

Anwar The Ahtar

أنور الأهتر



A Story By: Raid A. R. Hijazi

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Anwar The Ahtar

In Loving Memory of My Parents.

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Anwar's Birth

Zaidan, a simple man from the village residents, kind-hearted. Beloved by all, he was highly respected for his excessive kindness and lofty morals. He owned a dilapidated tractor from which he made a living by plowing some lands for the village residents. He has been married for ten years to Fazza, his cousin, and their dream was to be blessed by Allah (God) with a son or a daughter. However, they accepted God's will and were content with what He had allotted for them.

One night, just after midnight, Zaidan awoke to his wife's groans.

Zaidan: I hope it is good. What's wrong, my dear?

Fazza: Pain in the bottom of my belly, Zaidan, from sunset until now. As if knives are cutting through me.

Zaidan: May God forgive you. Why didn't you tell me earlier? I would have brewed you some sage or chamomile tea.

Fazza: I brewed some and drank, yet it's of no use.

Zaidan: All right, I'll go to the house of Fraywan (Abu Alurreyf) and ask him to come and see what's going on.

Zaidan quickly got up, donned his cloak, and wrapped his head with a turban, heading towards Fraywan's house. Fraywan nickname was Abu Alurreyf meaning the one who knows a lot because he prescribed herbs to cure diseases, fixed broken bones, conducted circumcision of male children after birth on top of being a barber. Zaidan arrived at the entrance of the small door within the large gate, known as the "khawikha". He knocked with both hands and called out, saying, "Hey, Fraywan, please, my brother, open up! It's Zaidan. I seek refuge in your honor, something has happened to my wife". Then, Zaidan heard Fraywan's response behind the gate, saying, "Yes, Zaidan, you've startled the whole village. I'm coming".

Fraywan opened the khawikha and said, "What's the matter, man? What's wrong with Fazza?" Zaidan replied, "Oh, my brother, I swear I don't know. She's been in pain since sunset, and neither sage nor chamomile tea helped her. Do you have anything that can alleviate her suffering? May God protect you, help me out.

Fraywan: All right, all right, wait a moment. Let me grab my bag of herbs. They set off afterwards to Zaidan's house. As soon as Zaidan entered to make way for Fraywan, he found his wife Fazza sitting there, her pain

and anguish having subsided. Zaidan asked her, "What happened? Are you feeling better?" Fazza replied, "All is well. The pain disappeared on its own. It is like an angel's touch.

At that moment, Zaidan was confused. what would he say to Fraywan, after he disturbed his sleep in the middle of the night? He was pleased with his wife's recovery but felt embarrassed about his earlier actions. Zaidan approached the entrance of the house, stumbling over his words, and said, "Please, don't be angry with me, Fraywan. I am truly ashamed of myself and don't know what to say." Fraywan replied, "What's the matter, Zaidan?" Zaidan continued, "Fazza's pain has gone away." Fraywan smiled and said, "Look! From the early morning, you go to Hajja Zareefa; Um Tayel (um meaning the mother of), the wife of the village chief, Mithqal. Let her come and check on your wife. If I am not mistaken, I think Fazza is pregnant. Zaidan didn't believe what he had heard from Fraywan, and said" what are you saying man! Is it possible? Fazza gets pregnant after these long years! Fraywan laughed and said:" May God forgive you, Zaidan. it's acceptable coming from you. I said perhaps but I'm not sure. However, the wise woman, Zareefa (Um Tayel), has the answer. Let's hope for the best in the morning".

Poor Zaidan couldn't close his eyes, neither could Fazza. They spent the remaining hours of the night

supplicating to God to confirm Fraywan's intuition. As the first rays of sunlight appeared, Zaidan went to the home of the village chief and returned to his house accompanied by the village chief and Zareefa, after explaining to her what had happened previously. Zareefa didn't show any unusual reaction, as she had encountered many cases where no signs of pregnancy appeared in the end. Upon reaching the door of the room, Zareefa said to Fraywan, "You stay here, and I'll go in alone." The purpose was to perform the customary examination.

Indeed, Zaidan waited anxiously, his tongue uttering prayers to God, while the situation continued for about half an hour, which felt like an entire day to Zaidan. Then, Zareefa came out, her face beaming with confirmation of Fazza's pregnancy. Zaidan exclaimed eagerly, "Is it a wheat or a barley grain?" He meant to say wheat grain. In the local custom, wheat signifies good news and barley bad news. Zareefa laughed heartily and said, "It's a 'bushel' of wheat grains, Zaidan. Congratulations, Fazza is pregnant."

Zaidan took off his shemagh and egal (Arabian traditional headdress), and began to dance while saying, "Praise be to God... Thank you, my Lord... Finally, I shall witness the joyous arrival of a son who will fill our home with delight." At that moment, Zareefa seized the opportunity and said to him, "Oh, Zaidan, perhaps a daughter might come to you instead of a son. This is

knowledge beyond our reach." Zaidan replied, overflowing with happiness, "Whether it's a son or a daughter, it is a blessing from God, how beautiful it is... Praise be to God, my Lord. "Zareefa left, leaving Zaidan and his elation. Zaidan and his wife, reveled in the pinnacle of happiness, for after ten years of marriage and waiting, finally, someone would come to fill their lives with joy and contentment.

Months passed, and the joy intermingled with longing as they eagerly awaited the arrival of the new visitor. The hour of birth drew near and Fazza cries of delivery began to rise. Zareefa and some women closed themselves in the room, while Zaidan was overcome with tension. He anxiously awaited the sight of the newborn while simultaneously feeling every pang of pain his wife, Fazza, endured. Then silence prevailed. The cries from Fazza and the voices of the women were no longer heard. Zaidan froze, his facial expressions transforming in fear that something unfortunate had befallen Fazza or the baby.

He shouted anxiously through the door to Zareefa, "Hey! What's going on? No news, no signs! Is everything all right, God willing?" Before he could finish his sentence, the door opened, revealing Zareefa, who said to him, "May he be blessed with all the good fortunes! A boy has come to you, as radiant as the moon." At that moment, Zaidan fell to the ground upon his knees with

tears, exclaiming, "O Generous One, my Lord... Thank you for your blessings... Praise be to God".

After Zareefa gave specific instructions to Fazza and Zaidan on how to take care of the newborn, what food he should eat, and how to breastfeed and nurture him, she asked Zaidan, "What do you want to name the boy, Zaidan?" He responded immediately, "Anwar (meaning most radiant). I want to name him Anwar because he is a light that illuminates our lives. What do you think, dear Zareefa?" Without hesitation, Zareefa replied, "As you wish, Abu Anwar (Abu means father of)".

Anwar's Circumcision

A week had passed since the birth of Anwar, and the joy grew with each passing day in Zaidan's (Abu Anwar) household. For Zaidan and his wife, Fazza, Anwar was the treasure they had sought from God. And now, Anwar stood on the threshold of another stage in his life, the stage of circumcision. Therefore, Zaidan decided to arrange with Fraywan to schedule the circumcision appointment. However, out of respectful duty, it was necessary to visit Mukhtar Mithqal (Abu Tayel) for two reasons. Firstly, the Mukhtar was like a father and brother to everyone, and it was important to seek his advice before proceeding with this procedure. Secondly, Mukhtar's wife (Zareefa) was the first to congratulate on Anwar's arrival.

On the way, Zaidan passed by the only shop in the village. After exchanging greetings with Abdullah, the shopkeeper, Zaidan said, "Hey, my friend, give me a box of Nashid (Nashid was a brand name of sweets Nashid Akhawan) and record this on the notebook (of debts on me)." Abdullah smiled and said, "Oh, so it's happening today, Abu Anwar Do you need the box of sweets for yourself or for Anwar?" Zaidan replied, "You know, Abdullah, every time someone calls me Abu Anwar, I start thinking they're calling someone else. My brother,

I'm still not used to the title of Abu Anwar!" Abdullah repeated the question, "Well, you still haven't answered me, why do you need the box of sweets?" Zaidan smiled and said, "You have a lot of wits, Abdullah. I want to give it as a gift for Hajja Zareefa. I promised her Halwan (a sweet delicacy, or a small amount of money as a gift) the day she informed me about Anwar's arrival".

Zaidan arrived at the Mukhtar's house and took his place in the gathering, saying, "This is the Halwan, a gift from Anwar to Um Tayel. May Allah reward you, Oh Mukhtar".

The Mukhtar replied, "No problem, Abu Anwar. If you say so".

Zaidan said, "By God, I have come to you for Anwar's circumcision, Abu Tayel".

Mithqal responded, "Certainly! Oh why! I have nothing to do with the circumcision. That's Fraywan's specialty".

Zaidan said, "Come on, Mukhtar, the eye doesn't get over the eyebrow. You are like my elder brother, and I won't make a decision without your consultation".

Mithqal: May Allah bless you, Zaidan, you know proper manners. In any case, arrange your affairs with Fraywan. Let me know so that on the day of circumcision, we may sacrifice two aqeqas (aqeqa is a

sacrifice made upon the birth of a boy or a girl) for Anwar and invite the villagers to the feast.

Zaidan became perplexed and uncertain about what would he answer Al-Mukhtar. His financial situation did not allow him to purchase lambs and signs of embarrassment appeared on his face. However, Al-Mukhtar swiftly remedied the situation and said, "Consider the lambs as a gift from me to Anwar, O Abu Anwar, and I swear by God that you shall accept them as I accepted your gift of sweet." At that moment, Zaidan's countenance changed, and the expressions of embarrassment were replaced with joy.

The circumcision was scheduled with Fraywan for after the Friday prayer. Indeed, after Friday prayer, men and young boys flocked while the women had already arrived at Zaidan's house early in the morning to prepare lunch. Zaidan cleared the way for Fraywan and Al-Mukhtar to enter the room, where Anwar, his mother, and some other women were present. Fraywan, with harsh words, said to the women, "Oh, women, I don't want to see any one of you here." One of them replied, saying, "Well, we want to attend the circumcision of the boy, sing for him, and recite blessings upon him." Fraywan responded, "Fine, but on the condition that I don't hear a word, do you understand? " At this point, Al-Mukhtar intervened and said, "Sit down and give silence

so blessings surround us, my sisters, so that the man can see to his work properly".

The circumcision process began by bringing out some tools and supplies, the most important of which were the barber's razor and the blade. As soon as Fraywan finished arranging his tools, he said to Zaidan, "Come, help me hold down the boy." However, poor Zaidan, after seeing the barber's razor and the blade, began to show signs of fear, hesitating with trembling hands. Once again, Al-Mukhtar intervened and said, "Step aside, Zaidan. I'll hold Anwar so that he doesn't slip away from your hands and something bad happens, God forbid." Al-Mukhtar held Anwar tight, who was crying as if he understood what awaited him. Fraywan began the circumcision process, and as the razor approached the operation area, Fazza cried out at the top of her lungs, saying, "Oh, my child, what are you going to do, Fraywan?" Fraywan hesitated, put the barber's razor aside, and said, "Do you all understand why I don't want women hovering over me while I work? For the third time, Al-Mukhtar intervened, directing his words to Fazza, "Don't worry, daughter, This is just the circumcision ritual. We need to remove this excess flesh from Anwar's body." Silence fell upon everyone, and Fraywan continued his work. However, poor Fazza cried silently, while her son Anwar's wailing filled the room, and Zaidan's tears flowed as he watched the barber's

razor cut a part of his infant's body. Despite all these heartbreaking scenes, Al-Mukhtar Mithqal's emotions were different. While Fraywan was engrossed in his work, surrounded by sorrowful eyes, Mithqal began to sing and chant:

"Cleanse him, O Shalabi (Shalabi was the name of a person who excelled in circumcision), and present him to his mother. O precious tears, have fallen upon his sleeve.

Cleanse him, O Shalabi, and present him to his father. O precious tears, have fallen upon his garment".

Fraywan completed the circumcision process, and Anwar stopped crying, bringing relief to those present. Fraywan handed Anwar to his mother, Fazza, and said to her, "Congratulations, daughter. Comfort him, nurse him, and feed him so that we can be reassured about him." (By reassurance, he meant the first urination after the circumcision, as it serves as an indication of the success of the procedure).

Afterward, everyone gathered to partake in the lunch, and congratulations poured in from the attendees to Zaidan and his wife, Fazza.

Bloodletting or Cauterization?

A year or so had passed, and Anwar's voice was neither heard through his cries nor laughter. It is known that children, after their fourth month, begin the process of babbling and communication. Poor Zaidan was worried that his son Anwar might have been born mute. Although Anwar could hear sounds and turn towards their sources, he did not utter a single letter. After approximately a year and a half of Anwar's life, Zaidan and his wife, Fazza, succumbed to the undeniable truth: Anwar was born mute. But one day, the unexpected occurred. Anwar, without any prior warning, uttered a single word: "atta". You can imagine the joy that filled Zaidan and his wife's hearts upon hearing this. Happiness overwhelmed them anew as if they had discovered a treasure. With this word, Anwar turned their world upside down. The situation continued in this manner, for after "atta," Anwar began to articulate new letters and words such as "abba" (father), "amma" (mother), and "edda". Happiness grew day by day within Zaidan's home.

After approximately three years, during a gathering at the community guesthouse, the chief of the village, (AlMukhtar), asked Zaidan, "Oh Abu Anwar, how is

Anwar doing these days?" Zaidan replied with lukewarm enthusiasm, saying, "Praise be to God, Abu Tayel. But there is something that has troubled and worried me!" Mukhtar adjusted his sitting position, shifting from leaning on his side to sitting upright, and asked, "All right, Abu Anwar, what is troubling your mind?" Zaidan responded, "As you know, Abu Tayel, Anwar speaking was delayed and now he has turned three without uttering more than five or six words. The Mukhtar sighed and turned to Fraywan who was present at the same gathering, asking, "Hey Fraywan, have you ever encountered such a situation?" Fraywan, drawing upon his medical and pharmaceutical expertise, confidently replied, "Yes, I have come across similar cases, like this ." Zaidan's face lit up, and he eagerly exclaimed, "Oh my friend, Fraywan, is there a solution to this problem?" Fraywan, with even greater confidence than before, said, "The solution is simple." Zaidan interrupted, eagerly asking, "What is your suggestion?" Fraywan replied, "The solution, my dear sir, lies in a simple surgical procedure known as 'fasd' (bloodletting) or 'kayy' (cauterization). "The signs of longing vanished from Zaidan's face, replaced by signs of fear. Fraywan continued to explain these two solutions, with everyone listening intently. He said, "Dear friends, beneath the tongue lies a tiny vein. By cauterizing it, the foul blood will flow out, and the child's tongue will be loosened. Alternatively, in the second solution, we burn the tip of

the tongue, and with the help of Allah, the child's tongue will be loosened, and he will become as eloquent as a bulbul (nightingale)".

Poor Zaidan found himself caught between two bitter options, both of which were equally unfavorable. He struggled to decide whether to resort to the solutions offered by (the so called skillful) Fraywan or leave Anwar as he was. Several days passed, and Zaidan and his wife, Fazza, were engrossed in their thoughts on the matter. Fazza found no solace in Fraywan's proposed solutions; her tender heart could not accept the idea of inflicting any harm or burning the apple of her eye, no matter the reason. However, Zaidan decided to seek the path of fad, believing that if it failed, the wound would heal in a few days, as if nothing had happened.

Indeed, that's what occurred. The bloodletting procedure was carried out by, Fraywan. In summary, it involved pulling Anwar's tongue tightly with a dry piece of cloth while forcefully opening his mouth by gripping his jaws, followed by Fraywan making incisions in the frenulum of the tongue. Poor Anwar's screams and groans were of no avail. He endured the pain and suffered from a reduced appetite due to the wound. Even the words he uttered could no longer be heard.

The situation persisted for about two weeks until Anwar recovered from his injury, returning to his previous state. Zaidan and Fazza's concerns resurfaced.

One night, Zaidan said to his wife, "By the fear of God, Fazza, I intend to subject Anwar to Fraywan to cauterize Anwar's tongue. By God, this might solve our predicament, and Anwar will hopefully speak". Poor Fazza, filled with compassion for her beloved son, replied, "For God's sake, have mercy on this child. Perhaps with time, his tongue will loosen, and he will talk like us". But Zaidan, unconvinced by Fazza's words, said, "If we wait, it will be too late, and he will suffer for nothing. The boy is already over three years old, and if he wants to talk, he would have done so long ago." With the daily repetition of their discussions, Zaidan finally decided to resort to the tongue cauterizing procedure for Anwar and so it was done.

Poor Anwar returned to suffer once again from the pain caused by the branding on the tip of his tongue. In essence, what happened to him was a deliberate second-degree burn. He endured another week of suffering while eating and drinking. Fazza, the helpless one, whenever she looked into Anwar's eyes, tears would well up, grieving for him. In contrast, Anwar's eyes would sparkle whenever he gazed at his mother's face as if they were two pearls. With a sorrowful smile, it was as if Anwar was Saying to them, "Accept what God gave, why did you hurt me and tortured me"?

Fraywan's operations proved to be of no avail to Anwar. On the contrary, they increased his suffering and

instilled in him a fear of anyone who approached, fearing a new surgical procedure awaited him.

Anwar Speaks, But!

And finally, Zaidan became convinced of what his wife had been saying and no longer listened to Fraywan's words and fancy prescriptions. The days passed, and Anwar grew day by day, with an increasing number of letters that he could now pronounce. He began to speak understandable meaningful words and sentences, and joy of Abu Anwar and Anwar mother increased. However, Anwar still struggled to articulate certain letters like "j," "th," "dh," "k," "s," "sh," "z," "r," "s," "g", and "q," often pronouncing them with a "t," "l," or "d" instead.

Ten years had passed since Anwar's birth, and he began venturing out to play with other boys. Among them was his close friend, Mohsen Al-Tayel, the grandson of Al-Mukhtar Mithqal. They would often play together either in the threshing yard (where harvest is collected to be processed) or in front of one of their houses. As Anwar grew, so did Mohsen, and Mohsen came to understand every word Anwar said, even if it deviated from its true pronunciation. For instance, when Anwar called out to Mohsen, he would say "Mohtin," and the phrase "I want to tell you" would become "I want to thell you," and "village" would be pronounced as "villat," and so on.

The situation continued, and Anwar grew happier day by day, especially with his friend Mohsen. Each one became like a brother to the other. An example, one day, at sunset, Mohsen's grandmother, Zareefa, came out to call him to come inside the house, but Mohsen, pleadingly, said, "Grandma, let Anwar spend the night with us." Zareefa smiled and called out loudly to Anwar's mother from behind the fence, saying, "Hey, Um Anwar... Hey, Um, Anwar".

Anwar's mother responded, "What's the matter, Um Tayel"?

Zareefa said, "You see, Anwar wants to spend the night with Mohsen. Don't worry about him".

Anwar's mother replied, "As you wish, Hajjah. Anwar is your son as well".

Happiness filled both Mohsen and Anwar, for they would spend the night together, chatting and playing with the toys made of things found in nature (such as sticks), along with a plate of boiled wheat with sugar (saleeqa).

After a third of the night had passed, drowsiness overcame both of them. However, there was something that disrupted their peace. Mithqal had eaten bulgur for lunch, followed by a meal of yogurt with green onions for dinner, and as you know, the result is guaranteed one hundred percent. Sounds and smells filled the place. Poor Anwar was not accustomed to such a situation and said

softly to Mohsen, "Does your dradfader do dis evely night?" (Does your grandfather do this every night?). Mohsen chuckled, and so Anwar did. Their suppressed laughter grew louder filling the air, which awakened Al-Mukhtar from his slumber. He scolded them, saying, "You both settle down! It is almost after midnight, and you're still fooling around." Mohsen then looked at Anwar and said, "Okay, let's sleep so that my grandfather will let you sleep over again." And after drowsiness overcame them, they slept, only to wake up, anticipating a new day.

The Scribe Teachers and the Beginning of Anwar's Suffering

Anwar completed his tenth year, and it became necessary to enroll him under the tutelage of the Sheikh of the Scribes (the popular children teacher). Now, he could speak, but he lacked the knowledge of reading and writing. Therefore, Zaidan decided to enroll Anwar, a few days after his peers were already enrolled, in the formal house of Rasmi Abu Al-Dibaa. Abu Al-Dibaa was the imam of the mosque, who had the additional responsibility of teaching young boys the sciences of the Quran and language. His title, Abu Al-Dibaa, was bestowed upon him due to his fame in his youth as a skilled hunter of hyenas.

After exchanging greetings, Zaidan sought permission to enter, accompanied by his son Anwar, and said to Abu Al-Dibaa, "Brother, I wish to entrust this child to you so that he may learn reading and writing, just like the other children." Abu Al-Dibaa replied, saying, "Of course, Zaidan, your command is respected, and I shall consider Anwar as one of my own children." Then, Abu Al-Dibaa turned his attention towards Anwar and said to him, "Come, my nephew, sit beside me so that you may learn reading and writing." Abu Al-Dibaa

gently placed his hand on Anwar's shoulder and guided him to sit beside him.

Poor Anwar, initially, trembled within himself, especially when he saw the boys sitting with manners and without any movement. The long staff leaning against Abu Al-Dibaa intensified the fear in his heart. However, the fear soon transformed into a sense of reassurance when he observed Mohsen among the boys.

Zaidan expressed his gratitude to Abu Al-Dibaa and advised Anwar, saying, "My son, pay attention to your uncle Abu Al-Dibaa, so that you may learn how to read and write, all right?" Anwar replied, "All light (meaning all right)," but the children burst into laughter with a loud voice, unaware that Anwar was newly acquainted and unaware of his difficulty in pronouncing certain letters. Fear and embarrassment overwhelmed Anwar, and he turned to his father, holding his hand and crying, saying, "Oh, father, I don't want to learn reading and writing." Meanwhile, Abu Al-Dibaa swiftly intervened and said to the children, "Everyone, extend your hands in front of you." He then grabbed his staff and began striking each one of them. Poor Anwar did not understand what was happening until he heard Abu Al-Dibaa say, "By God, from today onwards, whoever makes fun of Anwar or teases him, I swear I will let them forget the milk they drank when they were infants (a saying that means that they would be punished severely). Do you understand?"

The students responded loudly, "Yes, our respected teacher, we understand." Anwar remained astonished by what he witnessed, and his father, Zaidan, expressed his sadness to Abu Al-Dibaa, saying, "By God, pay a special interest to him. you see his condition. " Abu Al-Dibaa replied, "Depend on God, Abu Anwar, and do not have any worry."

Zaidan left, leaving poor Anwar gazing at the other children. Some of them he had seen before, while others he never saw before. Abu Al-Dibaa continued the lesson, and Anwar remained beside him until the last student finished reciting.

And here Rasmi shifted to speak to Anwar and in a friendly conversation aimed at dispelling doubts and fear in Anwar's heart so that he could adapt to the school environment. Rasmi asked, "What have you memorized from the Quran, Anwar?" Anwar confidently replied, "I have memorid Al-Tamdeeyah and Al-Tawtal"- (memorized al-Samadeyya and al-Kawthar). At this moment, the young boys almost burst into laughter, but with a pendulum-like motion, Rasmi's cane moved, creating a silence that fell upon them. Rasmi listened to Anwar's recitation and said to him, "Bravo, young lad! Tomorrow, you'll memorize the entire Quran and become a real scholar." An unexpected joy filled Anwar's heart, thanks to Rasmi's encouragement and protection from the mockery of other students.

Everyone left the classroom and dispersed through the village streets. Anwar and Mohsen walked together as they were friends and neighbors. However, this did not prevent some of the boys from whispering certain words or sentences to mock Anwar.

Anwar arrived home, and his mother Fazza awaited him anxiously. As soon as he entered, she embraced him and said, "I wish you could bury me, my dearest (a saying meaning "may my death day be before yours")! By God, you've become a young man, going to the scribe." However, Anwar didn't display signs of joy or happiness. On the contrary, he seemed troubled and despondent. His mother noticed this and asked, "What's the matter, my darling? Has the Abu Dibaa hit you?" Anwar replied, "No, it's not the Abu Dibaa". "It wad (was) a fat boy wid (with) a belly ad (as) big ad (as) a cow. He mates (makes) fun of me and talls (calls) me "ahtar (one who has speech impediment)" His mother concealed her sadness and hugged him tightly to prevent him from seeing her sudden tears. She said:

"Tomorrow, tell Sheikh Rasmi about this bad mannered boy." Anwar responded, "I don't want to do (go) back dere (there)." Fazza's attempts to convince her son Anwar to continue learning under Rasmi proved unsuccessful.

However, the following morning, after learning about what had happened to Anwar, Zaidan accompanied him as they headed to Rasmi's residence. When they

arrived, Zaidan requested a private conversation with Rasmi and informed him of the incident involving Anwar and the obese boy. At this point, Rasmi placed his right hand on his beard and shook his head, while his left hand rested on Zaidan's shoulder and said to him: "Don't worry, my dear friend, Abu Anwar. I will do what is needed, you go and don't worry." Then Rasmi turned to speak with Anwar and said, "Don't be afraid, my nephew. Come with me and show me the boy who upset you yesterday." Anwar hesitated, fearful that the boy might seek revenge and physically harm him. However, he couldn't resist Rasmi's insistence and authority. As soon as they entered the room, Anwar pointed with his right index finger at the boy. At this point, Rasmi said, "So, this is you, 'Bu'ut.' And by that, he meant Mer'i, the one whom the boys call 'Bu'ut' due to his large belly." Rasmi, being a teacher, was the last person to address children by bad nicknames. However, this time he may have intentionally used that term to boost Anwar's confidence once again as if he wanted to convey a message to Anwar that he wasn't the only one suffering or would suffer in the future from his new nickname, "Al-Ahtar" (the one with speech impediment).

Rasmi struck Mer'i (on the palm of the hand) with a stick ten times. After each strike, he would emphasize to Mer'i and say, "Are you going to do this again, boy, Mer'i?" And poor Mar'i would respond while jumping

from pain: "No, I won't repeat it. I declare my repentance, Sheik" And so, it went on until the ten strikes were dealt. Afterward, Rasmi requested everyone to sit down and resume their studies. However, Mer'i was weeping in pain, casting glances at Anwar as if to say, "All right, I will show you on the way back home." The unfortunate Anwar couldn't focus on Sheikh Rasmi; his entire attention was consumed by thoughts of how the journey back home was going to be. The school day came to an end, and everyone departed. Mohsen and Anwar, as they walked, heard Mar'i shouting and calling out to them, saying, "Wait for me!" At that moment, Anwar's meek spirit trembled, for he had no power over Mar'i, even with Mohsen's protection, as Mar'i's physique exceeded his age. As he reached them, Mar'i, panting heavily, stood still and took deep breaths and told Anwar : "I won't lay a hand on you, but if you show up at school tomorrow, by God, I will tear you to pieces, do you understand, ahtar?" Mar'i departed, leaving Anwar in a state of confusion. Should he tell his family what had happened today, or should he bear the consequences and wait for tomorrow? The hapless Anwar spent the night contemplating and planning his next move. Finally, overcome by drowsiness, he succumbed to a deep slumber.

In the morning, he got ready and decided to depend on himself. For the previous day, he felt weak standing in

front of the students with his father, who came to defend him. That was the beginning of his challenge against society.

After each student took his seat in the classroom, Anwar and Mar'i exchanged glances. Anwar's gaze seemed to say to Mar'i, "I have come, show me what you want to do." Meanwhile, Mar'i's eyes were filled with astonishment. It was as if he was speaking to himself, wondering how come this ahtar is challenging me. Maybe he is planning some bad thing for me or he might have reported me to Sheikh Rasmi. At this point, their thoughts were interrupted by the loud voice of boisterous Rasmi, who exclaimed, "All right, let me see every two of you face each other and recite the verses to each other before I hear from you. Do you understand?" The students responded in unison, "We understand, Sheikh." An idea occurred to Anwar, and without hesitation, he swiftly moved and sat next to Mar'i, saying to him, "I'll listen (listen) to you, and you listen (listen) to me." Mar'i couldn't believe what was happening. Anwar was voluntarily sitting with him and choosing him as his partner in listening. There must be something Anwar was hiding from me (Mar'i thought). On the other hand, Anwar's actions were driven by spontaneity and initiative so he was trying to hit two birds with one stone. He was not only breaking the barrier of fear between them but also showing Mar'i that he was unfazed by the threats of

the previous day. Poor Mar'i remained astonished for a few moments, but then he regained his composure in the face of the situation that he couldn't explain.

Anwar told Mar'i, "You lead (read) first or do I lead (read) first" After a while, while they were listening to each other, for the second time, their concentration was interrupted by the voice of boisterous Rasmi once again, saying, "Come on, boys, it's time. If anyone makes a mistake, do you know what they'll get?" The students replied in unison, "We know, Sheikh, a strike with the stick." Rasmi smiled and called Mar'i, saying, "All right, let's hear what you've memorized, Mar'i." Mar'i began to read but stumbled on one of the words. However, with lightning speed, Anwar quickly whispered the correct word to him, making sure Rasmi didn't hear. Mar'i continued until he finished reciting, and the same scenario repeated with the other students, with a few minor errors. However, Rasmi didn't resort to using the stick, but rather pointed them out. Finally, he said to them, "Well, today I let you go with a warning, but tomorrow I won't tolerate any mistakes." He allowed them to leave as usual, hoping to see them again the next day.

Anwar got up to join his friend Mohsen to walk back home, but Mar'i said to Anwar, "What do you think about coming to our place in the afternoon to play with the ball made of sharayet (left-over fabrics) with the kids from

the neighborhood?" Anwar was delighted by Mar'i's invitation, which he hadn't expected or thought about. The former enemy had become a friend today. After witnessing Anwar's gestures of goodwill and closeness, especially when he quietly corrected Mar'i during the listening session, Mar'i realized that Anwar didn't deserve his violence and mockery. Therefore, he took the initiative to improve their relationship. Anwar accepted the invitation on the condition that Mohsen accompanied him. The bond between them grew stronger as Anwar and Mohsen joined Mar'i's group, along with Azooz, Jameel, and other boys.

Anwar gained new friendships and the boys became accustomed to his way of speech. The situation became normal for Anwar.

The End of the Scribes Stage

After three years, at the residence of Sheikh Rasmi, the young boy successfully completed the memorization of the Quran. In light of this accomplishment, a celebration was deemed necessary to honor their achievement. Hence, during their final educational gathering, Sheikh Rasmi requested that they be prepared for the upcoming Thursday after the Asr (mid afternoon) prayer, in the courtyard of the mosque with the presence of the parents, to recite the Mawlid (Mawlid or Mawlid al Nabi is a celebration where praise is given to Allah and the story of prophet Muhammad's birth is told and is done to commemorate prophet Muhammad's birthday and it is also common to be done to commemorate some occasions). Typically sweets and treats are offered during this celebration.

As for Rasmi, the situation was normal as he would return with a new group of children to embark on a new course of Quran memorization, in addition to reading and writing. However, the situation was different for Anwar and his companions, for they had reached the end of a stage and were about to enter a new phase of their lives. Yet, what distinguished this celebration, besides the recitation of the birth story, were the diverse types of food, candies, and sweets. Thus, Rasmi emphasized to

the children, saying, "On Thursday everyone comes with their hands full, understand?" Here, Anwar responded, saying, "You mean we should bring eggs and lentils," as the parents had the habit of sending eggs and some grains to Rasmi as a token of gratitude for his teaching. Rasmi chuckled and said, "No, my dear, that's not what I meant. I was referring to not forgetting the roasted chicks, the grayman's agal (headband) (sweets that look like the headband that is used to keep the headdress in place, hence the name), and muta'am (hard candy in clear string wrapper)."

After the Asr prayer on Thursday, everyone gathered in the mosque courtyard, with the delicacies and sweets set aside. Rasmi stood up and, after praising and thanking God, he congratulated the parents for the accomplishment of their children. He asked each student to recite a portion of the Quran that they could manage. The attendees applauded the students after completing their recitation, showering them with praises and congratulations. However, Anwar faced a slightly different situation. Some of the parents were unaware of Anwar's speech impediment, unlike his fellow students. Fear gripped Anwar, leaving him standing bewildered. This was the first time that he stood and recited what he had memorized in front of such a large audience. He was accustomed to his classmates, and they were accustomed to him. Anwar's father, Zaidan, and his wife, Fazza, also

experienced anxiety about Anwar's speech impediment. It was then that Rasmi's voice cut through Anwar's astonishment, with a slight smile, saying, "Oh Anwar, the trays of roasted chicks are waiting for us. Shall we have them cold?" Anwar composed himself and began the recitation, but no one made him feel embarrassed. He continued with greater confidence until he finished. The audience applauded him warmly, perhaps applauding for him longer than for his peers. How could they not, for Anwar was the only child of Zaidan and Fazza, who came into the world ten years after their marriage. Hence, most of the parents sympathized with Zaidan and Fazza. Most importantly, they encouraged Anwar, expressed joy and happiness, and gave Anwar more self-confidence.

Afterward, the recitation of the story of the prophet's birth took place, with everyone participating, followed by the customary enjoyment of food and sweets. Each student left with their parents, filled with joy for what had been accomplished.

For Anwar and his companions, their daily routine now consisted of meeting, playing, and entertaining themselves without being bound by any specific time or place, especially after completing a phase characterized by discipline in time management and education under Sheikh Rasmi. However, this situation did not sit well with Anwar, who aspired to receive an education in

formal schools, which he had often heard about from the villagers. Yet, his father's financial circumstances prevented him from leaving the village and attending a school located several kilometers away.

Anwar is on the Study Benches Again

Anwar never lost sight of completing his studies. When he found himself alone, thoughts and dreams would overwhelm him. One day, after witnessing his beloved son, the apple of his eye, weighed down by worries, Zaidan asked Anwar, "What's the matter, my boy? I've noticed you've been troubled these days. Why aren't you your usual self?" At that moment, Anwar saw an opportunity to seize this golden chance to confide in his father and he replied, "By God, Father, I desire to complete my education." Zaidan realized that Anwar was serious in his request and thought to himself, "Why should I stand in this young man's way? I won't deny him the chance to pursue his studies and find path for his future. Isn't it better for him to aim for higher goals rather than remain confined to the alleys?" With that, Zaidan turned to Anwar, placing a hand on his shoulder, and said, "Don't worry, my son. I swear, even if I have to sell everything above and below me, I will ensure that you receive an education."

Zaidan purchased a donkey for Anwar as a means of transportation between home and school. Interestingly enough, a bond of understanding developed between

Anwar and the donkey. Unlike other burdened donkeys, this donkey was not subjected to hard labor. On the contrary, Anwar would occasionally dismount and walk alongside his pampered companion, showing it compassion. In return, the donkey considered itself fortunate to receive such treatment, as its sole duty was to transport Anwar between home and school. This arrangement continued for several years, during which Anwar grew both in knowledge and wisdom. Despite occasional disputes instigated by others due to his speech impediment. However, due to his cheerful personality and self-confidence, which were instrumental in his continuous success, Anwar was able to form friendships with most of his fellow students at school.

Anwar completed his primary education and prepared for the graduation ceremony, where the school administration traditionally honored the students through a modest celebration in the school courtyard. However, this time and this particular event were anything but ordinary and simple for Anwar. His parents, Zaidan and Fazza, were among the attendees, and it had always been Anwar's dream to receive a formal education. Fate had granted him what he had wished for. The ceremony came to an end, but Fazza's tears did not cease. On the contrary, after embracing her beloved son Anwar, she succumbed to a state of intense weeping to the point where one might assume she had lost someone dear.

Zaidan, patting her shoulder gently, said, "Enough with your weeping, my dear. Instead of rejoicing and singing, you're making a fuss." Fazza, crying, replied, "It's not within my control, Abu Anwar. It overwhelms me." Poor Anwar had no knowledge of the true reason behind his mother's tears. He believed they were tears of joy. However, the truth was different and Zaidan knew the cause of her weeping. Yet, he displayed composure so as not to spoil Anwar's happiness. The reason for Fazza's tears one may have guessed was due to the incomplete joy Anwar's mother's felt because she remembered his suffering since childhood, his speech impediment, and his problem with pronouncing words properly in the village dialect. She also remembered the pain he endured at the hands of "Abu Alurreyf" during the bloodletting and cauterization surgeries for his cleft palate and scarring. Zaidan, raising an eyebrow accompanied by a wink, sent a quick message to Fazza implying, "Enough, dear, don't bring up old stories that might catch our son's attention and open old wounds." Poor Fazza reluctantly complied with Zaidan's request wiping away her tears with her sleeve and saying to Anwar "Oh, my dear, you have no idea how happy I am. Thank God, my Lord, for allowing me to witness my son grow into a fine young man before I die." Anwar replied, "Without you, neither I nor my father could have accomplished anything. May God bless you and my father with a long life."

Second Round

Anwar returned to the village and his friends once again. However, after several days, he became overwhelmed by boredom. While his friends spent their days in agriculture and farming, Anwar did not. His father, Zaidan, owned no land except for a dilapidated tractor that barely sustained them during the plowing season. Sometimes, Zaidan spent more on its maintenance than what he earned from renting it out. It was difficult for Anwar to continue his secondary education since it required money, and he didn't want to burden his poor father with additional expenses. Thus, conflicting thoughts swirled in Anwar's mind. Should he accept the harsh reality and become a laborer in agriculture, earning meager wages, or remain a burden on his poor father? After a while, he decided to leave the village and seek his fortune in the city, hoping to find a solution there. One morning, after having breakfast with his parents, he cleared his throat and said, "Father, I'm doind (going) to da (the) city to find wort (work)." Zaidan and Fazza were taken aback by this sudden proposition. Zaidan asked, "Why, son? Have we failed you in any way? If you need something, tell us, and I swear I'll bring it to you even if it's a bird's milk." The expression means that they will bring to him the impossible because bird's do not produce milk. Then

Fazza, with a sorrowful voice, said, "Why, my child, do you want to leave us and go away? Stay with us; there are many opportunities, and tomorrow you'll find numerous jobs in the village. Everyone in the village loves you, and you can work with anyone you like."

However, Anwar had a different opinion. He replied, "Oh, moder (mother) and fader (father), you know that I am not meant for falmind (farming) and adlicultul (agriculture). Besides, where am I headed? I will be near, one hour and I can come back and vidit (visit) you once everly weet (every week)."

This situation continued for several days, with Anwar daily trying to convince his parents about the idea of working in the city. Finally, Anwar won the argument and managed to persuade his parents, especially after they sensed his seriousness and the difficulty of reversing his decision. Moreover, Anwar's logical argument played in his favor. As he told them, he couldn't work in agriculture, and at the same time, he didn't want to be a burden on his father. Thus, Anwar achieved what he wanted for the second round, following his initial success in completing his primary education.

Anwar in Amman

Anwar set off for the city of Amman (the capital of Jordan), but this time he was alone. His destination was a blacksmith workshop owned by the father of his friend Mustafa, with whom he had shared school days. Mustafa used to recount to Anwar how he assisted his father in the blacksmithing trade, and how his father would give him a weekly sum of money in exchange for his work. And this was indeed true.

Anwar arrived at the desired address and scanned his gaze among the signs hanging above the shops, searching for what he sought. Ah, there was one sign that read "Abu Mustafa's Forge." From the name, Anwar recognized it as the forge owned by Mustafa's father. He approached the forge as the sounds of hammering on iron grew louder, and he stood before the door. There, he witnessed a man of massive build, wielding an iron hammer, striking a piece of iron, while behind him, a young boy was painting an iron door.

"Mutafa Mutafa (Mustafa Mustafa)!" Anwar called out loudly to the young boy. The man paused his work, as did Mustafa, who, upon seeing Anwar, rushed towards him, exclaiming, "Hey, Anwar! What brings you here?" Anwar replied, saying, "I'm lootin (looking) for wort (work)." At this, Mustafa's father chuckled, having heard

unfamiliar words from Anwar. However, Mustafa quickly explained to his father, saying, "Dad, this is my friend Anwar from school." The father chuckled again, saying, "Ah, welcome... welcome."

Anwar felt a sense of embarrassment, especially since he was being laughed at by his friend's father, and because he had hoped to work at the forge. But with his usual cleverness and quick wit, he managed to make it seem like he had come to this place by chance. However, Mustafa said to him, "Didn't you just say that you were looking for work?" Anwar replied, "Oh, right. I meant that I have a relative living nearby, and I came to visit (visit) him." Suddenly, the sounds of hammering on iron resumed in the vicinity. Mustafa's father returned to his work without paying much attention to Anwar, not even extending an invitation to sit or take a break, especially considering the somewhat elevated temperature. Contrary to his father's behaviour, Mustafa insisted that Anwar come inside and sit down. But Anwar sensed from Mustafa's father's behavior that he was an unwelcome visitor. Therefore, he pretended that he didn't want to keep his imaginary relative waiting any longer and was eagerly anticipating their meeting. Mustafa could only wish him success in his pursuit. And so, the encounter was brief and abrupt, simultaneously delivering a harsh blow to Anwar, who had left his family and village only to find himself lost and estranged in this city.

Anwar walked with a heavy heart, unsure of where he would go. Should he return to the village, thus ending all his dreams of working and earning money, or should he stay in Amman and search for a job? Both options seemed equally challenging. As he walked, lost in his thoughts, a scent caught his attention, particularly since hunger had taken its toll on him.

He arrived at the source of the scent, a humble restaurant with a sign on its glass facade that read "Abu Muhammad Al-Fawwal." Anwar pondered what lay inside the establishment. He saw two wooden tables, each surrounded by three or four chairs made of wood and straw. On a stand was a brass jar, placed atop a small stove emitting a faint yellow flame. Behind the table stood a slim, cheerful man in his sixties.

"Welcome, Uncle, why are you staring?" the falafel vendor Abu Muhammad greeted Anwar. Anwar replied, "How much for da (the) meal?" Abu Muhammad smiled, realizing that Anwar had a speech impediment, but he didn't show any unnatural reaction. Instead, he engaged in conversation and joked, saying, "I'll offer you the food, and if you don't like it, you don't have to pay for it." Anwar smiled and perceived through the banter that this man might be kind-hearted.

Anwar knew that the five dinars he had taken from his father were meant to assist him in his needs until he found work and a place to stay that could sustain him for

a few days. However, he also didn't want to spend the money quickly, especially since he hadn't found employment yet, as he had hoped. Thus, he posed the question once again to Abu Muhammad, asking, "How much for da (the) meal?" The falafel vendor realized that there was a story behind this young man and replied, saying, "A plate of falafel, a loaf of bread, and a cup of tea for five qirshes. What do you say?" Anwar smiled and said, "That's fine, please serve me."

Anwar took his seat at one of the tables and began to eat. Meanwhile, Abu Muhammad occasionally glanced at Anwar, keeping a watchful eye on him. After finishing his meal, Anwar thanked God and approached Abu Muhammad, handing him a half-dinar bill. Abu Muhammad smiled and said to Anwar, "What do you think, Uncle? Are these dishes considered a treat from your uncle Abu Muhammad?" Anwar humbly replied, "No, by God, they are not just a treat." Abu Muhammad responded, "Uncle, the next time you're in need, I'll help you out, and then you can become a regular customer of mine." However, Anwar tried to decline Abu Muhammad's offer of hospitality, insisting on paying, but Abu Muhammad's refusal was stronger than Anwar's desire.

Anwar prepared to leave after expressing his gratitude to Abu Muhammad. However, Abu Muhammad posed a passing question and said to Anwar, "Are you a

new resident in the neighborhood or just passing through?" Anwar became flustered, unsure of how to respond. He remained silent for a moment, contemplating to himself, "Should I say it or not?" Eventually, he replied, "By God, my dear uncle, I have come from the village in search of work in your vicinity."

Abu Muhammad took hold of Anwar's hand and led him back to the wooden table, where they sat together. Abu Muhammad continued, saying, "Oh... oh, lost and found." Poor Anwar did not comprehend Abu Muhammad's actions and words. Abu Muhammad went on to say, "What do you think about working for me at this restaurant?" Anwar was taken aback by this swift offer but, at the same time, felt a sense of apprehension towards this man. Thoughts raced through his mind, "Could this man be harboring ill intentions? No... no, he appears affable and kind-hearted! But what if he is concealing something? No... no, he is an elderly man, and I don't believe he is wicked. I came here to seek employment, and here is an opportunity before me." This internal struggle concluded with Anwar accepting the offer after this mental turmoil.

Before Anwar could respond to Abu Muhammad's offer, a hint of fear resided in his heart, and he said, "All right, but how much compensation would you pay?" Abu Muhammad replied, "My sir, I will provide you with nirteyn (slang term meaning two Jordanian dinars) a

week and your food and drink are on the house. So, what do you say?" Poor Anwar couldn't believe what was happening to him. This amount was good enough for him, perhaps more than he had anticipated. Once again, Abu Muhammad interrupted Anwar's thoughts and said, "Now, you can go to your relatives, and in the morning, after the dawn prayer, come to me so that I can instruct you on your work." Helpless Anwar didn't know what to say as joy muddled his thoughts. However, he regained composure and said, "Uncle Abu Muhammad, do you know anyone around here who has a room for rent?" Abu Muhammad looked into Anwar's eyes with affection and affectionately patted his head, saying, "Listen, I'll arrange a room for you here in the restaurant. It's a small room where we store chickpeas and fava beans. What do you think of sleeping in the restaurant? This way, you'll save on rent, and in the evening, God willing, I will bring you a mattress for sleeping." Once again, Anwar accepted this generous offer for the second time, saying, "All right, Uncle Abu Muhammad, I accept."

Abu Muhammad began instructing Anwar and acquainting him with some of the tools he would be handling, as well as the process of preparing fava beans and chickpeas in the early morning. He also provided guidelines on cleanliness and public health. The sun of that day has set, leaving Anwar alone inside the restaurant, seized by a sense of fear and loneliness. His

imagination wandered between his parents and friends in the village until drowsiness overcame him.

At the break of dawn on the second day, Anwar woke up to the call for the Dawn (Fajr) prayer. He rose from his bed, performed ablution, and prayed. He then proceeded to boil the quantities of fava beans and chickpeas as Abu Muhammad had taught him. Instead of simply sweeping the restaurant floor, he poured a bucket of water and rinsed away the undesirable dark stains that had accumulated. He wiped the two tables and the straw chairs, tidying up the place. As the light of the sun was about to appear, Abu Muhammad had already arrived. Abu Muhammad was astonished by what he saw, for it was the first time in years that the floor had been rinsed with water. The broom made of straw had been the sole means of cleanliness before, without the use of water. Abu Muhammad stood behind his stand, observing the pot of fava beans and the pot of chickpeas, both cooked to perfection. He called out to Anwar, who was engrossed in the process of grinding the chickpeas. Anwar approached and said, "Good morning, Uncle Abu Muhammad." Abu Muhammad replied, "Good morning, filled with light, incense, and joy. What's all this, Anwar? What is this activity? May God grant you good health. So, that is how the work is done!" Anwar rejoiced at this praise, especially since it was still his first day of work.

The first day passed for Anwar, filled with energy and vitality. All the restaurant's customers inquired about Anwar, either through Abu Muhammad or by asking Anwar himself. Their reactions were positive towards Anwar, especially since they found him to be pleasant and quick-witted, despite his stuttering speech. As the days passed, Abu Muhammad's restaurant became bustling with unusual activity. Prior to Anwar's arrival, customers would greet Abu Muhammad and perhaps inquire about his well-being. However, with Anwar's presence, conversations and voices increased. Jokes, discussions, questions, and answers filled the air. Occasionally, some customers engaged in lengthy conversations with Anwar due to his sharpness and excellent responses that surprised everyone.

The first week came to an end, and now it was Thursday, the day when Anwar would receive his weekly wages as agreed upon with Abu Muhammad. Afternoon approached, and Anwar, as usual, began cleaning the place to have it ready for work on Saturday morning. Abu Muhammad handed three dinars to Anwar and said, "Here is your weekly payment, Anwar." Anwar received the amount but was surprised to find an extra dinar, exceeding the agreed-upon sum. He returned the dinar to Abu Muhammad, saying, "Uncle Abu Muhammad, dis id (this is) an exded (excess) dinar." Abu Muhammad smiled and pushed the dinar back with both hands, as if

deflecting an attack, and said, "I know, Anwar, it's a raise. Consider it a gift from me. From next week onwards, your weekly wage will be three dinars. You are a clever and good-natured lad." Poor Anwar couldn't hide his joy at this generous offer from Abu Muhammad. He reached out to kiss Abu Muhammad's hand, out of respect and gratitude, but Abu Muhammad refused, pulling his hand back and saying, "Now, go quickly and get your stuff together so that you can catch the bus to the village and on Saturday morning, you'll be here, God willing." Anwar didn't know what to say and stumbled over his words, wondering how he could arrive early when transportation was always a problem for him. Abu Muhammad anticipated his thoughts and followed up by saying, "On Saturday, I'll prepare the fava beans and chickpeas, and you come whenever it suits you." A smile returned to Anwar's face as he bid farewell to Abu Muhammad, hopeful for their reunion on Saturday.

Anwar in The Village Again

As the sun began to set, a small transport truck came to a halt at the village entrance. Anwar stepped out of it after paying the driver for his fare and made his way home. It felt like years since he had been there. As he reached the dilapidated wooden gate, he pounded on it with force, hoping to be heard from within. After a few moments, Anwar heard the voice of his father, Zaidan, saying, "Yes, who's knocking? Take it easy, I'm coming." Zaidan opened the door, and what a delightful surprise it was for his son, Anwar, who had been absent for a few days but had felt like years to them. Zaidan embraced Anwar, overflowing with joy, and shouted to his wife, Fazza, saying, "Look, Fazza, Anwar has arrived!" The loving mother couldn't contain her excitement and rushed towards the door to embrace her dear son, saying, "Welcome, my dear. Welcome, beloved scent. Welcome, my soul. Welcome, my entire life." It was a touching scene, filled with tears as if it were a reunion after years of longing.

Fazza, Anwar's mother, asked him the first question: "Are you hungry, my dear? Surely, you must be hungry?"

Anwar: "By God, I am stalving (starving), Mom. Tluly famid (truly famished)."

Zaidan: "May hunger vanish, my son. Fazza, hurry up and prepare the food."

Fazza: "All right, just a moment, and dinner will be ready."

Zaidan took Anwar by the hand and walked ahead, with Anwar following behind, saying, "Come, son, sit down and tell me everything. What happened to you? Don't spare any detail."

They sat on the mat, each finding a comfortable spot, and Anwar began narrating his experiences since arriving at his friend Mustafa's father's place, culminating in his work at Abu Muhammad's falafel stand. Zaidan would occasionally interrupt Anwar's conversation, saying, "May God endear people to you." Fazza, too, couldn't stop praying for Anwar's success and fortune in whatever he does.

Suddenly, Anwar rose from his seat and headed towards the bag he had with him. He took out some items from it, for which he had paid part of the price upfront, while the rest was to be paid in installments to a merchant whom Anwar had met through the restaurant. He said, "Dit id fol you, mudda (This is for you, Mother)," referring to a silk scarf, and then he pulled out something else and handed it to his father, saying, "And

dis id a toab fol you, fadda (and this is a thoab (a type of men's wear) for you, Father." These were simple gifts Anwar presented to his parents, but in their eyes, they were among the most beautiful and precious gifts.

After dinner, signs of fatigue and exhaustion appeared on Anwar as his father asked him to go to sleep to continue their conversation in the morning. The next day, shortly before noon, Anwar accompanied his father to the mosque to perform Friday prayer. There, Anwar met his friends, and he was greeted and welcomed by the men of the village as if he had been away from the village for years. Anwar spent some time with his friends and then returned home to have lunch, prepared by his mother, which consisted of roasted chicken.

Anwar spent two of the most beautiful days, and now it was time for him to return to the city on Saturday morning, as agreed. Suddenly, the joy of his poor mother turned into sorrow and the same was true for Zaidan, who concealed his grief, unlike his wife whose tears flowed abundantly. However, Anwar comforted them and said, "Don't wolly (worry), few dayd (days) and I will be back" It was a somber moment for everyone, even for Anwar himself, but this is the price one pays for working in the city. He bid farewell to his parents with a sad smile and headed to his workplace.

Shortly before noon, Anwar arrived at the restaurant to find Abu Muhammad engrossed in cleaning and

arranging the tables. He greeted him and said, "Untle (uncle) Abu Muhammad, allow me to tlean (clean) and ordanize dem (organize them)." Abu Muhammad paused his work, smiling, and replied, "Hey, Anwar, today all the customers have been asking about you. They thought you had quit, but I assured them that you were visiting your family and would return." Anwar considered these words as a form of reinforcement and encouragement, especially after his first week at work. He was delighted by this praise and started working even harder than before. Anwar continued in this manner for several months, with the restaurant's clientele growing to the point where sometimes a customer had to wait standing until a seat became available.

Abu Muhammad, recognizing the increased workload and strain on Anwar, particularly with the growing number of customers and increased income, decided to increase Anwar's wages without him having to ask. One afternoon, during a slow period when customer traffic was light, Anwar and Abu Muhammad sat at one of the tables and engaged in their usual conversation about the restaurant and the customers. However, this time Anwar surprised Abu Muhammad with a peculiar request, especially considering that Anwar had become familiar with most of the shops in the market and had gained insights into their transactions and commercial activities.

Anwar said to Abu Muhammad, "What do you tink (think) if we start mating (making) sauteed edds (eggs), tomatoes, meat, and potatoes?" At first, Abu Muhammad burst into laughter and said, "Anwar, are you trying to jump from the basket to its handles at once? (An expression meaning that a person is trying to get further than his capabilities.) Do you realize that this idea will open doors we are not ready for?" Anwar, calmly as usual, responded, " I would say deese (these) ideas will bring us blessings, and open the doors of providion (provision)?"

Abu Muhammad remained astonished by Anwar's sudden proposal, but after a few moments, he fell silent, deep in thought. He mused to himself, "By God, this boy is brilliant." Interrupting his thoughts, Anwar's voice broke the silence, saying, "Uncle Abu Muhammad, it'd (it's) a very timple (simple) matter. Tomorrow, let (let's) buy a flying (frying) pan, bling (bring) some gat (gas), instead of Primuth (Primus) stove, and thtart (start) boiling fava beand (beans) and chickpeath (chickpeas). We'll took (cook) flied edds (fried eggs) on top and terve dem wid delidus glilled (serve them with delicious grilled) meat. What do you tay (say)?"

Abu Muhammad was pleased with the idea and said, "You know what, Anwar? By God, you understand. How did this idea not cross my mind for years? All right, tomorrow morning, I'll go to the market and get the pans,

and from tomorrow, God willing, we'll start with the fried dishes along with hummus and fava beans."

Indeed, that's what happened. Abu Muhammad's restaurant took off with its new offerings, and news spread about the variety of meals they served. As a result, the restaurant operated throughout the day, attracting customers at all times. While the peak hours used to be in the morning with the demand for fava beans and hummus, now the orders continued from breakfast to lunch and even until evening.

Poor Anwar found himself in an unexpected predicament. True, the restaurant was doing better than before, and the number of customers was steadily increasing, but the workload and exhaustion on Anwar intensified. He no longer had time to rest during work. Throughout the day, he was constantly in motion, alternating between preparations in the morning, fulfilling customer orders, and cleaning utensils and the premises.

However, Abu Muhammad observed Anwar and appreciated the effort he put in. He understood the magnitude of the hard work Anwar was undertaking. Therefore, he took the initiative this time to offer a new proposition. He suggested to Anwar that they hire an additional worker to assist him. Within two days, by placing a simple advertisement on the restaurant's glass

facade, they managed to employ a resident of the neighborhood.

The work continued, and the restaurant's reputation spread among the market traders like wildfire. The organization, cleanliness, and variety of dishes became attractive factors, not to mention Anwar's friendly interactions with the customers. They had become accustomed to his gentleness and humor.

Family Problem

Several years passed, and Anwar's financial situation became better. Abu Muhammad did not neglect Anwar, for every time the restaurant's income increased, he would raise Anwar's wage. However, Anwar no longer went to the village every week. Due to work pressure, he visited the village once a month, and sometimes every two months. He was unable to do anything for his parents, who could do nothing but pray for his success and contentment. Yet, one day he decided to make a decision that might have been difficult for his parents. He decided to bring his parents from the village to live with him in the city after renting a small house. At first, Zaidan refused this offer, as how could he leave the place of his birth and upbringing to go to a place where he knew no one? On the other hand, Fazza's acceptance was immediate. Her only desire being to see her beloved son every day. After extensive contemplation, Anwar and his mother managed to convince Zaidan and withdraw his objection.

Anwar's life returned to relative stability after being lonely. Once again, he sensed the warmth of family life that he had long been deprived of. The lives of both Zaidan and Fazza took a new direction. As for Fazza, she got to know one of the neighbors and started spending

some time with her daily. Zaidan, who was not satisfied with being confined to the house after moving freely among neighbors and friends in the village, also embarked on a new life and occupied his free time. The first task he undertook was to beautify the modest house's garden, which did not exceed fifty square meters. He created small beds for herbs like parsley and others and planted three trees—lemon, almond, and olive. Sometimes, he went out shopping and made a detour to Abu Muhammad's restaurant to spend some time with him, reviving the memories of their youth and past times.

Several months passed, and the situation was becoming more stable day by day for Anwar and his parents. However, the same could not be said for Abu Muhammad, the owner of the restaurant. His health was deteriorating day by day, and he could no longer oversee the restaurant's affairs as he did before. He entrusted this task to Anwar, who carried out the responsibilities with utmost dedication. How could he not, when Abu Muhammad was like a spiritual father to him!

The Resolute Decision

One day, Abu Muhammad made a resolute decision. It had been on his mind for a long time, and now was the perfect time for it. His deteriorating health and old age were driving factors in making such important choices, especially since he had not been blessed with children (his teknonymy of Abu Muhammad (Father of Muhammad) was an honorary title given to him by friends as a show of respect). He called Anwar and sat him down at one of the tables, saying, "Listen, Anwar, I consider you as my own son, and I beg you to listen to me attentively." Anwar responded, "I'm at your command, uncle (your command, Uncle)." Abu Muhammad continued, "This restaurant has consumed my entire life. Since I can remember, I have dedicated myself to this world, and it has become my occupation and my preoccupation. But now, I've grown old, and I can no longer come and go as I used to. That's why I have decided to give you this restaurant because you are a trustworthy young man, skilled, and possess good morals." Anwar interrupted, saying, "But, uncle (Uncle), I don't have the intention or desire (intention or desire) to stay or spend a minute in the restaurant without you." Abu Muhammad replied firmly, "Don't interrupt me! Listen to me until the end. As I said, working here is no longer beneficial to me, and my presence only adds

unnecessary complications. So that my staying at home can bring me more peace, please, I ask you to fulfill my wish." Anwar nodded and said, "Ad (as) you wish, untle (Uncle), I will fulfill your requet (request)." Abu Muhammad returned to the topic and said, "I have made arrangements with the landlord, and we have agreed to transfer the lease contract from my name to yours, with an increase in the rent. The payment will be monthly, and this way, you will become the owner of the restaurant. And if I find myself with free time, I will come to have a cup of tea at your place." As Abu Muhammad finished speaking, tears welled up in his eyes. Anwar, unable to hold back his emotions, also burst into tears and embraced Abu Muhammad as if they were a father and son reunited after a long separation.

After an arduous effort, Anwar Abu Muhammad finally agreed to his idea, and the lease contract was transferred to the new owner, Anwar Al-Zaidan. As for Abu Muhammad, he became a "hostage" in the house, but Zaidan, Anwar's father, spent most of his time there. It was both for their amusement, but the main reason was to repay Abu Muhammad's gratitude for what he had done for his son, Anwar. Anwar, too, did not forget the kindness of Abu Muhammad towards him. He allocated a monthly sum from the restaurant's profits to assist him with his daily needs.

The situation continued in this manner, and Anwar's responsibilities increased, especially in the restaurant, as new customers began to come by, and his name became renowned in the market among the merchants, extending his fame to neighboring markets. Consequently, the restaurant expanded its offerings, and the staff increased to accommodate the growing variety of cuisines being served. This prompted Anwar to acquire two adjacent commercial premises, which were rented from the property owner once they became vacant.

However, Anwar did not forget Abu Muhammad's favor towards him. The monthly amount he gave him increased as a gesture of gratitude and to provide for Abu Muhammad and his wife. Furthermore, Anwar's parents also enjoyed a lion's share of this abundance of provision, not to mention some needy and impoverished individuals.

Restaurant and Sweets

With the expansion that took place, it was necessary to introduce a new element that would align with this growth. Anwar decided to incorporate desserts, especially after he met a pastry chef who had come from Nablus (a city in Palestine) in search of work. He recalled his own experience with Abu Muhammad years ago when he was seeking employment and how Abu Muhammad had taken him under his wing. This encounter had a profound impact on Anwar's acceptance of the offer from the Nablus pastry chef.

With this qualitative leap in his business, Anwar now had a chain of restaurants covering most areas of Amman, operating under the commercial name "Anwar's Restaurants and Sweets." Anwar's trade expanded, and he developed many friendships with market traders, fostering good relationships with them.

Anwar gained a prestigious position among the merchants and the local community. However, despite all these successes, sorrow remained his constant companion. Anwar's sorrow stemmed from his speech impediment. He would often reproach himself, alternately blaming his father for it. Of course, what saddened Anwar the most was his speech impediment, and he would recall that painful incident when, at a

tender age, Fraywan forcibly pressed him to the ground, kneeling on his chest to perform tongue correction by cauterizing the tip of his tongue. This was preceded by the bloodletting under his tongue, all in an attempt to alleviate his speech impediment. Anwar would always say, "May God forgive you, Father. If you had left me alone, I would have learned to speak properly with time."

These moments of solitude haunted him whenever he sat alone or faced an embarrassing situation with someone he met for the first time. They were painful and distressing memories of events that left him with an incurable disability. Ultimately, Anwar expressed gratitude to God for his current situation and the abundance of sustenance bestowed upon him.

Glimmer of Hope

One day, Anwar entered one of his restaurant branches in a suburb of Amman during his routine inspection visits. He was warmly welcomed and seated next to Mamdouh, the accountant. Anwar began teasing him as usual, but Mamdouh didn't respond to Anwar's jesting, contrary to his usual manner. Anwar immediately noticed this change in Mamdouh's facial expressions and asked him:

Anwar: "What (What's) the mattel (matter), Mamdouh? Had tometing (has something) happened, God forbid?"

Mamdouh: "By God, Anwar, the kids' mother called a little while ago and told me that our child has high fever. I applied cold compresses to bring it down, but it's still the same. I don't know what to do."

Anwar: "Tate (Take) him to the phyditan (physician), Mamdouh."

Mamdouh: "And who should I leave the cash register with?"

Anwar: "Oh, curte bot (cursed box)! I'll tay (stay) in your plate (place) until you return."

Mamdouh: "May your kindness last, Anwar. May God, grant you solace."

Mamdouh intended to count the cash register in order to hand it over to his mentor, Anwar. However, Anwar refused and said to Mamdouh, "Oh, hurry up and quickly check on the child, my friend."

With these words, Anwar urged Mamdouh to swiftly attend to his child's needs before anything else.

As Mamdouh was about to leave, Anwar called out to him, extending a sum of money: "Take thetth (these), for the phythithian and medithin (physician and the medicine)." Mamdouh left with solace, and Anwar took his place behind the cash register. It was only a matter of moments before a remarkably beautiful girl entered, holding a box of sweets, and handed it to the employee to be wrapped. After the employee finished wrapping the box, he gestured for her to proceed to the cash register to pay for it. The girl approached Anwar and handed him five dinars. Anwar remained astonished by what he saw, holding the five dinars in his hand, unsure of what to do. However, the employee interrupted him, saying, "Deduct two and a half dinars, boss." Anwar quickly redressed the situation and returned the remaining amount to the girl with a gentle smile. She accepted the change, bidding Anwar farewell with a sweet smile in return.

Anwar remained lost in this encounter for a few moments before he asked the employee, "Ith thith dirl a legulal tustomel heel (is this girl a regular customer here)?"

The employee replied, "Oh, indeed, she's been a customer for a long time. But honestly, sir, she is a very respectful and dignified customer, unlike the girls of today who have no manners." This encouraged Anwar to seek further information without revealing his curiosity to the employee. He asked, "Doth thee live nealby, thee mutht be becauth thee is alone and there ith no one attompanyin hel (does she live nearby, she must be because she is alone and there is no one accompanying her)?"

The employee answered, "Yes, sir. Her house is at the end of the street, near the big lemon tree. Once, on a Eid holiday (Eid is an Islamic religious celebration marking either the end of the fasting month of Ramadan or the end of pilgrimage to Mecca), I delivered some items to her house because she couldn't carry them herself." Anwar smiled and contented himself with this valuable piece of information. From then on, minutes felt like hours to him as he eagerly awaited Mamdouh's return. He was filled with anticipation to go out and see the lemon tree at the end of the street.

After more than two hours, Mamdouh returned with a smile on his face. He greeted Anwar and embraced

him, saying, "May God grant you solace and ease your affairs." Anwar asked him, "Tho (so), what happened wid da (with the) boy?" Mamdouh joyfully replied, "By God, Anwar, as soon as the wise doctor examined the boy, he found his tonsils inflamed. He gave him an injection to bring down his fever and prescribed a syrup. Thank God, the boy is fine now." Anwar nodded his head, smiled, and said, "Plaith (praise) be to God for hith lecovely (his recovery). Well then, I'll leave you to it. I have tome mattels (some matters) to attend to."

Anwar hurriedly went outside, searching for the large lemon tree. He spotted it from a distance and walked towards it. When he reached it, he found a modest house that shows it was very clean by the look of its small front yard at its entrance.

Every day, Anwar would come in his car and park it in front of the house, waiting for the girl to come out to confirm that it was indeed her house. After several days, Anwar arrived at the location early in the morning and saw a well-dressed middle-aged man leaving that house. Anwar kept his distance and observed him, which eventually led him to get out of the car and follow the man from a few meters away. He discovered that the man owned a small and humble shop in the neighborhood.

Anwar returned to his car, feeling a sense of happiness. As he was about to get in, his joy increased when he saw the girl watering the flowers and plants in

front of the house. At that moment, his happiness grew even more, knowing that the girl hadn't noticed his presence or even glanced towards the street.

A Step in the Right Direction

Anwar, despite his happiness, found himself overwhelmed by fear. He began to think to himself, "Indeed, Anwar, you float in a water of a hand span depth (an expression meaning foolishness). Could it be that the girl I fancy doesn't reciprocate my feelings? How could she possibly choose to be with someone with speech impediment like me? Truly, Anwar, you are a fool."

For several days, he remained in this state, neglecting his usual business affairs and settling for phone calls to ensure the progress of his work. Then, one day, he was seized by a sudden surge of positive energy, and without any hesitation, he made his way to that particular shop to confront the elegant man and broach the subject.

Anwar arrived and stood hesitantly at the shop's entrance, unsure whether to enter or not. However, the elegant man, the shop's owner, put an end to his indecision by calling out, "Come in, sir." Anwar entered and stood before the man, unsure of how to begin the conversation.

The shop owner asked him, "What can I do for you, sir?" Anwar, after a moment of hesitation, decisively

stated, "I need to dithcuth a mattel wid you plivately (discuss a matter with you privately)." The shop owner replied, "I'm sorry, I didn't quite catch that. What do you want?"

Anwar, with hesitation, repeated his statement, but this time with a stronger tone. The shop owner realized that Anwar had difficulty articulating his words, but he understood what he wanted. He asked Anwar to sit on a small straw chair beside him, showing no reaction to Anwar's manner of speech. Instead, he treated him with sincerity and seriousness. Anwar sat down, smiling, and his heartbeat returned to its normal rhythm. The dialogue between them began as follows:

The Man: Please, go ahead and tell me what's on your mind.

Anwar: I am Anwal (Anwar), da ownel of da lestaulant and tonfentionary atross da treet (the owner of the restaurant and confectionery across the street).

The Man: Welcome! By God, I have been a customer of yours since you first opened in the neighborhood. How can I assist you?

Anwar: May God bless you. I have a matter conterning (concerning) your daughter. An indident dat (incident occurred) that led me to tee (see) her when te (she) entered and bought some pateries (pastries). I was

captivated by her and now I wish to propod (propose) to her, if there id (is) no obtacle (obstacle).

The man smiled and said, "Listen, sir, in such matters, people usually ask for some time to get to know the potential groom. Before I respond or inquire about you, I would like you to visit me at home and have a cup of coffee. Choose a time that suits you."

Anwar, surprised, asked, "Id dis (Is this evening) convenient?"

The man replied, "Let's depend on God. This evening, after sunset, you will honor me at my house, located pasy your restaurant by ...," but Anwar interrupted, saying, "By the larde (large) lemon tree." The man laughed and said, "You even know the address!"

Anwar responded, rising from the straw chair, "If God wills, after tuntet (sunset), I will be there."

Anwar left the shop, and happiness returned to him momentarily, only to be replaced by worry and sadness. As usual, Anwar began to converse with himself, pondering and doubting, "Could it be that he invited me for a cup of coffee so that his daughter can see and hear my speech impediement? Perhaps she won't accept me. Ah... that's why he said he won't even ask about me for the time being!"

Hours passed as if they were a year, and now the sunset hour arrived, and the call to Maghreb prayer was made. Anwar finished his prayer and concluded it with the verse from the Quran: "My Lord, expand for me my breast [with assurance], and ease for me my task, and untie the knot from my tongue that they may understand my speech", May Allah's words be true.

Anwar rang the doorbell, and after a few seconds, the girl's father opened the door, inviting him to enter the guest's room with a gesture of his hand. They sat together, and the girl's father asked, "How is your coffee?" Anwar replied, "It tugar-free (it's sugar-free)." Immediately, the girl's father called to his family, saying, "Prepare two cups of coffee without sugar." Several minutes of greetings and compliments passed between them, discussing market conditions and business since trade was a common factor between them. Their conversation was interrupted by a light knock on the door, and the girl's father said, "Come in, Um Malak."

The girl's mother entered, serving Anwar the coffee, and then she attempted to leave. However, her husband asked her to call their daughter Malak and have her join them as a guest. Shyly, Malak entered with her mother, and Anwar looked at her with timid glances and a faint smile that was evident in his eyes.

Here Anwar, along with the members of the family, gathered in one room. Malak's father asked Anwar to

drink the coffee before it cools down and continued talking, explaining their family situation. The family consisted of the father, mother, and their daughter Malak. Their source of income was the father's retirement pension, in addition to the income from the shop. Anwar was astonished by what he heard and saw, saying to himself, "Have things been reversed? Shouldn't the groom and his family be the ones providing these details, rather than the bride's family?" Malak's father noticed Anwar's distraction and asked him, "Where did your mind wander?" Anwar replied with stammering words, apologizing for his behavior while looking at the girl, expecting her to laugh or giggle at his uneven speech. However, all the girl could offer in response was a shy smile. As for her mother, she had already been informed of the situation in advance by her husband, who had shared with her the details of what happened between him and Anwar earlier that day.

Pleasant Surprise

The conversation between Anwar and the girl's father continued in general for a few minutes, but without the girl, Malak, actively participating in the discussion. Her involvement was limited to shy glances she stole from time to time. The conversation came to a halt, and silence descended for a few moments before Malak's father resumed speaking, earnestly addressing Anwar. He said, "Dear ammo (uncle a term used when addressing an older person or used by an older person when addressing a younger person with kindness) Anwar, I invited you for a cup of coffee because I sensed your refined upbringing and knowledge of etiquette, unlike some young men these days who enter houses through windows rather than doors. That's why I didn't inquire about your family or your background, and my invitation to my home for a cup of coffee was not without purpose. I brought you here to inform you of something, and I wanted you to see it with your own eyes."

Anwar was puzzled by Malak's father's words, and astonishment gripped him as he responded, perplexed, "What id (is) it, uncle? What da (What's the) matter?" Malak's father replied, "My wife is my cousin, and by God's grace, we were blessed with this daughter, Malak. However, after a few months, we noticed that she

couldn't hear, and we took her to multiple doctors who told us that she was born deaf. At that moment, Anwar's reaction was a mixture of surprise and joy. His mind wandered back to the day he first saw her at the store when she bought a box of sweets. "Indeed, she didn't utter a single sound or word. All she did was take the box of sweets, hand it to the employee to wrap it, pay for it, and leave." Meanwhile, as Malak's father was engrossed in his narrative about the struggles they faced and the repeated attempts to treat Malak, which unfortunately yielded no success, Anwar's thoughts drifted away, specifically to that day when he was held down by Fraywan and a few men, with his father Zaidan present, for that operation under his tongue and the subsequent cauterization on the front part of his tongue. These incidents were the cause of his current speech impediment and the suffering he endured throughout his life. Painful memories continued to haunt him from childhood until this day. Anwar's eyes welled up with tears, and he remained lost in the depths of those painful and sorrowful recollections.

Abu Malak extended a paper tissue to Anwar and, in a gentle tone, said, "Take it, my dear, wipe your tears. Where did your mind wander off to, leaving me here conversing with myself? I apologize (apologize)", Anwar said. As Anwar began wiping his tears, he noticed that those around him were also shedding tears. Anwar

regained his composure and proceeded to recount the events of that fateful day. However, true to his nature, he thanked God in all circumstances.

Despite the wave of sadness that engulfed the room, Anwar concealed inner happiness, although his eyes almost betrayed him. The reason for this unspoken joy was that his speech impediment, which had been the main obstacle in pursuing any romantic relationship, seemed to dissipate in the presence of this girl.

In return, Anwar shared with Malak's parents the painful details of his childhood and recounted the hardships he faced during his early days of work in the popular restaurant until reaching his current position.

Malak followed every word Anwar uttered through sign language, which was one of her mother's responsibilities. The gathering extended beyond dinner with mutual contentment between the two parties. Anwar desired to stay for as long as possible, especially since Malak looked at him with shy glances and smiles as if silently requesting him to stay. However, adhering to social norms, he knew he had to take his leave, especially since it was his first visit. Therefore, he said to Malak's father, "Untle (uncle), I have anterred (answered) your invitaten (invitation) and fulfilled your requet (request). If you allow me, the net vidit (next visit) will be attompanied (accompanied) by my mother moder and fader (and father), ad we teek (as we seek) Malak's hand

in marriage." Malak's father smiled and replied, "Very well, but give me a few days, and then we can discuss it further."

Great Joy, But!

Anwar bid farewell to the family of uncle Yousuf (that was Malak's father's name), brimming with happiness. How could he not be? He was on the verge of realizing the dream of his life. He got into his car and drove leisurely, indulging in self-talk. "Surely, Abu Malak will inquire about me, which is why he asked for a few days more. Well, it's not wrong to let him ask at his own pace. Thankfully, I haven't kept anything from him and I've shared the story of my life, from the knock-knock on assalmu alaykum farwell (an expression that means from beginning to end). And so, Anwar continued driving, puzzled as to where he should go.

He mused to himself, "Should I go to my parents' place to share this news with them? No, they're probably already asleep after the evening prayer. Perhaps I should go to my uncle, Abu Muhammad's place instead. He's like a spiritual father to me. Yes, Anwar, you're wandering aimlessly. He's probably fast asleep, only to be found in the seventh dream. And so, Anwar drove his car while thoughts collided in his mind, oblivious to the fact that midnight had passed and the streets were devoid of pedestrians and cars. He returned home and decided that in the morning, his destination would be his parents' house, just a few meters away from his own dwelling.

Hours passed for Anwar as if they were years, for he did not surrender to sleep as usual. Instead, he sat in his rocking chair, lost in his thoughts once again. However, this time, Malak was the centerpiece of his contemplation. He spoke to himself, questioning, "Could it be that she does not approve of me? No, that's impossible. She already cannot speak or hear. And even if she didn't like my appearance, she would have suppressed her smiles at me. Thank God, my Lord, for facilitating the union with a woman of such righteousness, so that my dilemma may be resolved. And as for communication with her, that should be easy! With time, I'll adapt to her way of understanding through gestures, and we shall live in harmony and peace."

Anwar remained in this state until drowsiness overcame him while he sat in his rocking chair. He only woke up from his slumber when the rays of the sun playfully caressed his eyelids. He hastily got up, seeking refuge from Satan, realizing that he had missed the Fajr prayer. He performed ablution and continued with his morning routine, albeit in a rush. The feeling of joy returned to him once again, even stronger than the previous night. How could it not, when his mother, Fazza, had eagerly awaited this moment, and so had his father, Zaidan?

Anwar headed towards his parents' house, repeatedly ringing the doorbell as if he wanted to announce from the

outside that there was urgent news. Moments later, he heard his father's voice behind the door, saying, "O [God the] Opener, O All-Knowing, who is this person at the door?" Anwar replied, "Open up, Dad, it me Anwal (it's me, Anwar)."

Zaidan opened the door and said to Anwar, "Anwar! What's the matter with you this morning? Why are you here so early as if you have spent the night on a tree?"

Anwar exclaimed, "Dad, I have fantatic newd (fantastic news)!"

Zaidan asked, "Well, what is it?"

Anwar joyfully responded, "Dad, I have found my rligteos blide (ighteous bride). I found da (the) one you and Mom have been lootin (looking) for to be endaded (engaged) to me."

Zaidan, overjoyed by what he heard from his beloved son, exclaimed, "Is it true?-Come inside and tell me what's going on with you."

Anwar entered, happiness shining in his eyes, and asked, "Where'd (where's Mom)? Id tee till tleepin (Is she still sleeping)?" Zaidan replied, "I think she's still asleep. I'll go wake her up now."

Zaidan headed towards the bedroom, while Anwar remained in the living room, his heart brimming with anticipation for the decisive moment when he would

surprise his mother with this joyful news, perhaps the most delightful news of her life. It was only a matter of moments when suddenly Zaidan shouted from inside, calling out to Anwar urgently, "Son, Anwar... come quickly, see what's wrong with your mother!"

Anwar hurriedly ran, for the tone of his father's voice was one he hadn't heard since he was a boy, a tone that hinted at something serious. And indeed, it was. The scene suggested that something had happened. Zaidan embraced Fazza, weeping, and Anwar couldn't comprehend what he saw. He threw himself to the ground beside his father and held the hand of his mother, which hung limply behind Zaidan's shoulder.

"Oh, her hand is cold... and her face, too, is cold... her entire body is cold."

About The Author:

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- Born in Irbid, Jordan in 1965.
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Other Books By The Author (In Arabic):

- Shatharat min atturath – Part One (شذرات من التراث الجزء الأول)
- Shatharat min atturath – Part Two (شذرات من التراث الجزء الثاني)
- Aja `Abali (أجا عبالى)
- Khurbut Burbut (خُرْبُط بُرْبُط)
- Dareebistan (ضريستان)

Quote from this story:

“Anwar's thoughts drifted away, specifically to that day when he was held down by Fraywan and a few men, with his father Zaidan present, for that operation under his tongue and the subsequent cauterization of the front part of his tongue. These incidents were the cause of his current speech impediment.”