — real charity, re
coins needed. No effort. Just your face, open and kind.

You already have everything you need to give this gift.

CHAPTER II

Words Are Seeds

Layla heard it before she even sat down.

"Did you know Sara didn't pass her reading test?" Hiba was whispering to two girls near the coat pegs. "Three times. She failed three times."

Layla's stomach tightened. Sara was her friend. Quiet Sara, who sat in the third row and always shared her coloured pencils without being asked. Layla knew about the reading test — Sara had whispered the truth to her one afternoon, her cheeks pink with embarrassment.

For one long second, Layla wanted to lean in. To add something. Maybe just a nod.

She didn't.

Instead she pressed her lips together and walked to her seat. She remembered something her grandmother had read aloud from a book of hadith, in a voice so gentle it felt like being tucked in:

"Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him speak good or remain silent." (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim)

Silent. That one word settled in her chest like a small, warm stone.

So Layla said nothing. Not one single syllable.

But at break time, she walked straight to Sara's desk and pointed at the little bird Sara had sketched on the cover of her notebook. "That actually looks like it could fly," Layla said. "The wings are perfect."

Sara's whole face changed. Like a window someone had finally opened.

By lunchtime, two other classmates had stopped to look at the bird. By home time, four girls were gathered around it, asking Sara to teach them how she drew feathers.

One kind word. Four new smiles.

On the walk home, Layla thought about the tomatoes her baba grew on their balcony. He started them from tiny dry seeds — nothing much to look at. But give them soil and a little water, and they grew into something that fed the whole family.

Words are like that.

Every single one is a seed. You get to choose what you plant.

CHAPTER III

Truth Always Wins

The crash was loud. So loud that Adam froze.

He stood in the sitting room, football in his hands, staring at the floor. Mama's blue vase — the tall one with the white flowers painted on it, the one she'd had since before Adam was even born — lay in three jagged pieces.

His stomach dropped.

Then he heard footsteps in the hallway. Little Hana, his four-year-old sister, toddled in, curious about the noise.

And just like that, a thought crept in. She could have done it. Mama wouldn't know.

Adam looked at Hana. Hana looked at the broken vase. She didn't even understand what had happened.

The thought sat in his chest like a heavy stone.

He imagined the words. Hana knocked it over. Easy words. Three words. No punishment. No tears.

But then — something else. A memory of what his teacher had read aloud in class only last week. The Prophet ýú said:

"Hold fast to truthfulness, for truthfulness leads to righteousness and righteousness leads to Paradise." (Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 6094; Sahih Muslim, no. 2607)

Adam set the football down slowly.

When Mama walked in, he looked straight at her. "I did it. I was kicking my ball inside. I'm so sorry."

Silence. Two whole seconds of it.

Then Mama knelt down and held his face in her hands. She was sad about the vase — yes, she was. But she pulled him close and said, "I'm proud of you. That was brave."

Brave. He hadn't thought of it like that. Telling the truth didn't feel like much. But the stone in his chest? Gone. Completely gone.

Here's the thing about lies: they feel light when you first pick them up. But you carry them all day, all night, sometimes for years.

The truth can feel scary for one moment. Just one moment.

Then it sets you free.

The Prophet ﷺ also said: "Beware of lying, for lying leads to wickedness and
(Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 6094; Sahih Muslim, no. 2607)

Every time you tell the truth — even when it is hard, even when your voice shakes — you are walking the path to Paradise. One brave step at a time.

CHAPTER IV

Move It Out of the Way

The playground was loud and bright and full of running feet.

Maryam walked slowly along the path that curved around the big oak tree, dragging her lunchbox behind her. She was in no hurry. The afternoon sun was warm on her face, and she was watching a butterfly bounce from flower to flower.

Then she saw it.

Half-buried in the gravel, right in the middle of the path, sat a sharp grey rock. Its edge jutted up like a tiny jagged tooth. Maryam stopped and looked at it. She thought about all the children who would come sprinting around that corner at home-time — racing, laughing, eyes up, not looking down at all.

Someone could fall. Someone could bleed.

She crouched, picked up the rock with both hands, and carried it to the grass beside the oak tree. She pressed it down into the soft soil near the roots. Safe. Out of the way.

Thirty seconds. Nobody saw.

But Maryam felt something she couldn't quite explain — a quiet, warm feeling, like a hug from the inside.

That evening, her father read to her from his hadith book. He read the words

"Removing something harmful from the road is an act of charity." (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim; recorded also in al-Nawawi's 40 Hadith, no. 26)

Maryam sat up straight. "Baba," she whispered, "I did that today. With a rock."

Her father smiled slowly. "Then Allah recorded it," he said.

She turned that over in her mind. One small rock. No audience. Yet Allah had seen every bit of it — the crouching, the carrying, the careful tucking into the earth.

You don't have to be big to do something real.

A sharp edge on a path. A six-year-old with careful hands. A deed that travels all the way to Allah.

CHAPTER V

Water for the Thirsty Dog

The sun that afternoon felt like a blanket nobody asked for.

Ibrahim was walking home from the corner shop, a bag of bread in each hand, when he heard it — a raspy, wet panting coming from behind the recycling bins. He stopped. Peeked around. And there it was: a scruffy brown dog, its tongue hanging out like a pink sock, lying flat on the hot pavement.

"Poor thing," Ibrahim whispered.

He ran the rest of the way home. "Mama! There's a dog outside and I think it's really sick. It's panting so hard."

His mother came to the door, looked down the street, and nodded. She filled a wide plastic bowl with cool water from the tap — all the way to the brim — and handed it to Ibrahim. "Go," she said simply. "Quickly."

He walked carefully so the water wouldn't spill. He set the bowl right in front of the dog's nose. The dog lifted its head. Sniffed. Then it drank and drank and drank.

Ibrahim sat on the kerb and watched.

Later, when his mother was tucking him in, she told him about a man from long ago — a traveller crossing the desert who was so thirsty he climbed down into a dry well just to reach the last drop of water. On his way back up, he passed a dog gasping in the heat. The man looked at the dog. He thought about his own thirst, just minutes before. So he climbed all the way back down, filled his shoe with water, held it in his teeth, and climbed up again — just for a dog.

Allah forgave every single one of that man's sins.

The Prophet ﷺ told this story himself. When the companions asked, "Is there he replied: "There is a reward for serving any living being." (Sahih Bukhari, Sahih Muslim)

Ibrahim pulled the duvet up to his chin and smiled.

That dog outside. That bowl of water. That tiny walk down the street.

All of it seen. All of it counted.

Mercy is never too small for Allah to notice.

CHAPTER VI

What I Wish for You

The cupcake had pink frosting and three rainbow sprinkles on top. It was the last one on the table.

Fatima got there first. She picked it up, felt its weight in her hand, breathed in the sweet vanilla smell. She had been waiting for that cupcake all afternoon.

Then she looked up.

Across the room, her friend Zainab was standing alone by the wall. Zainab was shy — the kind of shy that makes your feet stay still even when you want to move. She was looking at the empty plate where the cupcakes had been, and her face said everything her mouth wasn't saying.

Fatima held the cupcake a little tighter.

She thought about how much she wanted it. Then she thought about how much Zainab probably wanted one too.

The Prophet ýú once said something that Fatima's mother had taught her:

"None of you truly believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself." (Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Iman, no. 13; Sahih Muslim, Book of Iman, no. 45; also recorded as Hadith 13 in the 40 Hadith of al-Nawawi)

Loves for his brother. Loves for his sister. Loves for the shy girl by the wall with no cupcake.

Fatima walked over. She tore the cupcake right down the middle — one half with pink frosting, one half plain — and held out the bigger piece to Zainab.

Zainab's whole face changed. Like a curtain opening onto sunshine.

"Are you sure?" Zainab whispered.

"I'm sure," said Fatima. And she was.

Here is the strange, wonderful thing. Fatima ate her half and it tasted better than any whole cupcake she had ever had. Not because the frosting was better. Because her heart was bigger.

That is what this hadith teaches you. Wanting good things for others does not shrink your joy. It doubles it. Every single time.

The Prophet ýú knew. He always knew.

CHAPTER VII

Peace Be With You

Hamza was six years old and small enough to fit under his father's arm like a tucked-in book. One evening, his father read him a hadith. Just one sentence. The Prophet ﷺ said: "Spread
Muslim)

Six words. That was all.

But Hamza couldn't stop thinking about them.

The next morning he decided to try. He walked into the lobby of his building and looked up at Mr Rafiq, the doorman, who always stood there with a face like a closed umbrella.

"Assalamu Alaykum," said Hamza.

Mr Rafiq blinked. Then something cracked open—slow, like a window in winter. He smiled. A real one. "Wa Alaykum Assalam, little one."

Hamza walked to school feeling tall.

He said it to the woman at the corner shop. He said it to his teacher before class. He even said it to his Uncle Tariq, who was famous in the family for grumbling at everything.

Uncle Tariq grumbled. Then stopped. Then said it back—quietly, like he'd almost forgotten the words existed.

Here is the thing about salam: the Prophet ﷺ also told us that you will not tr
another, and he asked, shall I tell you what will make you love one another? Spread salam. (Sahih Muslim) Love. Built from two words and a warm face.

Hamza didn't build mosques that week. He didn't recite a long surah. He was six. But he spread salam everywhere he went—to the grumpy and the cheerful alike—and every face he gave it to softened, even a little.

You can do this too. Right now. Today.

It costs nothing. It weighs nothing. And yet it carries all the light of a faith that began with peace and asks us to pass that peace on—one face at a time.

CHAPTER VIII

The Mercy Boomerang

The path after rain was the worst kind of slippery — the kind where puddles hide under leaves and your boots squelch with every step. Noor loved it anyway. She loved the smell of wet grass, the grey sky blinking between clouds, the whole garden looking freshly washed.

Then she saw the snail.

It was creeping right across the middle of the path. A tiny brown spiral, no bigger than her thumbnail. Slow. Completely unaware that her father's heavy boots were somewhere behind her.

Noor crouched down. She cupped both hands very gently — the way her teacher had shown her to hold anything breakable — and slid the snail onto the edge of a leaf. She carried it, barely breathing, to the wet grass beside the path and set it down.

Done. The snail didn't even look up.

Her mother had been watching from the doorway. "What was that?" she called.

"A snail," said Noor, wiping her hands on her jeans. "It would have gotten squished."

Her mother smiled — a big, warm one. She waved Noor over and crouched beside her on the doorstep. "You know what the Prophet ﷺ said about moments like that?"

Noor shook her head.

"He said — and Imam al-Nawawi recorded it in Riyad as-Salihin — 'Show mercy to those on earth, and the One in the heavens will show mercy to you.'"

Noor turned the words over in her mind. Those on earth. She looked back at the garden. The snail was already gone, tucked somewhere safe in the grass.

"So even a snail counts?" she asked.

"Every creature counts." Her mother tapped Noor's chest, right over her heart. "Mercy works like a boomerang. You throw it out — to a snail, a friend, anyone hurting — and Allah sends it back to you."

Noor liked that picture. A boomerang made of kindness, arcing up toward the sky and curving all the way home.

She went inside and made herself a quiet promise: she was going to be the best boomerang thrower in the whole family.

CHAPTER IX

The Best Thing I Can Do for You

Zainab heard her mother before she saw her.

The front door clicked. Then slow footsteps. Then a long, long sigh — the kind that meant Mama was tired all the way to her bones.

Mama worked at the hospital on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. On those evenings she arrived home with shadows under her eyes and her shoes already half off before she reached the hallway. Zainab, nine years old and sharp-eyed, knew that sigh very well.

The kitchen was a mess. Plates in the sink from lunch. A sticky spoon on the counter. Crumbs from Zainab's afternoon toast scattered across the worktop like tiny islands.

Normally Zainab waited to be asked.

But that week her teacher had shared something the great companion Abdullah ibn Mas'ud once asked the Prophet ýú: "Which deed is most beloved to Allah?"

The Prophet ýú answered: "Prayer at its proper time."

"Then what?"

"Dutifulness to parents."

"Then what?"

"Striving in the path of Allah."

(Reported by Bukhari and Muslim)

Dutifulness to parents. Number two. Right between the prayer and everything else.

That stuck.

Zainab set down her book. She rolled up her sleeves. She washed the plates, dried them, and stacked them where they belonged. She wiped the counter — not quickly and sloppily, but properly, every last crumb gone. She straightened the dish towel on the oven handle the way Mama liked it: folded into neat thirds.

She had just finished when Mama walked in.

Mama stopped. She looked at the gleaming counter. She looked at Zainab.

"Did you do all this?"

"I just tidied up a bit," Zainab said. Quietly proud.

Her mother pulled her close and held on. Zainab felt how tired Mama was — and also how warm that hug was.

Serving your parents is serving your deen. You do not need to climb a mountain to please Allah. Sometimes you just need to wash a plate.

CHAPTER X

Two Words That Matter

Omar had never really thought about those two words before Tuesday.

Tuesday was when Baba told him something that stuck. The Prophet ﷺ once said: "He who does not thank people does not thank Allah." (Riyad as-Salihin, reported by Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi, hasan)

Two sentences. Enormous meaning.

Omar turned it over in his head all morning. Not thanking people is the same as not thanking Allah? That felt serious. He decided to run an experiment — one whole day of saying JazakAllahu Khayran and actually meaning it.

At lunchtime, the lunch lady — her name was Mrs. Hana, and she wore the same blue apron every single day — scooped a big spoonful of rice onto his tray. Omar looked straight up at her.

"JazakAllahu Khayran," he said. Quietly. A little nervous.

Mrs. Hana stopped. She blinked. Then a real smile spread across her face — the kind that reaches all the way to the eyes. "Wa iyyak, habibi," she said softly.

Omar walked away with something warm glowing in his chest. Like a small candle he had just lit.

After school, his teacher handed back his drawing with a gold star on it. "JazakAllahu Khayran, Miss," Omar said, louder this time. She tilted her head. "That truly means a lot, Omar."

That evening, his older brother Ziad helped him tie his shoelaces — again, because Omar could never get the loops right the first time. Omar looked up.

"JazakAllahu Khayran, Ziad."

Ziad laughed. Then he ruffled Omar's hair. "You've been saying that all day, haven't you?"

"Baba told me something," Omar said. "About thanking people."

Ziad went quiet for a second. "Yeah," he said. "That one hits different."

It does. Every kind thing someone does for you — the rice on your tray, the star on your drawing, the shoelace tied for the third time — is a gift Allah arranged just for you. Thanking the person who delivered it is your way of thanking Him.

So say it. And mean every letter.

CHAPTER XI

Clean Outside, Clean Inside

Amira's wudu mat was pink with little white flowers on it. She rolled it out beside the bathroom sink every afternoon, just before Asr prayer, and went through the steps one by one: bismillah, hands, mouth, nose, face, arms, head, ears, feet.

Her grandmother, Teta, was watching from the doorway.

"You look very serious," Teta said, smiling.

"I'm concentrating," Amira said firmly.

When Amira had dried her hands and was ready to pray, Teta sat beside her on the edge of the bed. "Did you know," Teta said, "that the Prophet ﷺ told us purity is half of faith?"

Amira blinked. "Half?"

"Half." Teta held up one hand, fingers spread. "Sahih Muslim. 'Purity is half of faith.' Five words—but they carry so much inside them."

"Does it just mean wudu?" Amira asked.

"It means wudu," Teta agreed. "But it means more than that too."

She counted on her fingers. Washing your hands before meals. Brushing your teeth so your breath is fresh when you speak to people. Keeping your room tidy instead of leaving socks on the floor—here Amira quietly looked at the two socks lying beside her wardrobe—and cleaning the words in your heart before they come out of your mouth.

"What do you mean?" Amira asked.

"If a word isn't kind, leave it inside," Teta said gently. "That is cleanliness too. A clean heart does not hold grudges. It does not let unkind thoughts pile up like old dishes in a sink."

Amira thought about a comment she had nearly made about her classmate's drawing that morning. She was very glad she had swallowed it.

After her prayer, she crossed the room and picked up the socks.

Teta noticed. She did not say a word. She just smiled the way grandmothers smile when they are quietly, completely proud.

Islam loves purity—inside and out. The outside you can see. The inside only you and Allah know. Take care of both.

CHAPTER XII

The Right-Hand Rule

Bilal always forgot.

Every single evening, the family sat down to dinner — rice, lentil soup, sometimes his favourite macaroni — and every single evening, Bilal's left hand reached for the spoon first. His mother would raise one eyebrow. He would switch hands and smile. Then five minutes later, somehow, the left hand was back.

It was embarrassing.

One Friday, Baba invited Jiddo — Bilal's grandfather — for dinner. Jiddo was old and quiet and always smelled like cardamom. He noticed things.

"Left hand again, little one," Jiddo said, very gently.

Bilal looked at his spoon. He looked at his lap. "I keep forgetting, Jiddo."

Jiddo did not scold him. He simply set down his own spoon and leaned in close, as if sharing a secret.

"Did you know," he said, "that the Prophet ﷺ taught us exactly how to eat? H
for Shaytan eats with his left." Jiddo tapped the table softly. "Bukhari and Muslim both recorded it. The
Messenger of Allah ﷺ cared about every little thing — even which hand holds

Bilal looked at his right hand. Really looked at it.

He thought about the Prophet ﷺ sitting with his companions, eating with his
making it complicated. Just this. Just a hand. Just a habit.

That night Bilal made a decision. He would practise at every meal. Breakfast. Lunch. Dinner. Even snacks. He would make it automatic, the way brushing teeth had become automatic.

It took eleven days. He counted.

Now his right hand reaches first, every time, without thinking.

Such a small thing, isn't it? One hand instead of another.

But when your right hand lifts the spoon, you are following the Prophet ﷺ. A

The Prophet ﷺ said: "When one of you eats, let him eat with his right hand, a
with his right hand, for Satan eats with his left hand and drinks with his left hand." (Sahih Muslim 2020; Sahih al-Bukhari 5376)

CHAPTER XIII

Bismillah—The Words Before We Eat

The birthday cake had three layers. Pink frosting, rainbow sprinkles, and a little chocolate star right on top. Safiya had never seen anything so beautiful sitting on a paper plate before.

"Everyone, take a slice!" called Maya's mum, and the children rushed forward with their hands out.

Safiya took hers carefully. A fat piece with extra sprinkles along the edge. She sat down, closed her eyes for just one second, and whispered: "Bismillah."

Her friend Nour looked up from across the table. "What did you say?"

"Bismillah." Safiya smiled. "It means In the name of Allah. I say it before I eat anything."

Nour tilted her head. "Even cake?"

"Especially cake."

Nour thought about this. "But why?"

Safiya put her fork down. She wanted to get the answer just right. "Because Allah is the One who made the wheat that made the flour that made this cake. And the eggs. And the sugar. And the butter, and — well, everything. So before I eat, I say His name. To remember who gave it to me. To say thank you."

Nour looked down at her own plate quietly. Then she said, very softly: "Bismillah."

She grinned. "I think it tastes nicer now."

Safiya laughed. It always did feel nicer.

The Prophet ﷺ once taught this to a young boy named Umar ibn Abi Salama, r "O boy, mention Allah's name, eat with your right hand, and eat from what is nearest to you." (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim)

Two words. That is all.

And here is the good news if you forget: say Bismillahi fi awwalihi wa akhirihi — In the name of Allah at its beginning and its end — and your whole meal is still covered. (Riyad as-Salihin, reported by Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi, hasan)

So next time you sit down — birthday cake or plain bread, a special dinner or just a biscuit after school — whisper Bismillah first.

You are not just eating. You are worshipping.

CHAPTER XIV

Don't Leave It for the Devil

The sun had finally dipped behind the rooftops. The adhan drifted in through the open window, soft and steady.

Khalid had been waiting all day for this moment.

His family gathered around the low table. Right in the middle sat a small plate piled with dates — brown, soft, glistening. His father reached forward, said Bismillah, and iftar began.

Khalid picked up a date and bit into it. Pure sweetness. He reached for a second one — and his fingers slipped.

The date bounced off the edge of the plate and landed on the floor mat.

He stared at it. Then he looked at the full plate. He was about to leave the fallen date behind and take a fresh one instead.

"Pick it up, son," said his father, very quietly.

"But Baba — it fell on the floor."

His father smiled. "The Prophet ýú said: When any of you drops a morsel, let harmful from it, and eat it — and not leave it for the devil." He tapped the table gently. "That is in Sahih Muslim. A date is a blessing from Allah. You do not hand a blessing to Shaytan."

Khalid reached down. He brushed away a tiny thread from the mat. Then he ate the date.

It tasted exactly the same as the others.

Actually — maybe even a little sweeter.

His father leaned in close. "Think about how long that date travelled to reach your plate. The tree, the sun, the farmer, Allah's rain. All of that — for you. Wasting it means forgetting the Giver."

Khalid did not forget again.

After that, he picked up every dropped morsel at every meal. Because a blessing is a blessing, whether it lands perfectly on the plate or tumbles onto the mat.

You do not leave gifts behind.

CHAPTER XV

Gentle Hands, Gentle Heart

The bee came in through the kitchen window on a Tuesday afternoon. It bumped against the glass once, twice, three times — confused and buzzing loudly.

Hana's little brother Tariq dived under the table. "Kill it, Baba! Kill it!"

But their father didn't reach for a newspaper. He didn't swat. He walked calmly to the cupboard, took down a clear plastic cup and a piece of card, and crouched low near the window. Very slowly, very quietly, he placed the cup over the bee and slid the card underneath.

The whole thing took about thirty seconds.

He tipped the cup outside. The bee flew free into the garden — probably relieved.

Hana stared. "Why didn't you just... squish it?"

Her father sat down at the table and pulled her close. "The Prophet ýú said so
"Gentleness does not enter into anything except that it beautifies it, and it is not removed from anything except that it makes it ugly." (Sahih Muslim)

Beautiful. That word stuck.

"So being gentle made that better?" Hana asked.

"Everything," he said. "The bee is safe. Your brother isn't scared anymore. And nobody's hands are sticky." He smiled. "Gentleness fixes things quietly."

Hana thought about the morning — how she'd snapped at Tariq for touching her coloured pencils. How his face had crumpled. She hadn't fixed anything then. She'd only made it uglier.

Allah loves gentleness too. He is ar-Rafeeq — the Gentle One — and He loves that quality in His creation. (Sahih Muslim)

That evening, when Tariq knocked over her half-finished puzzle by accident, Hana took a breath. She didn't shout.

"It's okay," she said. "We'll build it again together."

His whole face lit up.

Gentle. Like a cup over a bee. Like a hand that holds instead of hits.

The stronger choice. Every single time.

CHAPTER XVI

A Promise Is a Promise

Tariq had one plan for Saturday afternoon. One. Football with Sami and the boys in the park, the kind of game that goes on until it's almost dark. He'd been thinking about it since Wednesday.

But on Friday, his friend Rayan had looked at him with those worried eyes. "Tariq, I really don't understand fractions. Will you come over tomorrow and help me before the test on Monday?"

Tariq had said yes.

Now it was Saturday. The sun was out. He could hear a ball bouncing two streets away. His boots were already on.

His mother found him at the door.

"Where are you going, habibi?"

"Football." And then, quieter: "But I told Rayan I'd help him. The game starts in ten minutes."

She sat down beside him. "The Prophet ýú told us that one of the signs of a h promise, he breaks it." She said it gently. Not a punishment. Just a truth. Important.

This hadith is recorded in both Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, and Imam al-Nawawi placed it as the fourteenth hadith in his famous forty — right at the heart of what a Muslim's character should look like.

Tariq tugged at his laces. Breaking a promise. He didn't want to be that person.

He texted the boys: Can't make it today. Helping Rayan.

Then he walked to Rayan's house.

Ninety minutes. Fractions clicked into place one by one. By the end, Rayan was grinning so wide it was nearly funny.

Walking home, Tariq thought about the goal he might have scored. The grass, the shouting, the sun on his back.

Then he thought about Rayan's face. That grin.

Honour. It sits lighter in the chest than guilt ever could.

Your promise is your word. Your word is your character. And your character — that's the real you.

CHAPTER XVII

Waiting with a Brave Heart

The waiting room smelled of disinfectant and old magazines. Musa sat very still in a plastic chair, his feet not quite reaching the floor.

His mother was somewhere behind the big grey doors. The nurses had taken her at nine o'clock exactly. The wall clock now said quarter past eleven. Two hours and fifteen minutes. It felt like a whole year.

His father sat beside him, a cup of cold tea untouched in his hand. Musa wanted to cry, but his chest felt too tight for tears.

"Baba," he whispered. "When will she come out?"

"Soon, insha'Allah." His father pulled him close. "Do you remember what the

Musa shook his head. He didn't feel patient at all. He felt small and frightened.

"He said — both Bukhari and Muslim report it — that no one has ever been given a gift more beautiful or more complete than patience. Whoever learns to wait with trust, Allah gives him patience itself as a reward."

Musa looked at his small hands in his lap. "But how do you do that?"

"You make du'a," his father said softly. "You talk to Allah. He told us in the Quran: Indeed, Allah is with the patient. (Surah al-Baqarah, 2:153) That means right now, in this waiting room, He is here with us."

So Musa folded his hands and whispered — quietly enough that only Allah could hear. He asked for his mother to come out safely. He asked for the doctor's hands to be steady. He even asked to feel a little less afraid.

Something shifted. The tight knot in his chest loosened. Just a little. But enough.

The clock kept ticking. Quarter to twelve. Noon. Half past.

Then the grey doors swung open, and a nurse smiled.

Patience is not what you feel when you are not afraid. It is what you choose when you are terrified — and you reach for Allah anyway.

He is always there.

CHAPTER XVIII

Biscuits for Salma

The rain was coming down hard on Saturday morning. Not the fun kind you splash in. The cold, grey kind that makes you want to stay inside forever.

Rania stood at the kitchen window and sighed. Her classmate Salma had been absent all week — five whole days — with a bad fever. Every morning Rania had looked at that empty chair and felt a small ache in her stomach.

"Teta," she called, "can we do something for Salma?"

Her grandmother shuffled in wearing her big fluffy slippers and smiled. "I was wondering when you'd ask."

They made biscuits. Simple ones — butter, flour, a little vanilla, a pinch of sugar. Teta let Rania press each one flat with her palm. The whole kitchen filled with warmth and something good.

While the biscuits baked, Teta told Rania what the Prophet ýú once said: "Fee (Sahih al-Bukhari)

"Just visit?" Rania asked. "That's all?"

"That's everything," Teta said quietly.

She also shared something that made Rania's eyes go wide. Whoever visits a sick Muslim walks in a garden of Paradise — all the way until they come back home. (Sahih Muslim; Riyad as-Salihin, al-Nawawi)

Rania packed the biscuits into a tin and tied a yellow ribbon around it.

When Salma opened the door, pale and wrapped in a blanket, she looked at the tin. Then at Rania.

"You came," she whispered.

Two words. But Rania felt something warm bloom in her own chest right then — nothing to do with biscuits.

On the walk home, Teta squeezed her hand. "You thought you were going to cheer Salma up," she said. "But Allah gave the gift to both of you."

That is how the sunnah works. You show up for someone, and the light touches you too.

CHAPTER XIX

The Real Champion

The toy was a red racing car with real rubber wheels. Idris had saved for it — six whole weeks of saying no to sweets at the school tuck shop — and it had finally arrived that morning in a shiny box.

By lunchtime, his little brother Samir had snapped both wing mirrors clean off.

Idris felt the anger before he even thought it. Hot. Fast. His hands curled into fists.

He opened his mouth—

And stopped.

Three breaths. In. Slowly. Out.

Because he remembered something the Prophet ﷺ had said: "The strong perso overpower others. The strong person is the one who controls himself when angry." (Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 6114; Sahih Muslim, no. 2609)

Idris looked at Samir. His little brother's lip was already trembling. He knew exactly what he had done.

"You broke my car," Idris said. Quiet. Steady. Not shouting. Just true.

"I'm sorry," Samir whispered.

Idris turned the car over in his hands. The wheels still spun. The mirrors were gone, but it would be okay. He set it carefully on the shelf and walked away before the hot feeling could come back.

That evening, Baba found them both at the kitchen table sharing crackers like nothing had happened. He asked what had gone on, and Idris told him — the broken mirrors, the fists, the three breaths.

Baba was quiet for a moment. Then he smiled.

"Do you know what the Prophet ﷺ told a man who kept asking him for advice taghdab. Do not get angry. The man asked again. And again the Prophet ﷺ ga get angry." (Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 6116)

He squeezed Idris's shoulder. "Tonight, you were the real champion of this house."

Idris glanced at the car on the shelf. The mirrors were still gone.

But it felt like he had won something much, much better.

That hot, tight feeling in your chest — you know it. Everyone does. The question is never whether it comes. The question is what you do with it. Three breaths. Steady words. Because the strongest person in any room

is always the one who holds it together.

CHAPTER XX

A Reward for Every Living Thing

Every morning, before Aisha even put on her school shoes, she had one job.

The bird feeder.

It hung from the old apple tree at the back of the garden — a small wooden box her baba had built last autumn with three nails and a lot of wobbling. Each dawn, Aisha would climb onto her tiptoes, tip the little bag of seeds, and listen to them scatter into the tray. Shhhh. Like a whisper between her and the morning.

The sparrows came first. Then the fat pigeon who waddled beneath the feeder picking up whatever fell. Sometimes a robin perched on the fence and watched, head tilted, as if waiting to be introduced.

One Tuesday, Aisha's mother found her standing in the garden in her school coat, seeds still in hand, squinting up into the branches.

"You haven't eaten your own breakfast yet," her mother said.

"They come before me," Aisha said simply.

Her mother smiled. She sat on the back step and patted the space beside her.

"Do you know," her mother said gently, "the Prophet ýú told us that there is a reward for every living being?" She let the word any sit in the cold morning air. "A cat. A dog. A bird too small to even remember your name."

The Companions asked him directly — is there a reward for us in serving animals? — and that was his answer. (Sahih al-Bukhari; Sahih Muslim)

Aisha looked at the sparrows hopping over the seeds.

"So every time I fill this up," she said slowly, "Allah writes it down for me?"

"Every single seed."

Aisha tipped the last handful in. Then she went inside for her porridge.

You might have a bird feeder, or a fish, or a garden snail you once moved carefully off the path. It doesn't matter how small the creature is. Every one you care for is a reason for Allah to be pleased with you.

Every feathered, furry, small, and crawling thing.

Every one.

CHAPTER XXI

The Heart of a Good Neighbour

Every Friday after Jumu'ah, Hassan and his father walk home past the vegetable market. And every Friday, the same thing happens.

Umm Khalid is standing at the bottom of the stairs.

She is old—seventy-three, she once told Hassan with a proud smile. Her knees ache on cold days, and she lives on the third floor, which means thirty-one steps. Hassan counted them once. She is always holding two bags so heavy that the plastic handles have turned her fingers white.

"Yalla, Hassan." His father nudges him. "Go."

So Hassan goes. He takes both bags. He climbs all thirty-one steps. And Umm Khalid follows slowly behind, her hand on the railing, saying "JazakAllahu Khayran, habibi" at least four times before they reach the top.

The first time, Hassan did it because his father told him to. The second time, he did it because he remembered. By the fourth Friday, he did it because he wanted to. That is a different feeling entirely.

One evening his father sat beside him and read him something the Prophet ﷺ

"He who believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him honour his neighbour." (Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim)

Honour. Not just say hello. Not just avoid being rude. Honour.

His father told him something else too—that Jibril, the great angel, kept rem
rights of neighbours so often that the Prophet ﷺ began to wonder whether nei
each other. (Sahih al-Bukhari)

That is how important a neighbour is.

Hassan thought about Umm Khalid's white fingers on the bag handles. He thought about her slow steps on the stairs.

Thirty-one steps. Every Friday.

Not a big thing, really. But maybe that is the point. Good neighbourliness is not one giant moment. It is showing up, week after week, bag after heavy bag.

You do not need to look far for someone to serve. Sometimes they live on the third floor.

CHAPTER XXII

Welcome, Guest!

The doorbell rang at half past four, and nobody was expecting it.

Maryam was in the middle of a drawing — a bright orange house with lopsided windows — when her mother hurried past. "Aunt Sadia is here! She came early from the airport."

Within seconds the house flipped into a different kind of busy. Baba carried in luggage. Mama opened the good tin of biscuits, the one they saved for Eid. And Maryam stood in the middle of the kitchen, not quite sure what to do.

"Can I help?" she asked.

"Yes." Mama handed her the tray with the tall glasses. "Use the proper ones. The crystal ones from the top shelf."

Maryam blinked. "Those ones? But what if I—"

"For a guest," Mama said simply, "we bring out the best."

While the cookies baked — Maryam stirred the dough herself, with both arms — Baba came and sat on the kitchen stool. He looked pleased.

"Do you know what the Prophet ýú said about guests?" he asked.

Maryam shook her head.

"He said: 'Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him be generous to his guest.'" Baba tapped the counter. "That is in Bukhari and Muslim, Maryam. It is not just about good manners. It is tied to faith itself."

"So how we treat a guest shows what we believe?" she asked.

"All of it," said Baba. "When Aunt Sadia walks through that door, she is not just a visitor. She is an honour Allah has sent to our home."

The oven beeped. Twelve cookies came out golden and round and smelling of vanilla.

Maryam carried the plate herself, very carefully, on the crystal tray.

Aunt Sadia smiled so wide her eyes disappeared. "You made these for me?"

"Yes," said Maryam.

And she felt it, right down to her feet — exactly what Baba meant. Every guest at your door is an honour from Allah. Treat them like one.

CHAPTER XXIII

Even a Smile Counts

Dawud was seven years old, and he had a problem. A big one, at least to him.

He'd been listening to his father describe the man who built a whole masjid and earned a house in Jannah. He'd heard about scholars who had memorised every single ayah of the Quran. He'd sat in the back at Jumu'ah and watched the imam recite, the man's voice filling every corner right up to the ceiling.

Then Dawud looked at his own hands. Small. Seven years old. What could he do?

The next day at school, Dawud carried his lunch tray into the noisy hall. He nearly sat down at his usual table. His friends were there. It was easy there.

But he stopped.

At the far end of the hall sat a boy named Bashir — new this week, three days in. He was staring at his sandwich like it had personally offended him. Nobody had sat with him yet. Not once.

Dawud walked over. Put his tray down. "Can I sit here?"

Bashir looked up. Something in his face shifted — like a door that had been shut all morning quietly opening.

They talked about football. They argued about whether the mashed potato was actually mashed potato. By the end of lunch, Bashir was laughing, a real laugh, the kind that reaches the eyes.

That evening, Dawud's father opened Riyad as-Salihin and read aloud. The Pr
any act of kindness insignificant, even meeting your brother with a cheerful face." (Sahih Muslim)

Dawud went very still.

"Even lunch?" he said.

"Even lunch," his father said. "The angels write it down."

You don't need to build anything. You don't need to lead anyone. You only need to look around — really look — and notice who is sitting alone.

That is enough. More than enough.

CHAPTER XXIV

Alhamdulillah! Bless You!

It happened right in the middle of a maths lesson.

Sumayya was sitting in the third row, pencil in hand, when her nose began to tickle. She tried to hold it back. She really did. But—ACHOO!—it burst out of her like a thunder crack, so loud that Hamid dropped his rubber and little Zara jumped in her seat.

Sumayya clapped both hands over her face, cheeks burning pink.

But then something wonderful happened instead of laughter.

"Sumayya," said her teacher, Miss Nour, in the softest voice, "what do we say after a sneeze?"

Sumayya lowered her hands. She remembered. "Alhamdulillah," she said quietly. All praise is for Allah.

Miss Nour's face lit up. She set down her marker. "And now—what does everyone else say?"

The class looked around at each other.

"Yarhamukallah," Miss Nour told them, and she said it slowly so they could catch every syllable. May Allah have mercy on you. "And then Sumayya says back to us: Yahdikumullahu wa yuslihu balakum—May Allah guide you and set your affairs right."

She wrote all three phrases on the board. Then she told them about the Proph exactly this exchange and said that when a Muslim sneezes and praises Allah, it becomes a duty on every Muslim who hears to respond with mercy. This hadith is recorded in both Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim.

Think about that. A duty. A sneeze becomes a tiny handshake of care between two hearts.

Miss Nour made the whole class practise. She pretended to sneeze. Twenty-two children shouted "Yarhamukallah!" all at once, and the classroom erupted in happy noise.

Sumayya sat up straight. Her cheeks were still a little pink—but now she was grinning.

That sneeze had done something good after all.

The Prophet ﷺ said: "When one of you sneezes, let him say Alhamdulillah, ar Yarhamukallah." (Sahih al-Bukhari; Sahih Muslim)

CHAPTER XXV

Hide Your Yawn

The smell of Baba's lamb stew filled the kitchen. Yasir was eight, and very tired — he had spent the whole afternoon chasing his cousins around the garden.

He sat down at the dinner table, picked up his spoon, and then —

Yaaaaawn.

Not a small yawn. A wide, loud, mouth-open-to-the-ceiling yawn that showed every tooth in his head.

Across the table, Grandfather Nabil set down his bread. "Yasir," he said gently. "Cover your mouth."

Yasir blinked. "Why, Jiddo? I'm just tired."

Grandfather smiled the way he always did when a good story was coming.

"The Prophet ﷺ taught us something about yawning," he said. "Abu Hurayrah reported that the Prophet ﷺ said: 'Yawning is from Shaytan. When any one of you yawns, let him suppress it as much as possible — for when someone yawns and says "haa," Shaytan laughs at him.'" (Sahih al-Bukhari; Sahih Muslim — sahih)

Yasir sat up straight. Shaytan laughs?

"But I can't always stop a yawn," he said.

"You don't have to stop it," Grandfather said. "Just cover your mouth — like this." He pressed his hand gently over his lips. "Small effort. Big adab."

Adab. Good manners. Yasir had heard that word before, but he had never thought of manners as something the Prophet ﷺ cared about right here, at the dinner table, on an ordinary Tuesday.

He tried it the very next yawn — and he did yawn again, because lamb stew after a long afternoon will do that. His hand came up fast, his mouth stayed closed, and Grandfather gave him one slow, pleased nod.

Here is the thing about good manners: they do not need an audience. You cover your mouth when you are alone in your room the same way you do when you are sitting with a king. Because Allah always sees. The Prophet ﷺ always knew that. And now, so did Yasir.

He never forgot. Not once. Not even when no one was watching.

CHAPTER XXVI

Make It Easy

Khadijah's little brother Rayan had been staring at the same maths worksheet for twenty minutes. His pencil hadn't moved. His lip was trembling.

"Two groups of six," he kept whispering. "Two groups of six." The numbers on the page meant nothing to him. They were just tiny black shapes sitting there, not making any sense at all.

Khadijah sat down beside him. She could have sighed and walked away. Instead, she went to the kitchen cupboard and came back with a bag of coloured candy buttons.

"Here," she said, lining twelve of them along the table. "Split these into two groups."

Rayan blinked. Then he smiled. He pushed six candies to one side, six to the other.

"See?" said Khadijah. "Two groups of six. That's twelve. You already knew it."

Easy as that.

The next morning she told her teacher, Miss Nadia, what had happened. Miss Nadia smiled a long, slow smile.

"Do you know," she said, kneeling down, "that the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ taug pulled Riyad as-Salihin from her shelf. "He said, 'Make things easy for people and do not make them difficult.' Imam al-Bukhari and Imam Muslim both recorded those words."

Khadijah hadn't known that. But somehow she had already felt it — that turning something hard into something simple was never a small thing. It was a kindness. A choice.

The Prophet ﷺ was the greatest teacher who ever lived. And his way was alwa Always finding the road a person could actually walk.

You can do that too. When a friend is stuck, sit beside them. Find the candy buttons. Find the simpler word. Find the gentler path.

That is the sunnah.

And the sunnah fits every single person perfectly — because it was made for all of us.

CHAPTER XXVII

Little Steps, Big Rewards

Ibrahim had a plan.

A big, grand, enormous plan.

He was going to read the entire Quran in one week.

He announced this at breakfast, very seriously, with jam on his chin. His mother smiled—that quiet smile she used when she was about to say something wise. "Start smaller, habibi," she said. "Two ayahs tonight. Just two."

Two? Ibrahim almost laughed. He could do much more than two.

But that evening, after Isha prayer, he sat on his little prayer mat and opened his Quran. He read Surah Al-Ikhlas. Then Surah Al-Falaq. Slowly. Carefully. Moving his lips over each beautiful word. It took less than three minutes.

And it felt good. Really good.

He did it the next night. And the night after that.

On the fifth night, he was so tired after a long day at school that he fell asleep before he could even reach his mat. He woke up the next morning feeling heavy about it.

"I broke my streak," he told his mother, frowning.

"So start again tonight," she said simply.

He did.

A few weeks later, Ibrahim asked his father something that had been sitting in his chest like a small stone. Why would Allah care about two tiny ayahs, repeated night after night, when some people recited the whole Quran in a single day?

His father opened Riyad as-Salihin and read aloud:

"The most beloved deeds to Allah are the most consistent ones, even if they are small." (Sahih al-Bukhari; Sahih Muslim)

Ibrahim went quiet.

Even if they are small. Even two ayahs. Even three minutes on a tired Tuesday night when everything in him wanted to sleep.

He thought about rivers. A river does not smash through rock all at once. It just keeps moving—steady, every single day—and eventually it carves canyons.

Two ayahs tonight. Two ayahs tomorrow.

That is how a seven-year-old builds something that lasts forever.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Safe Hands, Safe Words

The new girl's name was Dina. She had arrived three weeks ago, all the way from Cairo, and her English had a soft, rounded sound that made some words come out a little differently.

At lunch, a group of girls started giggling.

"Say water again," one of them called out. "It sounds so funny!"

Dina's cheeks went red. She stared at her tray.

Salma was sitting two tables away. She heard everything. Her stomach tightened — that particular tightness that arrives when something wrong is happening and you have to choose what to do about it.

Her friend Hiba nudged her. "Come on. It is a bit funny."

Salma didn't move.

She was thinking about a hadith her teacher had read aloud last Sunday — one she had liked enough to copy into her notebook in her neatest handwriting. The Prophet ﷺ said: "The Muslim is the one from whose tongue and hand other Muslims are safe." (Sahih al-Bukhari, Book of Faith, Hadith 10; Sahih Muslim)

Tongue and hand. Both in the same sentence. Because you can wound someone without ever lifting a finger.

Salma stood up. She picked up her tray, walked across to Dina's table, and sat down. Just like that.

"I'm Salma," she said. "Where in Cairo did you live?"

Dina looked up, surprised. "Near the river," she said quietly.

"My grandmother is from Alexandria," said Salma. "She says Egyptian mangoes are the best in the whole world."

Dina smiled. Small first. Then bigger.

Behind them, the giggling faded.

Salma hadn't made a speech. She hadn't told anyone off. She had simply decided that her own tongue would be safe — and then used it to say something warm instead.

The Prophet ﷺ wrapped the hand and the tongue into one single rule. Not two. A word aimed at the wrong place leaves a bruise just as real as any other kind.

Your words belong to you. Use them to protect.

CHAPTER XXIX

The Cat in the Cage

Zayd loved Mishmish. That was the cat's name — Mishmish, meaning "apricot," because of the soft orange patches on her ears. Every evening she curled at the foot of Zayd's bed and purred like a tiny engine that never quite switched off.

One night, after Isha prayer, Zayd's father sat beside him and said, "I want to tell you a story."

"Long ago," Baba began, "a woman locked a cat in a room. She didn't feed it. She didn't give it water. She didn't let it go outside to find its own food from the earth. She just left it."

Zayd frowned. "What happened?"

"The cat died," Baba said quietly. "And because of that — only that — the woman faced a very serious punishment."

The Prophet ﷺ told us this story himself. It is recorded in both Sahih al-Buk
woman hadn't hurt anyone. She hadn't stolen. She had simply ignored one small, helpless creature — and Allah did not ignore that.

Zayd looked at Mishmish.

He got up. Right then. He walked to the kitchen, checked her bowl — barely any water left — and filled it to the brim. He scooped dry food and set it neatly beside her mat. Only then did he go back to sit with his father.

Baba smiled. "You understood."

And he had. Every animal in your care is a trust — an amanah — that Allah placed in your hands. You cannot hear a cat's thirst. You cannot see a bird's hunger. But Allah sees everything, hears everything, and forgets nothing.

The Prophet ﷺ also reminded us that there is a reward for serving any living
Sahih Muslim). Every bowl of water filled. Every creature tended. Every small act of mercy — counted.

From that night on, Zayd checked Mishmish's water before he thought about his own snack. Because some trusts are small and orange-eared and purring. And they deserve your whole heart.

CHAPTER XXX

The Prophet's Hug

It was two o'clock in the morning when Reem heard it.

A small cry from the next room. Her little brother Tariq, only three years old, whimpering through a bad dream.

Reem pulled her blanket up and waited. Then she heard something else — footsteps. Her father's slow, steady footsteps crossing the hall. The creak of Tariq's door. A soft hush, like wind through leaves. Then silence.

She crept out of bed and peeked.

Her father was sitting on the edge of Tariq's little bed, arms wrapped all the way around him, rocking gently. Tariq's crying slowed. Stopped. Her father pressed a kiss to the top of his head and whispered, "You're safe. Baba is here."

Reem went back to bed feeling warm, as if the hug had reached her too.

In the morning, she asked about it over breakfast.

"Baba, does Allah like hugs?"

Her father set down his tea. "There was a man," he said, "who told the Proph had never kissed a single one of them. Do you know what the Prophet ﷺ said?

Reem shook her head.

"He said: 'Whoever does not show mercy will not be shown mercy.'" Her father tapped his chest. "Imam al-Bukhari recorded it. And the Prophet ﷺ himself kissed his grandson al-Has No embarrassment. No hesitation."

Reem thought about that for a moment. The most beloved man who ever lived. Kissing a little boy's forehead.

"So last night," she said slowly, "when you hugged Tariq…"

"That was sunnah." Her father smiled. "A prophetic act. Right there in your brother's bedroom at two in the morning."

Reem looked at Tariq, happily smashing his toast.

Hugs were sunnah. Who knew.

CHAPTER XXXI

Stand Up for Your Friend

Umar spotted it from across the playground.

His best friend Sulayman — funny, loud, always sharing his crisps — had cornered a small boy near the climbing frame. The boy was new. He had only started on Monday. And right now he was staring at the mud while Sulayman flicked his water-bottle cap away.

"Give it back," the boy whispered. Nobody moved.

Umar's stomach went tight. He wanted to look the other way. Sulayman was his best friend. They walked to school together every single morning.

But his feet were already moving.

"Sulayman." Umar stepped between them. Not shouting. Just steady. "Give him his cap back."

Sulayman blinked. "It's just a joke—"

"It's not funny to him."

A long pause. Then, slowly, Sulayman picked up the cap and held it out. The small boy grabbed it and ran.

Walking home, Umar waited for Sulayman to be angry. Instead, Sulayman kicked a pebble along the pavement and said quietly, "You were right. That was rotten of me."

That evening Umar told his father everything.

His father listened, then smiled. "The Prophet ﷺ said: 'Help your brother who oppressed.'" He let that sit for a moment. "The companions asked him: how can anyone help an oppressor? And the Prophet ﷺ answered — by holding him back from doing wrong." (Sah

Umar thought about that for a long time.

Stepping in for Sulayman was not betraying him. It was the kindest thing anyone could do — the act that kept his friend from becoming someone cruel.

You might have a Sulayman in your life too. A friend who sometimes gets it wrong. Real brotherhood — real friendship — means caring enough to say something. Gently. Bravely.

Even when your knees are shaking.

CHAPTER XXXII

The Extra Ladle

The kitchen smelled like cumin and warm bread. Eight-year-old Fatima stood on her little wooden step stool, stirring the lentil soup with a spoon almost as long as her arm.

"Keep it moving," her mother said, "or it will stick to the bottom."

Fatima stirred. The pot was big — bigger than usual. She looked up. "Mama, why did you make so much? There are only four of us."

Her mother smiled and wiped her hands on her apron. "Do you know what the said: 'When you cook a stew, add more water to it and then look after your neighbour.'" She tapped the rim of the pot gently. "Muslim reported it. Al-Nawawi put it in Riyad as-Salihin. It is an old instruction. But it still works today."

Fatima thought about that. More water. More soup. More to give.

When the pot was ready, her mother ladled a generous portion — three full scoops — into a deep ceramic bowl. She covered it with a cloth. Then she handed it to Fatima.

"You carry it," she said. "You helped make it."

Next door lived Mrs Osman. She was old, and lived alone, and sometimes her lights stayed dark all evening. Fatima knocked. The door opened, and Mrs Osman's face did something beautiful. It opened, the way a window opens on a bright day.

"Lentil soup?" she whispered. "My favourite."

Walking back, Fatima felt full — and she hadn't even eaten yet. That is the strange thing about generosity. It fills the giver first.

Her mother was already setting the table. Four bowls. Four spoons.

"Did that feel good?" she asked.

Fatima nodded. She thought about the Prophet's words. Add more water. Such a simple thing. Such a small extra ladle.

But it reached all the way to Mrs Osman's heart.

The Prophet ýú said: "When you cook a stew, add more water to it and then lo
Muslim; Riyad as-Salihin, al-Nawawi)

CHAPTER XXXIII

The Heaviest Thing on the Scale

Adam had a theory.

He was nine years old and had it all figured out. On the Day of Judgement, when everyone's deeds were placed on the great Scale, the big things would go first. Prayers. Fasting. Hajj. Those were the heavy things, the real things. A cheerful "good morning" to a classmate? That couldn't weigh very much at all.

He told his father this one evening while they sat on the back step watching the stars come out.

His father was quiet for a moment. Then he smiled.

"Adam," he said, "do you know what the Prophet ﷺ told us about that Scale?"

Adam shook his head.

"He said: Nothing is heavier in the scale of a believer on the Day of Resurrection than good character." His father let the words sit in the cool air. "Riyad as-Salihin records it. Think about that. Not the longest prayer. Not the strictest fast. Good. Character."

Adam frowned. "But how?"

His father counted on his fingers. "The time you waited patiently while your little brother knocked over your Lego tower and you didn't shout — that goes on the Scale. The morning you told Mum she looked nice even though you were half asleep — that goes on the Scale. Yesterday, when you helped the new kid find the canteen without being asked. That too."

Adam sat very still.

All those small, ordinary moments. Every one of them, counted.

"So every day is a chance?" he asked quietly.

"Every single hour," his father said. "Your character isn't built in one big moment, ya ibni. It's built in a thousand tiny ones."

Adam looked up at the stars. Somewhere up there, a Scale was waiting.

He decided he had better start filling it — one kind word, one patient breath, one cheerful morning at a time.

CHAPTER XXXIV

Honour the Silver Hair

The bus was full.

Huda could see that from the moment she stepped on with Teta—her grandmother—on Thursday afternoon. Every seat taken. Huda spotted the last free spot near the middle, a red plastic seat next to the window, and sank into it gratefully. The bus lurched forward.

Then, at the very next stop, an old man climbed aboard. His hair was completely white. He walked slowly, one hand gripping the rail, his eyes moving across the rows looking for somewhere to sit. Nobody moved.

Huda looked at him. She looked at her seat. She looked at Teta, who gave her a tiny nod.

She stood up.

"Excuse me," Huda said, in her clearest voice. "Please take my seat."

The old man blinked. Then his whole face opened into a smile—the kind that reaches all the way up to the eyes. "Thank you, habibti," he said softly. "What a good girl."

Something strange happened then. A woman across the aisle smiled. A teenage boy offered Teta his own seat. The driver glanced in the mirror and nodded. One small thing had warmed the whole bus up, like switching a heater on in winter.

Huda held the rail and felt quietly pleased.

That evening, Teta sat beside her on the prayer rug. "Do you know," she said honouring a grey-haired Muslim is part of glorifying Allah Himself? Imam al-Nawawi kept that hadith safe in Riyad as-Salihin so we would never forget it." She squeezed Huda's hand. "When you stood up for that man today, you were not just being polite. You were honouring your Creator."

Huda thought about that for a long time.

The white hair. The tired hand on the rail. Her small, ordinary seat.

And all the way up to Allah.

CHAPTER XXXV

No Lies—Not Even for Laughs

Nadia had the best story ready.

It had everything — a flying cat, a banana peel, and her teacher's hat landing in the fish tank. None of it was true. Not one word. But she could already hear her classmates laughing, and that sound felt so good even before she opened her mouth.

She stood up at sharing time. The words were right there, waiting.

Then something stopped her.

She had heard the hadith just last weekend at her uncle's house. He had read it from Riyad as-Salihin, the big book with the green cover on his shelf. The Prophet ýú said: "Woe to the one laugh." (Riyad as-Salihin; reported by Abu Dawud and Tirmidhi; hasan)

Woe. That was a heavy word. It meant real trouble.

Nadia closed her mouth. She thought fast. Was there anything real — anything actually funny — that had happened to her?

Oh. Yes. There was.

She told them about the morning she sleepwalked into the kitchen, poured orange juice into her cereal bowl, and took a huge spoonful before waking up properly. Her little brother had filmed the whole thing on Mum's phone. She had made a face like a surprised fish.

The class burst out laughing. Actual, proper, falling-off-your-chair laughter.

It was just as good. Better, even. Because Nadia could laugh too — with her whole chest — without anything heavy sitting underneath.

That is the thing about true stories. They let everybody relax. The teller. The listener. Even your heart.

The Prophet ýú also said: "Truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteous al-Bukhari; Sahih Muslim)

You can be funny. You can be the funniest person in the whole room. Just make sure every single word of it is real.

CHAPTER XXXVI

A Du'a That Never Ends

Yasir kept Grandpa's prayer beads on his bedside table.

They were old. The wooden beads worn smooth from years of fingers moving quietly through them. Some nights Yasir held them without even realising he had picked them up.

Grandpa had been gone for three months. Three months felt very long when you were eight.

One evening, Yasir sat on his prayer mat after Maghrib, still holding the beads, and he asked his father the question that had been pressing inside his chest.

"Baba, can Grandpa still hear my du'a?"

His father sat down beside him. He did not rush to answer.

"The Prophet ﷺ told us," Baba said softly, "that when a person dies, all their deeds end except three. One of them is a righteous child who makes du'a for them." He paused. "That means you, Yasir. Your prayer is a gift that reaches Grandpa right now, wherever he is."

Yasir turned the beads slowly in his palm.

"So when I say Allahummaghfir lahu — O Allah, forgive him — he actually receives that?"

"Yes." Baba's voice was quiet. "It reaches him like a letter. A letter with light inside it."

Something loosened in Yasir's chest. He had felt so helpless since Grandpa left — too small to do anything that mattered. But this he could do.

He closed his eyes and whispered his grandfather's name into the du'a. Slowly. Carefully. The way you place something precious into very safe hands.

After that, he made it a habit. Every night after Maghrib. Some nights the du'a was long. Some nights just three words.

But every single time, he sent a letter with light in it.

"When a person dies, his deeds come to an end except for three: ongoing charity, knowledge that is benefited from, or a righteous child who prays for him." (Sahih Muslim)

Every du'a you make for your parents — living or gone — travels to them like a gift wrapped in love. You are never too young to send it. And it never, ever stops arriving.

CHAPTER XXXVII

The Secret Gift

Layla had been saving for three weeks.

Fifty pence here. A pound coin there. She kept the money in an old mint tin under her bed, adding to it every time she chose water instead of juice at the school tuck shop. By Thursday she had four pounds and thirty pence. Enough.

The school charity box sat on a shelf by the main office — a red tin with a slot in the lid, collecting for families who had lost everything in the floods. Layla had walked past it a dozen times. Every time she thought, tomorrow. Every time she kept walking.

But on Friday morning she woke up different. She tucked the mint tin in her coat pocket before her mother could even call her down for breakfast.

The corridor was busy and noisy. Perfect. Nobody was looking at the shelf. Layla slipped past, tipped her coins through the slot — clink, clink, clink — and kept walking without stopping, without turning around, without telling a single person.

Not even her best friend.

She felt something warm move through her chest. Quiet. Small. Like a candle someone had just lit.

That afternoon, her grandmother noticed she was smiling at nothing.

"What is it, habibi?"

Layla nearly told her. Then she stopped. And smiled more.

Later, sitting together after Asr prayer, her grandmother read aloud from the hadith of the seven who will stand in Allah's shade on the Day of Judgement — the day when there will be no shade but His. One of them, she said, is a man who gives charity so secretly that his left hand does not know what his right hand has given (Sahih al-Bukhari, no. 1421; Sahih Muslim, no. 1031).

Layla's heart jumped.

That's it, she thought. That's the warmth.

Giving loudly can feel good. People clap. People notice. But giving in secret — just you and Allah, nothing in between — that is its own reward. Richer than applause. Quieter than anything.

Your sadaqah does not need a witness. Allah sees every coin, every kind choice, every small act done in the dark for His sake alone.

That is enough. More than enough.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

Give It Back

Bilal borrowed the ruler on a Tuesday.

It was not just any ruler. Samir's ruler had his name written in green marker along the side, and little star stickers at each end. Samir loved that ruler. Bilal had only needed it for one maths lesson, but by home time it was gone.

He searched his bag three times. He checked under the desk, behind the pencil tray, even inside his shoe — just in case. Nothing.

That night, Bilal could not sleep properly. The ruler sat in his chest like a pebble. Heavy, poky, impossible to ignore.

He could say nothing. Samir might forget. But Bilal knew he would not forget. Every time he saw Samir in class, that pebble would dig in a little deeper.

The Prophet ﷺ said: "Return the trust to the one who entrusted you with it."

An amanah. A trust. That was what Bilal had carried home — not just a ruler, but Samir's trust in him.

So Bilal saved. His pocket money was one pound a week. A new ruler cost two pounds fifty. It took three Saturdays. He bought the ruler, asked his mum to help find star stickers, and wrote Samir's name along the side in green marker — just like the old one.

On Monday morning, Bilal placed it quietly on Samir's desk before anyone arrived.

When Samir spotted it, his face went from confused to wide-eyed to grinning. "Where did you —?"

"I lost yours," Bilal said. "So I got you a new one. I'm sorry."

That pebble in his chest? Gone. Just like that.

You know what the Prophet ﷺ was called before prophethood? Al-Amin. The T
names, that one people remembered longest.

A ruler is a small thing. But the trust behind it? That is everything.

CHAPTER XXXIX

Look Down, Not Up

Omar had wanted that bicycle for forty-seven days. He had counted.

Red. Shiny. Silver handlebars and a bell that actually rang. His best friend Tariq got one for his birthday, and on the walk home from school Omar stared at the pavement because looking up felt too painful.

"It's not fair," he muttered to his shoes.

His mother did not scold him. She just said, "Come with me on Friday. We're visiting your cousin Bilal."

Bilal was nine, same as Omar. But Bilal had been in hospital for three weeks with a broken leg that needed two operations and a metal plate.

Omar walked into that hospital room and stopped.

Bilal lay in a tall white bed with a tube in his arm and a frame around his leg. He could not walk to the window. He could not even go to the bathroom by himself. But he smiled when he saw Omar — wide and warm.

They talked for an hour. Bilal asked whether Omar was still fast at football. He did not complain once.

On the drive home, something shifted inside Omar's chest.

He thought about his own legs. Strong. Working. Carrying him anywhere he wanted — school, the park, the kitchen at midnight.

His mother glanced across. "The Prophet ýú said: 'Look at those below you an you. That way you will not belittle Allah's blessings upon you.'" (Sahih Muslim, 2963; Sahih al-Bukhari)

Omar looked out at the dark streets.

A bicycle. He had wanted a bicycle.

He had two legs that worked.

Maybe you have felt that pull — that little sting when someone has somethin gave us the cure: look the other way. Look down. See the blessings already in your hands.

That night Omar made wudu, prayed, and whispered Alhamdulillah three times — once for his legs, once for his food, and once just because there was too much to count.

CHAPTER XL

Wishing Well for Everyone

Aisha had been quiet all through dinner.

Not sad-quiet. Thinking-quiet. The kind where your eyes go soft and your spoon stirs the rice without really trying.

"What are you turning over in that head?" her mother asked.

Aisha looked up. "I was just thinking about Yusuf and his smile. And Ibrahim and the water for the dog. And Layla's secret money in the box." She paused. "All the stories. They all feel like the same story."

Her mother put down her fork.

The Prophet ýú once said something so simple that a person might walk right nasiha." Sincere well-wishing. That is all. His companions asked, well-wishing for whom? And he answered: for Allah, for His Book, for His Messenger, for the leaders of the Muslims, and for all ordinary Muslim folk. (Sahih Muslim)

One sentence. The whole religion inside it.

Aisha thought about that. Every hadith she had learned — the smiles, the gentle hands, the kept promises, the shared soup, the du'a for a grandfather far away — every single one was nasiha in action. Wanting good for someone. Feeling it. Then doing something about it.

Not performing goodness. Actually wishing it.

"So if I wake up tomorrow," Aisha said slowly, "and I genuinely want good things for Allah and for people — like, really want it in my chest — then I'm already carrying the deen with me?"

Her mother smiled the way mothers smile when a child has understood something real. "Yes," she said. "Right there in your chest."

Aisha sat with that for a moment.

It didn't feel heavy. It felt exactly the opposite. Light as a breath. Warm as a hug.

She picked up her spoon and finished her rice.

Tomorrow, she already knew, she would wake up wishing well for everyone.