

A Lantern in Her Window

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Book	A Lantern in Her Window
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To the One Reading This...

This book is for every soul searching for its Lantern — the Lantern of Hope, the Lantern of Faith — and for every heart longing for just a little more light to hold on to.

*For every **Sara** who struggles in her deen yet refuses to give up.
For every **Yusuf** who holds his family with gentleness, faith, and responsibility*

*And for every child of **Gaza, Sudan, Uyghur**—know that I have not forgotten you.*

Your pain shakes my heart, your courage humbles me, and the injustice you endure burns through my veins. You are the reason I keep writing fiercely, hoping my words somehow become a small sadaqah for the oppressed, a reminder to the world, and a whisper of hope for our wounded ummah. You hold a special place in every page, every paragraph, and every chapter I ever write.

And finally this book is for anyone who is striving and slipping, hoping and returning, falling and still believing—that Allah will guide them, forgive them, and carry them safely to their home in Jannah.

May this Lantern reach your hands exactly when your heart needs it the most.





Chapter 1: The Girl and the Letter

The clock ticked quietly in the corner of the room, but 18-year-old Sara barely heard it. She sat cross-legged on the floor of her small Boston apartment, the corner near the balcony where the sun always poured in just before Maghrib. Her phone lay flipped over beside her — on purpose. She was trying something new. A social media fast.

But it had only been 14 minutes. Yet it feels like forever.

She reached out to touch the slightly warm glass of the window. Below her, the street hummed with life — dogs barking, buses groaning, a child laughing wildly as her dad chased her with a bubble wand. A life of noise and color.

Sara didn't feel like color. She felt gray. Muted. Tired in a way that didn't show on the outside.

Her chest had carried an unnamed weight for months now. School was overwhelming. Her best friend had moved away. Her parents were in the middle of a silent war. And worst of all — worst of all — **she felt nothing in Salah anymore.** It was mechanical. Stand. Bow. Words. Finish. Done.

What was going on? Was she losing her iman?



She didn't know when it started — this emptiness. She only knew she missed something she couldn't name. Like when you're hungry but nothing seems appetizing.

That's when the sound of **adhan** echoed from her tiny prayer app — a soft, haunting reminder of Maghrib.

She didn't want to pray. But she did it anyway.

She always did. Even if she didn't feel it anymore.

As she stood up and made her way to the bathroom for wudu, she looked at herself in the mirror. Her own face stared back — tired, worn, but trying.

“Ya Allah... at least You know I'm trying.”

She prayed Maghrib slowly. Intentionally. She didn't know why. But today, her heart had whispered a single sentence before she began:

“Ya Allah, Even if I don't 'feel' it, You are still worth it.”

And in her final sujood, where the world always felt just a little quieter, a tear slipped out of her eye.

The first one in a long time.

The next morning came with overcast skies. Sara woke up later than she wanted to — after hitting snooze six times. No morning Qur'an. No morning *adhkar*. Tahajjud wasn't even a possibility. She barely had some time left before Fajr slipped away. And the

moment her eyes opened... the guilt pounced.

It sat on her chest like a weight she couldn't name—heavy, familiar, breath-stealing.

You're slipping. You used to be better.

Everyone else manages their ibadah... why can't you?

She pushed herself up, hair messy, eyes burning with shame. She sighed and sat up, brushing aside her phone notifications — memes, streaks, ads for new hijab collections, even someone's vacation photos in Greece. None of it mattered.

Dragging herself to the musalla corner, she prayed Fajr, slow but distracted. Her mind kept wandering — school, her mom's silence, her own spiritual drought. After the tasleem, she buried her face in her palms and whispered:

"Ya Allah, I feel so far from You... I don't know what to do, where to begin ... "

That's when she noticed something odd.

Underneath her prayer mat — slightly peeking out from the edge — was an envelope.

Handwritten. No stamp.

Her heart thumped. What is that...? Who left it there?

She unfolded it slowly. The handwriting was delicate and curvy, with green ink:

"Dear Soul,

You're probably in a valley right now. One of those valleys of life





Chapter 2: The Girl with the Blue Scarf

That Friday, Sara wasn't planning on going to Jumu'ah. She had a chemistry quiz. She was behind on homework. She hadn't even decided if she wanted to wear any hijab that day.

But the letter wouldn't leave her mind.

“Choose peace.”

It rang in her head louder than any anxiety could. So, after hesitating by her closet for five full minutes, she grabbed a soft olive green scarf — not too flashy, not too tight — and wrapped it, praying no one would stare.

She walked to the masjid near her school. Quiet, small, a cozy second-floor prayer room over a halal pizza shop. The air smelled of musk and hot cheese.

Sara slid into the back row. She felt invisible. That was perfect.

Until someone sat down beside her. A girl she had never seen before.

She wore a dusty blue scarf, round glasses, and had a notebook in her lap. Her smile was soft, and her eyes sparkled like she had

seen something beautiful this morning. Those eyes whispered **“Alhamdulillah”** even without saying a word. What a vibe Ma-sha-Allah!

The khutbah began. The imam spoke about how **Allah never wastes the tears of His servants** — that even a single drop spilled for the sake of Allah is recorded by angels who know its worth. He reminded everyone that **Allah sees you in your quiet moments** — when you’re still trying, still holding on, even when no one is watching, when there’s no applause, no validation — only sincerity and longing.

Then the Imam recited the hadith:

“Seven types of people will be shaded by Allah under His shade on the Day when there will be no shade except His...” and among them is **“a man who remembers Allah in solitude and his eyes overflow with tears.”**
— (Bukhari & Muslim)

And in that moment, the masjid felt still.

Sara didn’t mean to cry. But something hit her like a wave, and the tears fell silently. Maybe those tears will speak for her on a day when every word will fail.

After the prayer, the girl in the blue scarf gently turned to Sara.

“Hey Salam,” she whispered. “You okay?”

Sara blinked away tears and nodded. “Yeah, I’m fine. What’s your name?”

“I’m Amirah”, she paused and smiled widely, “Nice to meet you!”



Then she pulled a small, folded sticky note from her notebook. She handed it to Sara and smiled.

“It helped me once. Maybe it’ll help you too. Keep it.”

Then she stood up, waved, and was gone — like a breeze that comes and leaves without making noise.

Sara unfolded the note.

It was a quote. Just one line:

“And your Lord has not forsaken you, nor has He forgotten.”

— *Surah Ad-Duhaa*, 93:3

Something inside Sara cracked again — again, not painfully. And this time, it bloomed.

She whispered the verse over and over on her walk home. *“My Lord has not forsaken me... He has not forgotten me...”*

And for the first time in weeks, **she actually believed it.**





Chapter 3: The Storm at the Dinner Table

The sun had already dipped low by the time Sara walked into her apartment. The scent of turmeric and burnt onions lingered in the air — her mother’s usual chicken curry attempt, though half-hearted lately. The tension in the house, like always, greeted her before anyone else did.

Her mother, Sultana, stood at the stove, arms crossed, face tired. Her father sat on the couch, glued to his phone. No greetings. No questions. Just the clatter of a spoon and the hum of a television no one was watching.

Sara placed her bag down and quietly started setting the table.

Her little brother, Zayd, came running in, tugging at her sleeve, “*Sara Api, tell me now, am I your favorite brother?*”

She smiled, ruffled his hair, and said, “*Well, since I only have one brother at the moment... I guess the title is yours,*” and handed him a glass of water.

For a second, everything felt okay.

Until her mother spoke.



“Sara,” she said, turning sharply, “*Why did I get a call from school saying you missed chemistry?*”

Sara froze. Oh no, she forgot! She forgot to tell the school she left early for Jumu’ah.

“I—I *just went to pray*,” she said, trying to sound confident.

Her mother’s face hardened. “*You missed class to go to the masjid? Sara, your grades are slipping. This is not the time to play ‘madrasa girl’.*”

Her father looked up for the first time and added with a sharp voice, “*Sara! Your cousins are getting scholarships. And you’re skipping classes for feelings?*”

The room shrank around her.

Sara clenched her fists under the table. A thousand words rose to her tongue — *I’m trying! You don’t know how hard it is to feel nothing when I pray! You have no clue about the inner battles that drain me every single day. I’m just trying to find Allah again! Trying to find myself again!*

But none of them came out.

Instead, she stood up quietly, her eyes burning, heart pounding.

She walked to her room, closed the door, locked it. And she cried.

Cried like the night would swallow her whole. Cried not because of her parents’ words, but because — somewhere deep inside — she feared they might be right. *Are they right?*

Was she really losing her future while chasing a faith that didn’t even feel real yet?



Wasn't Islam supposed to bring ease and peace? Wasn't it the ultimate solution to all her problems? Then why did everything feel so hard now? Why did the door seem to close the moment she tried to walk toward Allah today? Why was everyone, *even her own parents*, upset with her for choosing Islam above all?

A dark voice crept into her mind — *What's the point?* it hissed. *You're praying, crying, and still nothing changes. Maybe you're just pretending to be 'religious'. You're just pretending to love the Qur'an.* Another whisper followed, softer but sharper — *'You don't even deserve to open the Qur'an when you are having these types of questions in your head.'*

Sara immediately looked at the Qur'an on her shelf. Her chest tightened; her hands trembled. She kept staring at the Qur'an on her shelf, feeling a mixture of emotions— sadness, fear and longing battling inside her — her *nafs* pulling one way, Shaytan pulling another.

But she took a shaky breath and reached for the Qur'an anyway. She pulled her Qur'an off the shelf. It felt so heavy in her hands. The waswasa of shaytan got heavier, *'You don't even deserve to open the Qur'an Sara!'*

But something in her heart whispered harder — ***Sara, Open it anyway.*** She flipped it randomly.

Her eyes fell on a verse.

**“So be patient. Indeed, the promise of Allah is truth.
And let not those who have no certainty discourage you.”
—(Surah Ar-Rum, 30:60)**



She stared at it. She read it again.

Let not those who have no certainty discourage you.

The words hit her like a tidal wave. A strange stillness followed. Not everything made sense yet, but one thing was clear:

Faith is not always loud. Sometimes, it's quiet resistance. Silent commitment. Choosing Allah, again and again — even when the world is shouting the opposite.

She wiped her face. Pulled out her journal. And wrote at the top of the page:

“I will not give up.”





Chapter 4: The Library and the Revolution

The next week felt like walking through fog.

Sara kept showing up—to school, to Salah, to her responsibilities—but a part of her still felt like it was surviving, not living. She was still processing what happened at dinner that day. She thought about opening up to Amirah, the blue-scarf girl she had just started messaging. But she brushed it off the next second *‘What’s the point? I don’t want to burden someone else with my struggles.’*

It was on Thursday afternoon, with two hours free before her tutoring shift, she wandered into the city library.

She hadn’t meant to go there. Her feet just... took her.

The building smelled like paper and dust and old stories. A sacred kind of quiet. A kind that wrapped around you like a blanket, not like the silence of her home — which felt more like walking on eggshells.

She wandered through the shelves, her fingers brushing titles she didn’t plan to read.

Then she saw her.

