

The Widow Upstairs

In a very big city, where there were a lot of people and a lot of noise, there was a small quiet street. On this street there was a quaint, brown apartment building with a tall tree in front of it that lost its leaves each fall and looked frail and sickly until spring. On the third floor of this apartment building a small girl lived with her mother and father and her fish named Firas.



Above this family, on the fourth floor, there lived an old widow. Her husband was no longer alive and her two sons were all grown up. They had gotten married and had moved away. They called their mother every day on the phone and they visited her often. Each time they visited their hearts would become heavy with sadness. They did not like that their dear old mother lived by herself. ‘Surely,’ they thought, ‘she must be terribly lonely’ and they would beg her, “Dearest mother, please come live with one of us. We will take care of you in the best way insha’Allah.” But their mother would always say no. She did not want to leave her small cozy apartment on the fourth floor.

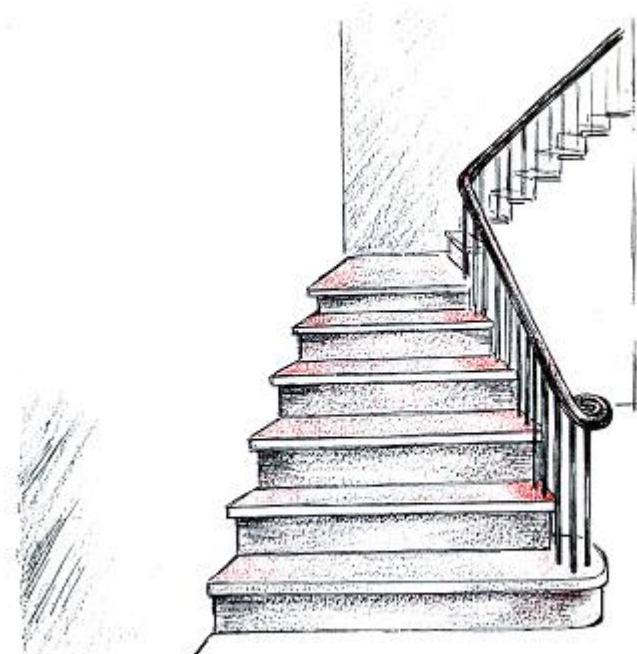
This went on for a number of years until one day the widow, who was now very old, got sick. Her sons rushed to come see her. Again, they begged her to come live with one of them and again she said no. Their hearts were broken.

By this time the little girl who lived on the third floor beneath the widow was no longer so little, she was six years old now. The little girl’s mother was in the habit of visiting the widow every Jumma to see if she needed anything. Now that the little girl was growing up, her mother began taking her along. The little girl loved visiting the widow upstairs. She loved how each time she saw her, the widow would say, ‘Assalamu alaikum’ in her old scratchy voice and bend down and kiss her on the top of her head. The widow always smelled of Daphne and the little girl would inhale the scent each time the widow kissed her.



On the Friday after the widow got sick the little girl and her mother went upstairs to visit her. The widow took a very long time to answer the door and they began to worry. Finally, slowly, the widow's door opened. She was too frail to bend down and kiss the little girl and the smell of Daphne was weak and the little girl hardly smelled it at all. The little girl was sad. She wanted the widow to get well. "I don't want you to be sick," she told the widow. "I want you to be happy and strong like you were before." The widow smiled. "Would you like to help me feel better insha'Allah?" she asked the little girl. "Would you come and read to me for just a little while each day?"

And so from that day on the little girl's mother would take her upstairs and the little girl would read to the widow. Sometimes the little girl would get stuck on a word but the widow never minded and she would lie in her bed and patiently wait while the little girl figured the word out. Sometimes the widow helped but she was very weak and so she was not able to help very often.



The widow was sick all winter and each day the little girl's mother would take her upstairs and the little girl would read to the widow. Some days she would read surah An-nas or surah Ash-Sharh. Other days she read surah Ad-Duha, surah Az-Zalzalah or At-Takathur. One day she read surah Al-Humazah and another day she read surah Al-Ma'un and the widow cried.

When winter was almost over the widow began to feel better alhamdulillah. Her sons came again and again and they begged, "Dearest mother, please come live with one of us, certainly we will take the best care of you insha'Allah." But as she had done many times before, the widow refused. "I do not wish to leave my cozy apartment and I have a friend who comes and reads to me each day. I wish to stay my dear sons." And so, with sad hearts, they left her.

But every day until the widow was very very old the little girl would go with her mother and read to the widow upstairs and the widow was not lonely at all.

