



The Messenger

Book 7

Sugarcoated Evil



Sugar and spice and everything nice

That's what this villain's made off

Dedicated to,
My sweet little angels,
Fatima and Amna,
Sugar, spice and everything nice,
That's what you two are made of

Please recite Surah Fatiha for Syed Nadeem ul-Hasan and Mrs. Mahjabeen

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Chapter 1 - Good night!

Rain pelted down from the cloudy sky. A nasty gale moaned around the manor, banging against the windows. Samir struggled through the downpour and approached the large, front door. His persistent ringing was promptly answered by Hannah. She ushered him in, taking his coat and bag and seating him in front of the roaring fire. Samir's shivering hands welcomed the warmth. The fire roared in the fireplace, leaving the hearth feeling like a warm sun on the edge. He lay back in the cosy armchair, his eyelids became heavy and his head drooped forward, as Samir began to fall asleep.

However, this proved to be a small respite before a very noisy storm as Sonu and Zain came running into the room. Dressed in their pyjamas, they tore into the room. Both were yelling at the top of their voices, making it very clear to a tired, pursuing Hannah that they did not want to go to sleep.

She lurched forward, attempting to catch them.

However they were much quicker. The old woman was no match for the two little children. They clambered over the sofas and slid under the tables. They made it clear to the two adults that they did not want to go to bed.



Samir stood up and attempted to assist Hannah in catching them. Samir went after Zain, who gave him a good workout. He tore around the whole house, with poor Samir struggling to keep up with him.



Hannah went after Sonu, who was just as difficult to catch. She slid under the couches and the chairs, out of Hannah's reach.

In the end the two adults met in the living room after their fruitless efforts to catch the kids.

“We can't possibly find them, they could be anywhere!” exclaimed Samir in exasperation.



Hannah held a finger to her lips and listened intently. Samir instantly stopped speaking and listened as well. The faint sound of giggling echoed through the hollow hallways.

“What do we do?” he whispered as quietly as he could to Hannah.

She pondered deeply for a few seconds. Suddenly her eyes lit up. Hannah cupped her hands around her mouth and yelled,

“Well, it’s a shame we can’t find them. I just bought that new race car in the toyshop and that doll. But if there is no Sonu or Zain, I’ll go to the school and give their lovely toys to someone else.”

Suddenly, the two children came running down the stairs, and before Samir could blink, both were pulling at Hannah’s sleeve.

“If you don’t want me to give your toys to someone else, both of you should finish your chores and be in bed before I count to one. Ten ... Nine ...”

Zain and Sonu shot off like a rocket. Tumbling and tripping over each other they scrambled into their rooms. Samir looked at Hannah and asked, “Are they usually this way?”

Hannah shook her head and said, “I have never seen them in such a state. They are such serene, amiable children, especially Sonu, I wonder what got them riled up in such a manner.”

Shaking her head and muttering to herself in exasperation, she tottered off to the kitchen to clean the dinner dishes.



Samir went up to his room and got ready to go to bed. He was so exhausted that not even the steaming mug of coffee on his bedside table could relax him. Sinking between the warm covers, Samir's eyelids slipped over his eyes as he did his few minutes of daily accountability. At the end of the day he would spend a few minutes assessing his actions, wondering whether there was any action that he regretted or that he could have done better.

As his session finished, he felt very sleepy. As he was dozing off, his mind wandered to the incident that had occurred in the evening.

He couldn't possibly fathom any reason for Sonu and Zain's strange behaviour. They would always obey Samir. For Hannah, they were like her little soldiers. It was very abnormal to see them turning a deaf ear to the commands and pleas of both adults.

Unable to keep himself awake any longer, Samir fell asleep.

Chapter 2 – Delicious!

Samir woke up to a chilly morning. Winter held Peaceville in its icy clutches. Frost crawled over all the surfaces, painting patterns on everything from trees to car. The gales swept past rattling the doors and windows. One could only find a warm respite in the shadows of rays of the sun. The yellow beams of warmth washed away the cold where ever they fell. Samir welcomed the beams of light that crept into his room. He hurriedly got dressed. The team was planning to have an early meeting combined with breakfast. He crept past the kid’s room, and rushed down the stairs. As he was leaving, he called out to Hannah. She was already awake, preparing the children’s food. “Hannah! I have to leave early but I will be back by lunch, Inshallah” Cried Samir as he exited the house.



Hannah shook her head as she made some sandwiches. “Where is Samir Baba going, so early in the morning?”

Samir rushed on his way. He sped along the empty lanes. He was anxious to get there as soon as possible. It was not long before the tall, grey, looming building came into sight. In a few minutes he parked the car and rushed into the elevator. The elevators were very busy so Samir rushed up the stairs. After climbing three floors, he knocked on the door. Someone looked through the peek hole and fiddled with the lock before the door swung open. Samir sat in the nearby chair puffing and panting.

“Am I late?” he asked.

“No,” replied “We are still waiting for the girls.”

It wasn't long before the two arrived. They helped Huda lay the food while the men washed their hands and got ready.

“Wow!” exclaimed Mukhtar as he entered the room. It was a spectacular sight. The mouth-watering aromas of fried eggs, spice, fresh bread and so much more filled the office. Like a tiled floor, the table was covered from one end to the other. The six team members had a seat.

Huda passed around a bottle of salt and everyone took a pinch.

“What's this for?” asked Maira.

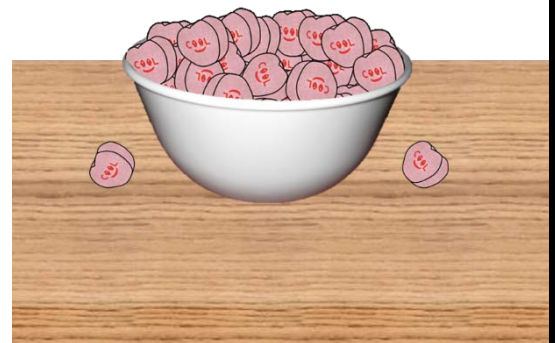
“The Holy Prophet (saw) has said that we should have a pinch of salt before we eat. It is said to save a person from over seventy different food diseases.”

Maira’s eyes widened in surprise. “More than seventy diseases! Wow!” she exclaimed as she reached out for the salt. After saying ‘Bismillah’ they dug in. The food was absolutely delicious.

“Huda, if you continue to feed us like this, I know that I will soon be a balloon.” Exclaimed Zahra.

Everyone complemented the food. After breakfast, Huda walked around offering everyone brightly coloured sweets.

They all refused, as everyone was full after having such a sumptuous meal. That is, everyone except Mukhtar, who was known to have a huge sweet tooth.



“What are these Huda?” asked Mukhtar.

“I don’t know. I saw them in a shop and thought that they might taste good.”

The meeting began. There was still no news of Naas. She had suddenly disappeared after their last adventure, leaving everyone puzzled.

“It doesn’t make sense.” Stated Maira. “Why would she make such a big show of herself and then disappear?”

“What do you mean by disappear?” queered Shajeeh.

“What I mean is that it’s as if she’s been wiped off the face of this earth. According to our reports from Aggressville, she has withdrawn from the presidential elections. Neighbours say that she went mental. She locked herself in her house, and that was the last that anyone saw of her. However there are several rumours floating around. Some say she tried to sneak into Peaceville. Others say that she fled to the moor. But a few say that she was taken care of.”

“Isn’t it strange?” questioned Huda “I don’t know whether you all would agree, but I see a repetition here. First we have the famous Rajab Khan, who –after his downfall- runs into a police station and begs to be arrested. Then we have this bank group who have vanished into thin air. Now Naas does the same thing that Rajab did. She vanishes without trace.”

“Who could both Naas and Rajab fear? They were rich, powerful, influential and smart. What could have intimidated them?” asked Mukhtar.

“Maybe it’s time to change our goals, from looking for Naas, to looking for her leader. However, this man is probably going to be a lot harder to find.” replied Samir

“Samir’s right. He is very skilled at keeping himself hidden. For all we know, he could be walking amongst

us in Peaceville. It is more important than ever that we keep our group a secret.”

She was interrupted by, who had turned to Mukhtar and exclaimed, “Mukhtar, don’t tell me you just ate all those candies.”

Everyone turned. Mukhtar was picking the crumbs from an empty bowl, the one that had earlier been filled with sweets. He shrugged his shoulders sheepishly as he held the empty bowl in his sticky hands. His face was down cast as the bowl turned between his fingers.

“What? They taste good...”

They all shook their heads and had a good laugh. The conversation continued and the conclusions were agreed upon. The new task was finding Naas’s boss.

They also decided to enforce more rules regarding the secrecy of the team. After all was agreed, they decided that it was time to clear up. Mukhtar became more of a nuisance than an assistance. He was clearly hyperactive, getting in everyone’s way. His hands soiled the papers and made the wires sticky. He was very troublesome, so they made him sit out while they tidied up

Chapter 3 - Predicaments in all possible places

After the meeting, Mukhtar went with Samir to his house, and was even more hyper. He played around with the kids. He received a sharp scolding from Hannah after making a huge mess in the living room. He and Zain were pretending that they were fighting in the battle of Badr. Tossing enemy cushions back and forth, while slashing at the evil idol tables, they defeated the 'foes'.

Hannah had quite an adventure getting them to calm down. After cleaning up the mess, she gave the children quiet activity to do in their room. But Mukhtar was behaving rather strangely. The day was otherwise uneventful. Samir spent the afternoon doing some office work, while Hannah laid the table for lunch.

"Lunch is ready!" came her cry. Samir entered the kitchen and sniffed the aroma. His stomach rumbled as the mouth-watering smell tantalized his taste buds.

The lunch smelt delicious and tasted even better. Sonu and Zain gobbled down their food, much to Hannah's disapproval. Mukhtar was hardly better. Samir and Hannah were the last ones at the table.

Feeling so full, Hannah decided to take a nap. Samir continued with his office work.

The evening flew by. Dinner was served, and the kids went to bed. They obeyed instantly, as they were absolutely exhausted after such a day.

Samir entered his room and his eyelids became heavy as he slipped between the sheets of his bed. The grey patterns of the opposite wall danced before his eyes. In a few minutes, he was fast asleep.

The next day was like the former. The sun shone brightly, but an awful, freezing gale still whooshed through the streets of Peaceville.

Samir slipped into his warm, fluffy slippers and climbed out of the warm bed. As the blanket fell away, he felt a draft rush past. He hugged himself tightly, but it had no effect. He shivered as he rushed to his closet



to grab his thick coat. He clambered down the stairs, into a warm kitchen; a hot breakfast lay on the table waiting for him.

Samir shook his head. Hannah always knew what he needed. A steaming mug of coffee lay on the table too. After the delicious breakfast, he was exiting the kitchen, when Hannah called out to him, “Samir Baba, the school called. The principal said that he needed to meet you as soon as possible. I told him you could meet him this afternoon, after Asr prayers. I knew you were free.”

Samir looked surprised and pulled out his phone to check his agenda. He was surprised to see that Hannah was right.

“How did you know?” he exclaimed.

Hannah gave a knowing smile and replied, “A woman never reveals her secrets.”

He shook his head as he left the room. Samir went to the office for a few hours. He then went straight to the school and arrived a few minutes early. The children were lined up, ready to read Dua Imam-e-Zamana. As the Dua began, Samir felt his spirits soar. The little children recited beautifully. The wonderful scene made him smile as he looked at their innocent faces.

Someone tapped his shoulders and he swerved around to see the jolly face of the school principal.

“Mesmerising isn’t it?” he asked. His own eyes gazing at them in awe and wonder.

“Every day I watch them; I never get tired of seeing this scene. Anyways, Salams Mr. Samir. If you don’t mind, we should head to my office.”

“Wasalaam, of course.” They headed up the stairs, into a large office.

The walls were a dull yellow except for one that was grey. They were covered with file cabinets from one end to the other. There was a small glass coffee table with two chairs. The principal, whose name was Mr. Tahir, sat down in his office chair and gestured for Samir to sit opposite him.

“Mr. Samir, I have some issue to discuss with you; regarding Sonu and Zain. Your children, in these past few days, have been displaying hyper and irrational behaviour. The teachers find them difficult to control.”

Samir was not surprised to hear this, “I have this problem. I have never seen them behave like this before and at home. I am unable to understand the reason behind it.”

“You know, you are not the only parent I have had a discussion with. Several other children have developed this hyperactive behaviour. However no one knows what is causing it.”

The two men continued to talk about the problem for a



few minutes. After they concluded, Samir left, more worried than ever. ‘I should tell the team...’ he thought to himself.

While driving home, Samir’s mind was clouded with the statements of Mr. Tahir. ‘The only way to solve the problem is to find out what is making them so hyper’. His mind was already working.

At home lunch was already on the table, typical of the punctual Hannah. Mukhtar helped his mother tidy up. Samir watched Hannah reward Mukhtar with candies like little kids. When Hannah finished pouring the promised amount, he threw them all into his mouth. He started unwrapping it immediately, after a few loud chomps he swallowed them. He licked his lips, his gaze

locked on the cupboard, a mischievous look on his face. After lunch the two men sat down together and began to talk.

“Why do you like that candy so much?” he asked Mukhtar.

“I’ll tell you if you promise not to laugh.”

“Fine,” promised Samir.

Mukhtar took a deep breath and began. “It’s sweet, to begin with. It bubbles in your mouth and melts on your tongue. When I have it, it’s like I am flying, and obviously you don’t want such a sensation to end. So you have more.”

“Don’t you think that eating too much of this candy might be bad for you?”

“Why?” queered Mukhtar, his face twisted in confusion. “I brush after eating it, and I am a young, fit man.”

Samir sighed, “Sometimes I wonder when you plan to grow up.”

Mukhtar looked at the clock and exclaimed, “If I don’t go outside now, Mother will leave without me!”

A quick goodbye was uttered and Mukhtar ran out the door while Samir retired to his quarters.

Chapter 4 - Stating the facts

A few days went by. It was quite a while before the next meeting could occur. As time passed, the children's' situation deteriorated, leaving all parents wide eyed and open mouthed.

That day, Samir was alone at home. He would have to put the kids to bed himself. However, this proved to be easier said than done. Today Zain gave him no trouble, but Sonu was crazy. He sat down on the nearby rocking chair watching the little girl go from one activity to the other. She was so giddy that she wouldn't lie down, and kept throwing her stuff off the bed. Finally the little girl collapsed in a heap on the floor. He placed her in the bed and went downstairs to relax for some time.

Moments later, Hannah arrived carrying several grocery bags. He helped her put them on the kitchen counter. Hannah separated Samir's grocery from her own. He was surprised to see five large packets of the candy that Huda had offered them the other day.

“Hannah, surely you're not planning to eat those...”

Hannah smiled and replied, “They aren't for me, they are for Mukhtar. It's his new craze.”



“And you won’t believe it,” she continued, “Sonu and Zain have developed a strong liking for it too. But I don’t give them any unless they do as they are told.”

After a short discussion she went and Samir retired to his room. That night he had a very pleasant, much needed sleep.

The morning welcomed him with the giggling laughter of the children. They shook him while jumping up and down, crying for him to wake up. Hannah would grab one and put them on the floor while the other climbed up. This continued until Samir opened his eyes.

He scrambled out of bed and gave a big hug to each. After that he sent the kids to their room. Today was the meeting and he couldn’t afford to be late.

Mukhtar had excused himself from coming because his course examinations were to happen soon and he needed to attend the center regularly.

Samir got dressed, and after a delicious breakfast he sat in his car and set off. There was a major traffic jam on the highway due to the icy road conditions. The car crawled along the road. Luckily his exit was very close by and he turned away leaving the long line of automobiles.

He was the first to arrive. Huda was next, followed by Maira and Zahra. Shajeeh came in a few minutes after

them. He looked disappointed seeing that he wasn't first.

“Better luck next time Shajeeh.” Smiled. Samir.

Shajeeh returned the smile good humouredly. He took a seat in the nearby chair.

Once everyone was ready, Samir began his report. “I am not sure whether anyone has noticed this, but I have seen something very strange and abnormal going on in Peaceville. It is regarding the children and maybe in some cases, the adults. About a week ago, I went to visit the principal of the Peaceville primary school. He told me that my kids were displaying hyper irrational behaviour. They proceed to make loud, blatant noises in class and not heed the teacher's instructions. The strange part is that he said that I was not the only one parent he had this conversation with.”

“I concur with Samir's facts,” agreed Huda, “I had a similar problem last week while babysitting my nephew. He was out of control.”

Shajeeh pondered for a few seconds, “The influencing factor must either be a psychological or medical compound. It is the only two ways to influence their behaviour. Psychological means would mean the use of media, literature etc. which we all know is very carefully monitored in Peaceville. That rules out that

option. So it has to be something medicinal, it has to be something they are fond of eating and are consuming.

The room was silent as everyone thought hard. Zahra stood up, “What about the candy? What if it has something in it that they should not be eating? Something addictive and enhancing, that gives someone an instant boost, like coffee.”

“You know, you might be right. As far-fetched as it is, you just might be right.” Murmured Samir.

“Does anyone have the ingredients list?” queered Shajeeh. Maira dug into her pockets and pulled out an interesting collection of things. A flashlight, a bunch of string, some marbles, and a crumpled plastic bag.

She separated the bag and placed the rest of the items back into her pocket.

“Here” she said, and smoothed the crumpled bag on the table. Using a paper weight she straightened it as



much as she could before handing it over to Shajeeh.

He turned it over in his hand, but couldn't find an ingredients list anywhere. Suddenly his eye caught on a number, written at the very bottom. A smile grew on his face as he called the others into a circle.

“I have a plan!” he whispered.

Chapter 5 - Concerning a certain concoction

The factory was very busy that day. Orders from various purchasers poured in like rain during a storm. Supplies came in by the truck load, and were rushed to the requiring station. A fat man came strolling down the centre path. He was quite hefty, with a large stomach spilling over his belt. He was dressed in white plastic and wore a mask. He went to various station, observed for a second and then move on. He sighed as he listened to the whirring of the machines and the calls of workers. Business was good.

He felt a vibration from his pocket. Then he hurried to a nearby office as fast as he could move his bulky figure on his squat, chubby legs. He removed the drapes and pulled out a cell phone.

“Hello?” he whispered into the receiver.

“Salam Sir.”

“Wasalaam, what is it?” It was his secretary.

“There’s a call on the customer service line.”

“I’ll be there in a few seconds.” He replied before hanging up. Removing his gloves and masks he went to the main office and picked the receiver.

“Salam. Thank you for calling, how can we be of assistance?”

“Wasalaam Sir,” it was a woman’s voice. “I want to inquire about the ingredients of your product.”

“Ma’am, I can assure you that all our products are halaal.”

“Yes, I am sure. But still, I would be much obliged to know.”

“Very well, we use: flour, water, food colouring, flavours, citric acid, water, fruits, various dairy products and X.”

“What is X?”

“It is the company’s secret ingredient.”

“I would like to know what it is and what it is composed of. If I may.”

“I am sorry Ma’am, but I am not at liberty to disclose that information.”

“Are you sure there is no way I can know?”

“I am sorry, but that is confidential information.”

“Oh well, Thank you for your time. Wasalaam.”

Huda hung up the phone and put it on the table. Shajeeh sat down on the opposite chair.

“So what happened? Did he tell you?”

Huda shook her head.

“All the ingredients are normal,” she replied. “Except for one. He called it X. He said it was the company’s secret ingredient.”

She turned her head to see Samir walking in, the two girls following him. Their faces were red, and a small giggle would escape every few seconds.

“You two almost ruined the act.” she scolded.

“But it was so funny and we barely made any noise!” Blurted Maira.

“Enough dilly-dally. Come here you two and please try to sober up a bit?”

“I have a friend. He works for the governmental lab, maybe if we give him a sample he may be able to identify this X.” suggested Shajeeh.

“Will he be willing to do it in secrecy?” asked Zahra. Shajeeh nodded in response.

That day Zahra ran down to the shop and bought the smallest packet available.

Shajeeh and Maira waited in the office for her to return. She handed him the packet and then they left. Shajeeh drove to the lab, where his friend was awaiting



his arrival. He handed his friend one smashed candy. He didn't hear anything from him until the next day. His phone began vibrate on the bed.

“Hello?” he called into the receiver.

“Salam brother, its Mahmood.” Came a reply.

“Wasalaam Mahmood” It was Shajeeh's science friend.

“How are you?”

“I am fine Alhumdulilah. I have the test results of the product you sent me. It was crystallised sugar filled with synthetic flavours and fruit juice, and a small amount of a very strange chemical.”

“What is it?”

“It is more or less like a neuro-transmitter. Meaning it can affect the signals going to our brains. It was synthetically made, in a pharmaceutical laboratory. It is very powerful and thus is very effective for its purpose. When consumed by a healthy being, it gives an energy rush. We call it Psychonium. The substance is extremely addictive and thus is regulated, which means that its use is monitored by the authorities.”

“Then how is it a part of kids candy?” Shajeeh was getting more confused.

Mahmoud explained, “The reason for that is clear after the lab results. This substance is not used in its purest form in the candies. In fact it is used as a compound of

Psychonium with a special type of sugar. This not only makes it a new substance but also increases its energising effect.

The new Psychonium compound is not a regulated since it does not exist normally. The question is how did the company get hold of Psychonium in the first place? But even that doesn't solve the problem. The candy company is the sister of a pharmaceutical company and they are legally allowed to conduct researches on various substances, including Psychonium. It is not possible to hold them responsible legally. Also the amount they use is well under the allowed limits so they are totally covered”

Shajeeh was quiet.

“Shajeeh Are you still there?”

“Yeah ... I am, thank you so much for your help.”

“No problem, anytime brother, I will go now.
Khudafiz”

“Khudafiz.”

The phone beeped as Shajeeh hung up. He called an urgent meeting for that day. Allah's mercy was prevalent as all the team's members were available. Within an hour, they were assembled in the room.

Tension filled the room, accompanied by a deafening silence as they anticipated Shajeeh's arrival. He opened

the door and entered. In one hand was his laptop and in the other, a printed file.



“What’s wrong Shajeeh? We were worried sick! Has something happened?” exclaimed Huda, bombarding Shajeeh with questions.

Shajeeh narrated the conversation he had had with Mahmood on the phone. He then passed around the file.

“Is there any rules about how low you can sink in this evil world. It is disgusting to see that they not only plot against adults but also have no mercy for children. Infusing harmful chemicals in the brains of children is definitely going to have long term bad effects. Have they no conscience.” Samir got emotional.

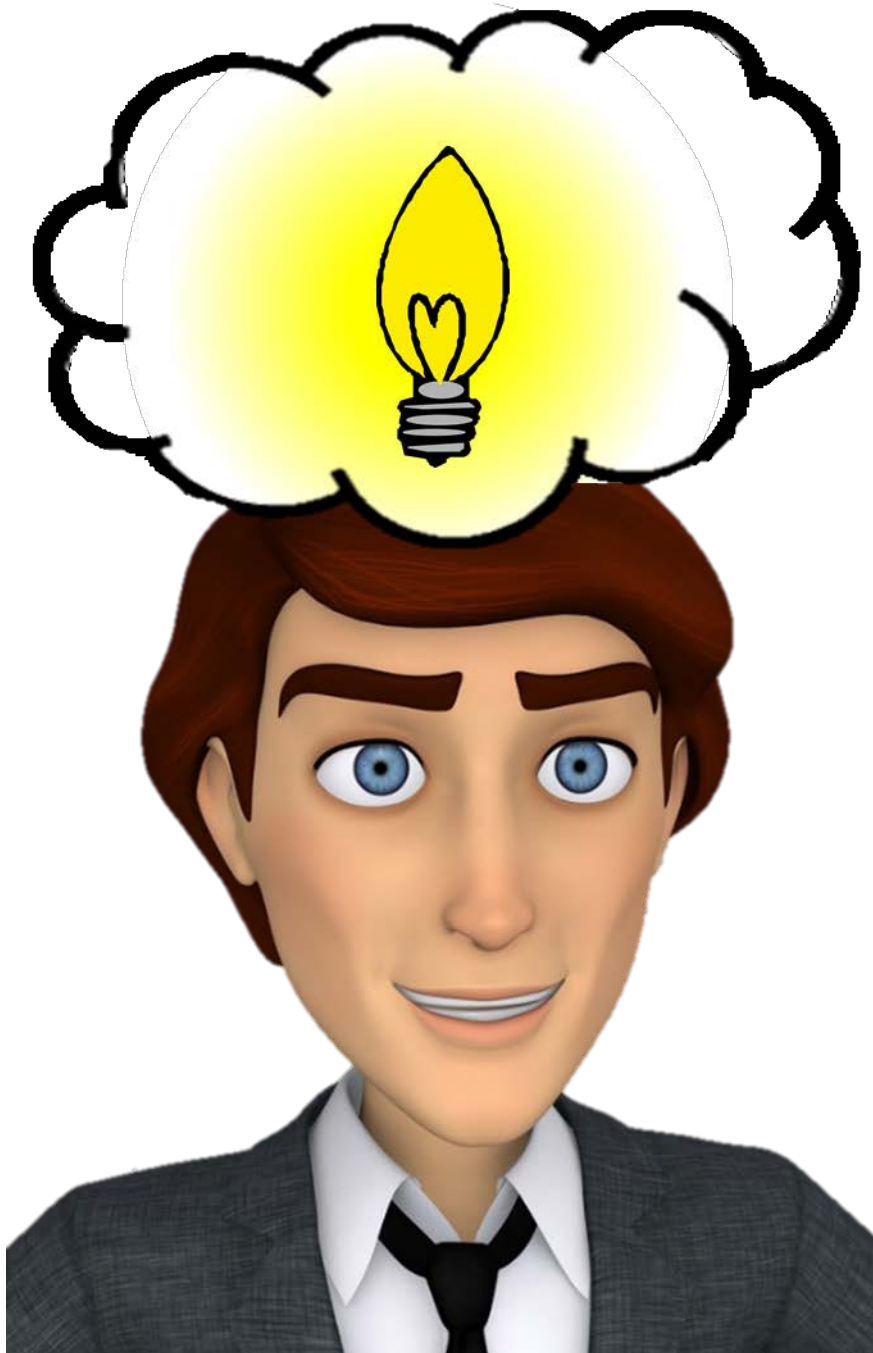
Huda sighed, “Remember Samir, I read something in the book ‘Greater Sins’ by Ayatullah Dastaghaib Shirazi. According to Imam Jaffer Sadiq (as) every sin creates a back spot on one’s heart and repeated sins make the heart black after which it can feel no guilt.”

“This is very serious...” murmured Zahra. “How do we handle this problem? It is so simple but so impossible to handle.

There was a long silence. Everyone was thinking

“What about having a little fun?” asked Samir.

Everyone looked at him in surprise. He called everyone into a circle and whispered out the new plan.



Chapter 6 - Destruction of the deceitful delights

The word spread like wildfire across the town of Peaceville. There was to be a fine event in the city park.

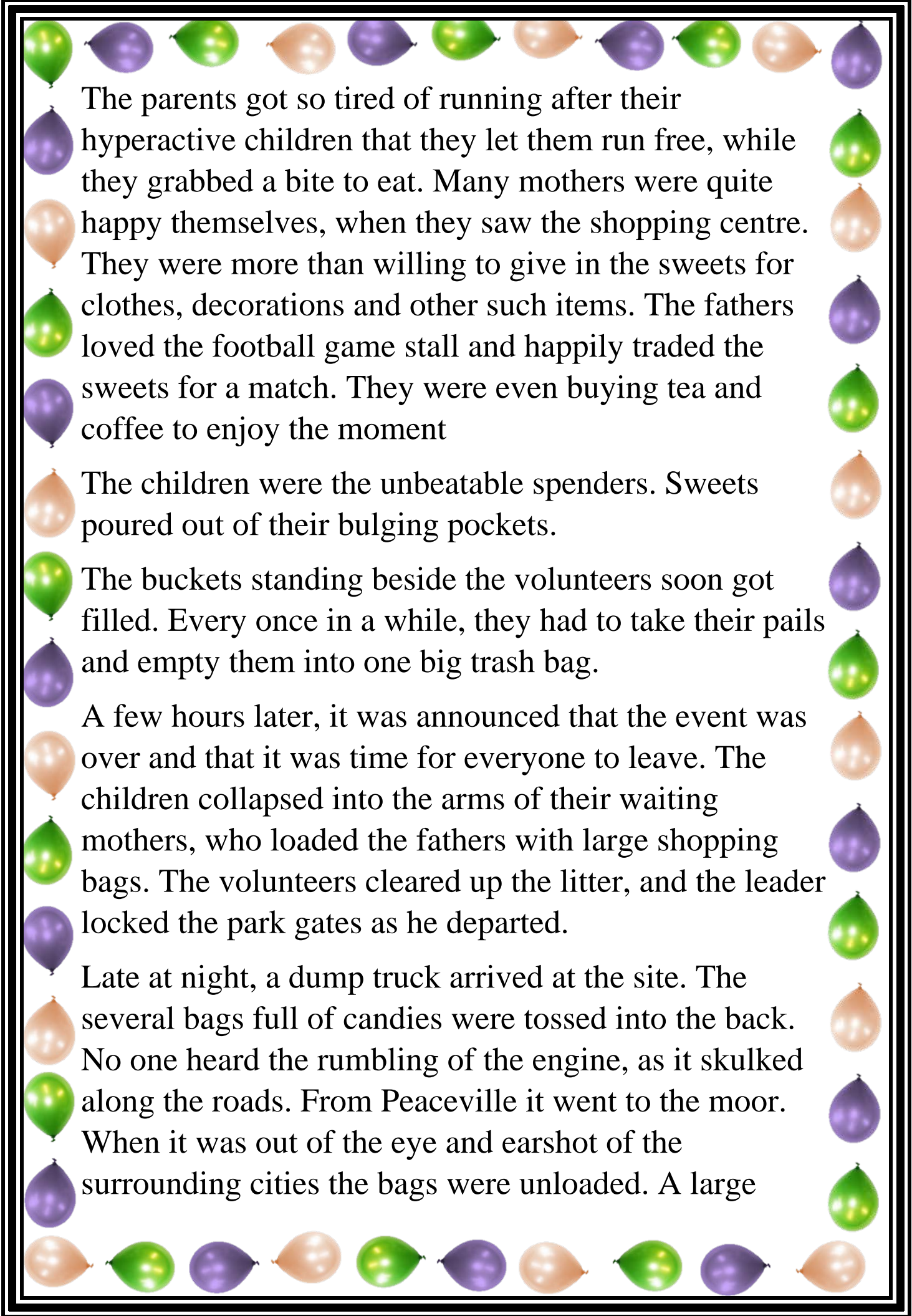
There would be fun and games of all kinds. The event was to last for two days. However there was one strange factor. The currency for the event was a colourful candy.

As the children drove into the parking, they hopped in their seats with excitement.

Large looming towers of the bouncing castle came towering out of the green, waving their air filled heads. The food stand was overloaded with customers. They gazed earnestly at the dishes displayed, the delicious aroma tantalizing their taste buds.



The balloons stalls seemed to have kids popping out of the ground as it was run over by little children. The balloon person had to get a few more assistants to keep up with the demands of the impatient children. The ball pool was the star of the event. It seemed to be filled with more kids than balls! The sweet shop set up a stall there, selling their final supplies of the candy to passer-byes.



The parents got so tired of running after their hyperactive children that they let them run free, while they grabbed a bite to eat. Many mothers were quite happy themselves, when they saw the shopping centre. They were more than willing to give in the sweets for clothes, decorations and other such items. The fathers loved the football game stall and happily traded the sweets for a match. They were even buying tea and coffee to enjoy the moment

The children were the unbeatable spenders. Sweets poured out of their bulging pockets.

The buckets standing beside the volunteers soon got filled. Every once in a while, they had to take their pails and empty them into one big trash bag.

A few hours later, it was announced that the event was over and that it was time for everyone to leave. The children collapsed into the arms of their waiting mothers, who loaded the fathers with large shopping bags. The volunteers cleared up the litter, and the leader locked the park gates as he departed.

Late at night, a dump truck arrived at the site. The several bags full of candies were tossed into the back. No one heard the rumbling of the engine, as it skulked along the roads. From Peaceville it went to the moor. When it was out of the eye and earshot of the surrounding cities the bags were unloaded. A large

amount of wood lay in a big heap. The bags were tossed upon the heap. One person rubbed his hands, and out



flashed a strong beam of light. The others turned away as the brilliance of the light pained their eyes. A sizzle was heard before the dry wood burst into flames.

The orange fire lapped up the bags and its contents. In a few minutes it had burned to the ground, leaving nothing but a pile of ashes. The people climbed into the truck, the dark night covering their tracks. The only sign of their deed, was a wisp a smoke that slithered along the sky in the dark night.

The next day the volunteers arrived and were surprised to find a large line of people standing by the gate. The pockets, purses and wallets overflowed with candies. The sweet shop owner had set up a stall, selling whatever candies he had left. As the gates opened, a sea

of people flooded in. In the midst of happiness and joy, one dark figure, made his way through the crowd.

He walked quickly through the masses, hardly glimpsing at the nearby stalls. Without a word he slipped across the path onto the main road. The figure entered a small car. It zoomed down the road, dodging the parked cars.

The sky above was filled with balloons, the giggles of children filling the air. He did not say a word, but stared at the scene, his face turning red with anger. The car pulled up in front of a large factory.

It was a dreary, large building. The looming grey funnels, towered over the parking lot, casting a dark shadow across the empty cars. The building itself was quite a morose sight. The walls were stained black and its white parts had greyed. Scraps littered the surrounding area, clearly showing the owners negligence towards the property.

He walked straight to the front door, without raising his head. With a bang, he threw open the door and stormed down the hallway into the office.

A large, hefty figure, was seated at the desk, his feet propped up on the wooden desk. A plate full of sugary goodies lay half – consumed beside him. The sudden entrance seemed to slap him, as he tumbled off the table

into a globular heap. He hurriedly stood up and raised a sticky hand in salute to the businessman.

However the man wasn't paying attention, but stood glaring out the window at the balloon filled sky above the park.

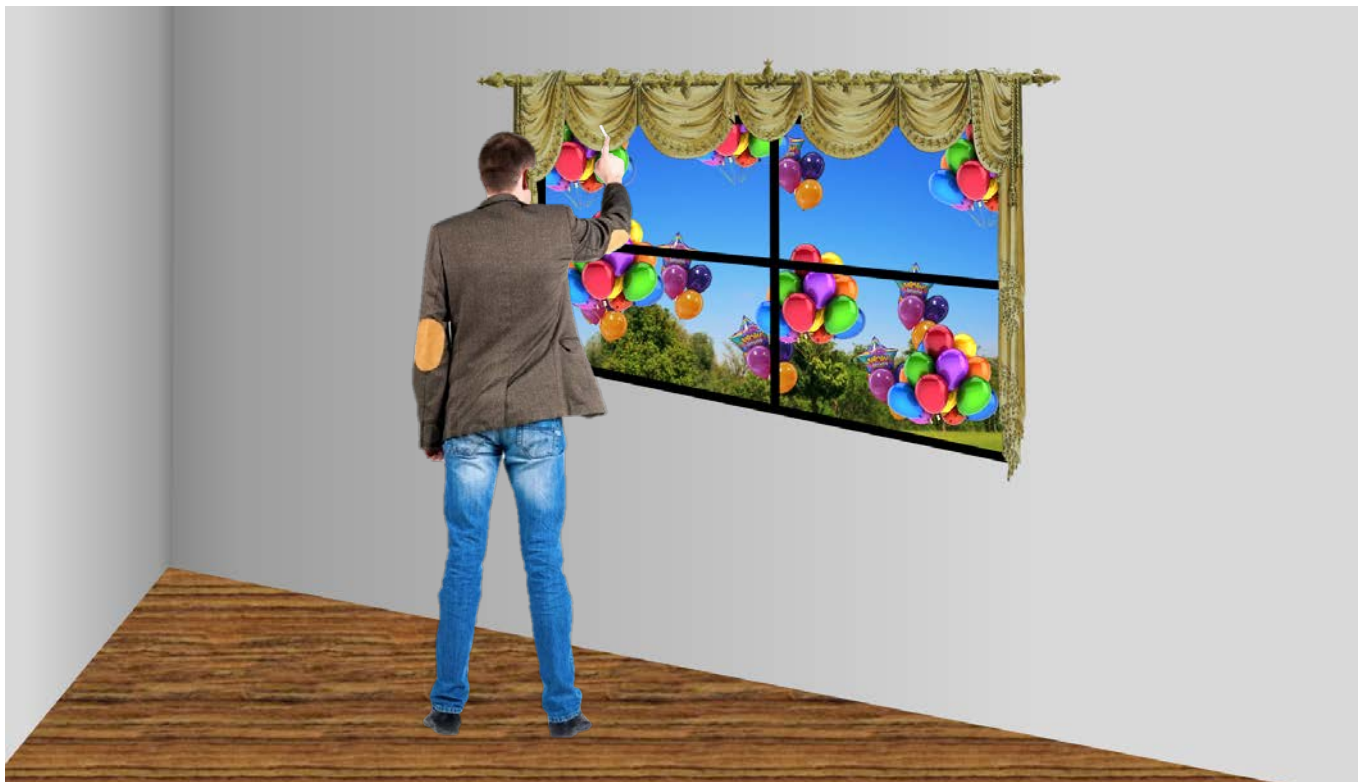
He turned and locked his fiery gaze on the other man.

“What happened?!” He yelled. The poor worker stood there flabbergasted. He wrung his hands and replied,

“Well sir, what are you referring to?”

The man felt his blood pressure rise. He grabbed the worker by the scruff of his neck and dragged him to the window.

“There!” He pointed towards the park. The worker squinted through his large glasses, before deciphering the text on the colourful banner strung at the entrance.



His knees began to shake like jelly, and his mind went blank.

“S-S-S-Sir....I c-c-can’t possibly imagine-” He stuttered.

The man began to lose his temper and gave the poor worker quite a tirade.

“See that? That is our destruction! Do you realize how much effort and money I put in? I placed you where you are today! And it was not so that you could stuff your fat three hundred kilogram bulk with my sweets!”

The worker stood there quite, not believing his eyes or ears. How could he have been oblivious to such a threat? He trembled as he tried to muster the courage to blabber some petty excuse.

The business man sank into a nearby chair, his head in his hands. It was all over.

The festival was very successful. It took the volunteers quite some time to turn out the large crowd of people. That night the dump truck reappeared and, like it did previously, it hauled away all the sweet to be burned in the middle of the moor.

The team smiled as they saw that their plan had worked. The factory was shut down due to an investigation by the authorities. Peaceville was rid of almost all the

sweets. They all gathered in the moor to witness the destruction of the last batch of sweets.

A roaring bonfire was prepared, bright and fiery. One by one the bags were tossed into the fire. Mukhtar gazed longingly at the bags as they were tossed into the burning flames.

“Can’t I have just one sweet?”

“No!” They all exclaimed in unison. The place was quite. All that could be heard was the crackling of the lively fire, and the singing of the crickets, hidden away from sight. Mukhtar shrugged his shoulders and pouted. “I guess I’ll have to substitute it with licorice.”

Samir burst out laughing and the rest of the team joined him. At the crack of dawn they went home, leaving no sign of the event, nothing except a small pile of ashes.

Soon, the children calmed down and things returned back to normal. Life was happy and merry once more as the sun smiled down over the blessed town and its guardians.

Sneak Peek

Book 8!!!

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