

Jeopardy in Disguise

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It has been raining for quite some time in Gaza City and a lady is struggling her best to buy some groceries to prepare dinner for her family. She sensed that the rain is worsening every day and she has to take minor precautions with her umbrella and her indomitable spirit riding through the powerful rain.



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The lady took her habitual walk along the very same alley to the nearby market. It was raining heavily, and she was drizzling wet despite the fact that she was hidden under the large red umbrella she had prepared beforehand. She expected the rain to be pouring down this morning â she knew it from the weather forecast repost on the television, but she did not expect a torrential one. She trudged her way along the wet, muddy path and wrapped her arm around her body because of the chilly wind pushing behind her. Her view was not completely affected by the wind and the lamenting rain splashing onto her face, so she was able to navigate her way slowly.

The rain was not so scarce anymore; unlike the way it was years ago when the dry desert landscape was flocked with pilgrims infused with their devotion towards this sacred city. She remembered those days when she was a happy child playing in an open field with the neighbouring children in open field. She had never felt so happy in her life. She shook her head in disdain as her body is shivering a little under the startling chill of the rain. She felt blessed that today the sky is showing an almost everlasting dark blanket of gloominess, from the visible horizon. Rain itself is a blessing from Him, a bringer of fortune and wealth particularly for the farmers.

Her hijab was soaking wet. She sighed deeply as her sandals were drenched and smothered in brown, gooey mud up to the hemline of her sophisticated robe. Yet, she continued her habitual walk to the market with arising hope that she could prepare a marvellous meal for her husband and three children.

The drifting wind limited her cautious movement to a certain extent of a forceful march. Under the lacklustre sky, the bright morning had transformed into a shadowy and dim atmosphere. She moved along the alley towards the the junction where she turned left, away from the tall homes rising at all sides. Some of the inhabitants might be sleeping through the gale as splattering rain can blend well with the environment to become a soothing symphony that might trigger drowsiness.

Then, about six metres in front of her, beside a tall wooden signpost she saw a young girl squatting alone. A large yellow raincoat was draped over her head and her small-framed shoulders. The little girl was pale, dirty, and she looked terribly frail. Her hands were cupped upwards as if trying to collect the rainwater.

The little girl quickly drank the rainwater she caught in her hands without hesitation. Despite the humid rain she looked quite parched. The lady approached the little girl silently, and inquired sympathetically.

â What are you doing here all alone, my dear? Are you lost? You couldnâ t find your way back home? Donâ t be afraid nowâ the lady said. The hooded girl was quivering from the cold, wrapped her arms around her fragile body and shook her head vigorously as a simple, understood answer without any proper eye contact. The lady knelt slowly as she drew closer to the girl. She lowered her red umbrella over their heads to cover the drenched, trembling child, in order to inspect the shy little girl with the pure concern of a mother.

The little girl seemed a bit agitated but eventually pulled her head up to look at the lady. Her hair was plastered to her forehead, covering parts of the eye and flowed wet all the way down to her shoulders, still

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hooded. The lady was shocked to realize that the lonely little girl was fully blind - both her eyes were wispy white from cataracts. She was weeping through her unfixable eyes. Her erratic breath rectified her deathly pale face showing nothing beyond the anxiety and discomfort with the lady's sudden approach. The lady wiped her own tears, and held the frail hands lovingly as if she was her own child.

“Salam to you, oh lovely lady” the girl replied with a solemn tone. “Don't worry, I'm not lost at all. I'm sitting here to contemplate the world and the akhirat. I'm just a humble servant of Allah. He had granted me a wonderful gift through my blindness. I can't see the sins happening all around me, thus all praises are reserved only for Him for this genuine gift. But I do wish to savour His creations on my own accord and not dependent on others. Yes, the world can be a hostile place unless once you're solely living away from the guided life of Islam.”

Again, the girl answered the lady's question with a morbid tone and she coughed deeply. The lady nodded in agreement, handing the girl a few slices of raisin bread she brought along so that she could give to the poorest of beggars at the market area. The little girl accepted the bread and bit it pieces by pieces in the most polite manner. The lady was relieved that the girl took her gift. Perhaps her tummy is finally filled after a long while. The lady caressed the little girl's hair and pushed it aside to her ears in order to have a closer look on her face.

“Alhamdulillah, the foundations of iman is for us human to reveal. How, you might ask? Muhammad had preached on his last hajj to all of us. The Holy Quran will always be our guide and His Prophet's Sunnah” the lady continued “is the official template for us to commit fewer sins and more deeds.” The lady concluded with a nod as she decided to sit on the wobbly rubble next to the little girl, perhaps accompanying her for a few more minutes.

“That's true, madam. But currently, we're living in a world where the end is near and total calamity is too conspicuous yet none will heed His warning. Yes, the relentless ignorance displayed by most of us will make those who are ungrateful or I might say, unaware blinder than me. I am myself a proud Muslim and we should never give up on our struggle for a unified world at peace before the Day of Judgement befalls us. It's not too late, right?”

The lady nodded and looked at the dim sky as if expecting the rain to stop on its own. She sighed in exasperation and twisted a big knot from her hemline to squeeze out the rainwater.

The lady and the little girl exchanged their views like two Nobel scholars conversing about a new ground-breaking theorem of knowledge that seems crucial for a newfound revelation to solve enmity among humans. Suddenly, through the very depth of the little girl's eyes an indescribable pain erupted in agonizing flares that made her whimper. The bread fall off her hands onto the muddy ground. Utmost misery burst from within her. She wailed harmlessly, grasping for breath. She grabbed her chest while her wet hair flung backwards. Was it anaphylactic shock? An unexpected allergic reaction to raisins? She was struggling really hard to stay alive, looking exactly like an exorcized girl. The lady didn't know what to do to help out the poor little girl.

Afraid for the girl's safety after she started to twist and contort uncontrollably, the lady screamed for help. Spasmic relapses were restricting her breaths and the girl continued to scream in pain. Intuitively, the lady grabbed hold of the little girl's hands but the poor girl was foaming drastically through her mouth in such

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unbearable pain that her misty white eyes seemed to bulge out. The little girl looked petrified, not because of her critical state but due to the extreme agony that she had to endure.

The child's cadaverous body vibrated extremely for a few minutes until she arched backwards and fell to the ground. She was deeply unconscious. The lady was fear-stricken and desperately cried for help but there was nobody in the vicinity to assist her. Her voice is muffled by the sound of the torrential rain. Suddenly, the world seemed so lonely, so static. The surrounding sounds became almost like a distant entity by itself that no cry, no matter how loud could ever be heard to help the little girl. Time stood frozen out of a sudden.

The situation grew tenser as the lady wailed guiltily for the little girl's approaching death. Fat tears rolled down her cheeks. She couldn't do anything to help the girl. The sky didn't stop pouring down with the rain, nor did she know would it ever stop in the near future. The blatant uproar in the back ground slowly grew more audible than before. Instead of the tapping sound of millions of rippling raindrops hitting the ground, it was something else. Something more familiar than ever before, something she had always despised. The earth shook and rattled horribly on her feet and inadvertently brought her back to reality. Her vision was not being selective anymore, her eyes were not fooling her anymore and they were not showing the peaceful land that she had always dreamt and hoped for.

She wasn't in her right state of mind and now she is witnessing the ugly truth happening right before her eyes. Everything starts to come back like a powerful slap in her face.

Her name is Hafsa el-Sharoumi and she is not going to the market, she is going to the courtyard of Al-Aqsa Mosque near the great Wailing Wall to meet her remaining family members driven there for refuge. She remembers now that she lost her entire family yesterday night. Her husband and her children were buried under the heavy concrete carnage of what little remained of their house in downtown Nablus, in the middle part of Gaza City. She is the only survivor from the bombardment. Her legs start to feel so limp.

She blinked thrice to make sure that she was not yet again fooled by her own imagination of perfect harmony. But the situation happening around her was absolutely real. There was no news about the weather, after all. It simply reported an eminent attack by the enemies on her beloved soil and she would lose everything in mere minutes.

She remembers further, in just a click of the nearby bombing. There was no news about the weather; it's just a Jordanian news report and other neighbouring countries' news stations offering condolences to the fallen victims without much effort to offer assistance to stop the insanity.

Hafsa looked at herself from top to bottom and looked closely to the sky with a vivid vision of the truth. She wipes her face from the tears of sorrow and realizes that she is not holding an umbrella over her head but a wooden cane. She now realized that the pouring rain was not mere showers of water droplets but instead they consisted of small long-range missiles and sulphurous bombs projected by the opposing regimes decimating everything within the perimeter of the launch blast. Her clothes are not smothered wet with rainwater but she was drenched in her own blood because she was gravely injured from the last night's attack.

The sound of those blowing bombs was ear-splitting; it stole away the mixture of cries from the fleeing civilians searching for what little safety they had left. Many had lost their homes and their lives under the restricted portrayal of brutality. Blood is spilt everywhere like milk from a huge basin, and corpses lay around like fallen mannequins. Hafsa still holds the little girl's hand; the girl was the daughter of her best friend.

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The poor girl has not died from an allergic attack, but from the intoxicating inhalation of the poisonous sulphurous gas purposely released by the grenades thrown by the violent armies attacking their city these last few weeks.

Her brittle lungs could not bear the miserable effects of the gas choking the very breath out of her, while gasping really hard to be alive. Her skin also corroded and so did her vision, which saved her from witnessing the savagery shown by the inhumane armies, controlled by their ignorant leaders.

Hafsa had already seen these preposterously unfair events such as this like a repeated slideshow since she was a little child. They had claimed countless lives â including her loved oneâs lives which made her life so unbearable. She knew that this was qadaâ and qadar or fate from Allah to test the perseverance of His servants.

She was one of the innocent civilians who suffered so much since they started to barge into the rightful land of the Palestinian Muslims, and drove peace away like it was a distant dream. Day by day, they continued to claim more and more of her country, day by day. The sky was dark from the smoke of burning vehicles and bombarded buildings throughout the city compound. The reality is completely of a higher degree of atrocity compared to her imagination of peace, less macabre and less intimidating than the reality.

She holds her hands high towards the sky to seek the much-needed blessings from Allah, as her duâa, prayers is lifted unto the sky among the prayers of the other innocent Palestinians.

The heartless armies are drawing nearer with their snipers and their enormous war tanks. Hafsa feared the worst but continues to pray for the best in the future, for a seamlessly impossible change. She wishes that the whole Muslim world would unite as one to stray these malevolent forces away from the land of Al-Aqsa. The effects of the potent gas creeps inside her skin and into her lungs grew stronger; her vision was very blurry and she felt dizzy by the second.

Hafsa is slowly losing control of her entire body, but she still steadies herself up and gives her last ounce of energy to throw a few harmless pebbles towards the approaching armies. Then, she collapsed to the ground as a true syuhadaâ or a respected martyr. Her legs lose their strength and the escalating pain began to take its toll. Her entire body is paralyzed with despair from the unending misery. Yet, she rises again with an insurmountable effort to fight for the cause of all the fallen ones.

After a few minutes and a few futile attempts to throw the pebbles she could reach, her lifeless body falls next to the determined little girl. She feels her life and her soul slowly dissipating from her body. Death is near, she told herself as she embraced the feeling like she had trained herself long beforehand.

She had ended the story under her own terms, for the benefit of all Muslims all around the world to remember the cause. She reminds herself of one of Rasullulahâs hadith, quoted in Sahih Muslim, that the souls of the martyrs live in the bodies of green birds who have their nests in chandeliers hung from the throne of the Almighty. They eat the fruits of Paradise from wherever they like and then nestled in these chandeliers.

But what if her death would only bring bliss upon her soul? Yet it would bring about nothing but endless despair and desolation to these innocent lives, her people. They would still live in fear and misery.

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The only thing that remained untouched and strong from this absurdly vicious story was her unremitting iman, faith. She gives her last breath by reciting the words of syahadah and closes her eyes for the last time, thinking about the uncertain future of her people.

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