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**Illuminated**

**souls**

**(Tales of finding the**

**divine)**

**Neha Fahim**

## Preface

### Ramadan Special Series: A Journey Within

This series is a humble effort to help you grow spiritually and make this Ramadan more meaningful than the ones before.

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We are all sinners—none of us live a life free of mistakes. As human beings, we are bound to err. Unfortunately, due to the sins we accumulate throughout the eleven months of the year, we often struggle to experience Ramadan with the

same devotion and purity as our ancestors once did. But that does not mean we cannot try.

This Ramadan, let's strive to become better versions of ourselves. Through this story series, you will find small yet profound lessons about Islam—insights that will deepen your understanding of faith and its significance in our lives.

We spend the year immersed in novels, fiction, and worldly pursuits. Why not do something different this Ramadan? Even if we aren't making

grand sacrifices for our Akhirah, we can still take small yet meaningful steps that benefit both our Deen and Dunya.

This is my small effort to help you avoid sins and embrace Ramadan in a way that truly nourishes your soul. May this blessed month bring you closer to Allah and fill your heart with peace.

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Let's make this Ramadan count.

## First story

### " The Lost and Found Faith"

"Hey, Ahmer, what are you up to?" Zain nudged his shoulder before dropping onto the sofa beside him.

"Brother, don't you realize Ramadan is approaching? I'm preparing for it by deactivating my social media accounts for the month."

"Oh, come on," Zain scoffed, rolling his eyes.

"Why are you being so sentimental and overzealous? It's just Ramadan—it comes and goes every year. There's nothing extraordinary about it."

"You wouldn't understand," Ahmer replied with a solemn gaze. "There's no use explaining it to you."

"Whatever," Zain muttered, standing up and stretching. "I'm heading out for a bike ride, and I



won't bother inviting you—I already know you'll turn me down."

"Exactly," Ahmer responded with a knowing smile, his attention shifting back to his phone.

Zain merely shrugged before striding away.

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Zain and Ahmer were more than just best friends—they were like oxygen to each other, inseparable and essential.

Ahmer came from a devout family where religious values were deeply ingrained, and every member actively practiced Islam. In contrast, Zain's upbringing was entirely different; he belonged to a liberal household where Islam was merely a tradition—limited to reciting the Kalima and attending Eid and Friday prayers.

Ahmer often tried to enlighten Zain about the true essence of Islam and its significance in a Muslim's life, but Zain always brushed off his words, letting them pass in one ear and out the other. Yet, despite their stark differences in beliefs and upbringing, their bond remained unshaken—a true testament to the power of friendship.

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"Zain, are you planning to fast this Ramadan or not?" Ahmer asked, glancing at him as they sat in the university cafeteria.

"Bro, Ramadan isn't starting tomorrow, so spare me the lecture," Zain retorted, clearly irritated.

"Seriously? There are only three days left," Ahmer sighed, shaking his head. "Every year, you spend this month indulging in worldly pleasures. Have some sense, Zain. You're a Muslim, yet your actions don't reflect it. Allah—the One who created us, who blesses us with everything, who

loves us more than seventy mothers—deserves our devotion, yet you seem to be drifting further away from Him with each passing day."

"Wait a minute—what did you just say?" Zain interrupted, his voice laced with anger.

"You said He loves us more than seventy mothers," he continued, his eyes darkening with pain. "Then why did He abandon me when I begged Him to save my sister? He took her life, Ahmer. He took her away from me. He didn't listen to my prayers."

"Zain, Zain, my friend, please try to understand," Ahmer said gently, his voice filled with sincerity. "I've explained this to you many times—you've misunderstood everything. Allah doesn't abandon us; sometimes, He tests us by taking away what we love most. He doesn't always give us everything we ask for because if He did, we might become ungrateful and completely forget to turn to Him.

"Allah cherishes those who remember Him in every moment—both in joy and in sorrow. But

we, as sinners, often neglect Him in our happiness. So sometimes, He tests us with hardship, not to hurt us, but to draw us back to Him, to make us raise our hands in du'a and remember that He is always there for us."

"I... I genuinely struggle to comprehend these things. No matter how hard I try, I simply can't. Why me? Why only me and my sister? I would have sacrificed anything—anything but her. She lay on that hospital bed, writhing in agony, and I was utterly powerless. That image still haunts me, replaying in my mind over and over. It makes it

impossible for me to believe that Allah listens to our prayers and loves us beyond measure."

"Oh God, I don't know in what language or with what words I can make you understand," Ahmer sighed heavily, his voice laden with sorrow. "All I can do is pray for you."

"There is no language, no words that can ever make me accept this," Zain retorted, his tone sharp with bitterness.



This argument between them was nothing new. Zain had never made an effort to understand. He hadn't always been this much of a nihilist—there was a time when he prayed five times a day and was a devout Muslim. Despite being raised in a liberal family, he had never conformed to their beliefs. But then, one day, everything changed.

He was nineteen when tragedy struck. His only sister, Sarah, just twelve years old, became a victim of a devastating bomb blast near her school. She was severely injured—her small body

covered in blood, her wounds deep, and her head gravely harmed.

The sight shattered Zain. Overcome with despair, he wept uncontrollably, pleading with Allah to save her. But fate had other plans. Sarah succumbed to her injuries.

Her death broke him. He couldn't accept that this was a test of his faith. Instead, grief consumed him, and his beliefs crumbled. He abandoned everything he once held dear, slipping into moral nihilism, forsaking the good deeds that had once defined him.

Ahmer had witnessed Zain's transformation firsthand. He had seen the way his once-vibrant friend withdrew from everything he once loved—his faith, his prayers, even the quiet kindness that had always defined him. Zain had become bitter, angry, and lost, drowning in a sea of unanswered questions and unresolved pain.

"You think you're the only one who's suffered?"

Ahmer finally spoke, his voice low but firm. "Do you think you're the only one who's lost someone they loved?"

Zain clenched his fists, his jaw tightening. "You don't understand, Ahmer. You never will," he said coldly.

Ahmer exhaled, shaking his head. "You're right. I don't know what it feels like to lose a sister. But I do know pain, Zain. We all do. You're not alone in this."

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Zain let out a bitter laugh. "Then tell me, where was Allah when she was screaming in pain?

Where was He when I was begging for her life?"

His voice cracked, his eyes shining with the pain

he had buried for so long. "If He really listens, why did He let her die?"

Ahmer took a step closer. "I don't have the answers you're looking for, Zain. But I know that turning your back on everything won't bring her back. It won't heal you. It will only leave you emptier than before."

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Zain looked away, his breathing uneven. For the first time in years, he felt something stir within him—a flicker of doubt, not about his anger, but about the emptiness he had embraced.

Ahmer placed a hand on his shoulder. "You don't have to believe right away. Just stop running, Zain. Let yourself heal."

For a long moment, Zain said nothing. The weight of his grief was still there, but for the first time, it didn't feel as unbearable. Maybe, just maybe, he wasn't as alone as he thought.

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**TWO DAYS LATER**

Zain had gone to the hospital pharmacy to collect his father's routine medication. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, he needed to consult his father's doctor, prompting him to step inside the hospital. As he waited outside the doctor's office, his gaze wandered across the ward, where countless patients lay on their beds, engulfed in pain and sorrow. A wave of sympathy washed over him as he observed their suffering.

Just then, a young man took a seat beside him. For reasons unknown, Zain found himself turning toward him and asking,

"Why are you here, brother?"

"My sister was in an accident. She's in the ICU now," he said calmly.

Zain was taken aback by his composure.

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"How can you be so calm? Aren't you worried?"



"Of course, I am. I'm deeply troubled and saddened, but what else can I do besides pray? Allah knows what is best for me."

"B-but she is your sister... Don't you love her?"  
Zain's voice trembled.

The man immediately sensed that Zain had endured a similar pain. He smiled gently and said,

"Let me ask you something."

"What is it?" Zain asked.

"Imagine you have to make a crucial decision.

You have two choices: either you make it yourself or entrust it to someone who is truly sincere, someone who knows your past, present, and future. Which option would you choose?"

"Of course, I would trust their decision more,"

Zain admitted.

"Why are you here, brother?" Zain asked, his voice laced with curiosity.

The young man looked at him with a calm expression. "My sister was in an accident. She's in the ICU right now," he replied.

Zain was taken aback by how composed he seemed. "You seem so calm.. Aren't you worried?"

"Of course, I am," the man admitted. "I'm sad, and I'm praying for her recovery. But what else can I do? Allah knows what is best for us."

Zain's throat tightened. "B-but... she is your sister. Don't you love her?" His voice trembled, betraying the storm within him.

The young man studied him for a moment, as if he could see through Zain's pain. Then, with a gentle smile, he said, "Tell me something."

"What?" Zain asked, his brows furrowing.

"Imagine you're making a crucial decision. You have two choices—either you make it yourself with your limited knowledge, or you let someone

who truly cares for you, someone who knows your past, present, and future, make that decision for you. Who would you trust more?"

Zain thought for a moment before replying, "Of course, I'd trust the person who knows everything about me and wants the best for me."

The young man's smile deepened. "Then why don't we trust Allah in the same way? Doesn't He know our past, present, and future better than we ever could? Isn't He more merciful and loving than anyone else?"

Zain's heart pounded. He had no answer. He had spent years questioning, resenting, and running from the very thought of faith. But now, for the first time in a long while, he felt the weight of his own resistance.

Before he could respond, a nurse approached the young man. "Sir, we are sorry, we couldn't save your sister."

Zain watched as the young man's smile faltered, the light in his eyes dimming. For a moment, he

stood frozen, as if the words had yet to fully register. Then, ever so slowly, his hands clenched at his sides, his breathing uneven.

“I see...” the young man whispered, his voice barely audible. He swallowed hard before looking up at the nurse. “Was she in pain?”

The nurse hesitated, then shook her head. “She was unconscious in her final moments. She went peacefully.”

A deep silence settled between them. Zain, who had been an observer until now, suddenly felt the weight of the moment pressing down on him. He had spent years running from faith, questioning its fairness, its logic—but here was a man who had just lost his sister, standing with a quiet acceptance that Zain couldn't understand.

“She’s... gone.” The young man closed his eyes for a brief moment, drawing in a deep breath. When he opened them again, there was grief, yes—but also something else. A kind of surrender. A kind



of strength. “She belongs to Allah, and to Him, she has returned.”

Zain felt his throat tighten. How? How could he say that with such conviction? How could he trust so completely when life had just taken someone he loved?

“You’re not angry?” Zain found himself asking.

“You don’t feel like... like this is unfair?”

The young man turned to him, his gaze calm despite the storm he must have been feeling

inside. “I won’t pretend it doesn’t hurt. I won’t pretend I don’t wish things had turned out differently. But I trust Him.” His voice was steady. “Even in loss, I trust Him.”

Zain lowered his gaze, ashamed of the turmoil in his own heart. He had spent years blaming Allah for the hardships in his life. He had refused to trust, refused to believe. But here, standing in front of him, was proof that faith wasn’t about having all the answers—it was about trusting even when you didn’t.

For the first time in years, Zain wanted to understand.

He wanted to trust.

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## FIRST DAY OF RAMADAN

Ahmer was in the masjid for Taraweeh prayer when his eyes widened in astonishment—Zain had just stepped inside. Without a second thought, he made his way toward him.

“I can hardly believe you’re here,” Ahmer murmured, his voice laced with surprise.

A faint smile played on Zain's lips. "I've come to realize that you were right all along. No matter what we seek in life, we should never close our hearts to the One who holds all the answers."

Ahmer exhaled, a deep sense of peace settling within him. "I won't ask what led you to this realization," he said softly. "It's enough for me to know that you've found your way back. May Allah grant you the strength to stay steadfast in your journey."

“Ameen,” Zain whispered, his heart lighter than it had been in years.

And That's how they realize it that

**"faith is never truly lost, it waits for the moment we're ready to embrace it again"**

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