

WARAQAH BIN NAUFAL

Witness of Truth in the Darkness

*A tale from the Age of Ignorance — written in the
manner of Buya Hamka*

Waraqah bin Naufal

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to the editorial standards of Penguin Books*

*From the Indonesian original by Odysseus, in the
voice of Buya Hamka*

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O my brother.

Close your eyes. Let imagination carry you to a valley heaped with black rock and barren sand. The night wind off the east carries dust that bites the cheek. Above, the sky spreads high and indifferent, thick with stars that watch in silence. There Mecca stands. Not a garden city shaded by date palms like Yathrib, which you later knew as Madinah. Mecca was a trading post, a halt for camel caravans out of Yemen bearing spice, and from Syam (Syria) bearing velvet and swords. They came not merely to trade, O my brother, but to visit an ancient House said to have been raised by Ibrahim Khalilullah and his son Ismail, peace be upon them. But look — and grieve. Around that sacred dwelling stood three hundred and sixty idols of wood and stone. The tallest, Hubal, reared up inside the Ka’bah, fitted with a golden hand, broken and replaced by Quraysh with another of gold, as if the idol itself possessed power. Outside stood Lata, ‘Uzza, Manat, and others they called “daughters of Allah,” na’udzubillah. Allah speaks in His Book, as though the revelation descended for these very nights: *And they have made the angels, who are servants of the Most Merciful, females. Did they witness their creation? Their testimony will be recorded.* (Surah Az-Zukhruf: 19). Such was folly wrapped in pride.

As dusk sinks behind Jabal Abu Qubais, what they call worship — if the word still applies — stirs to life. Drums beat. Flutes sound. Men and women run naked, or half-naked, around the Ka'bah, clapping hands and whistling. They run between Shafa and Marwah not to glorify the One God, but to imitate ancestors who died in disbelief. Some carry small stone idols they kiss when they meet on the road. Others collect the blood of sacrificed animals, not to feed the destitute, but to splash against idol walls. O my brother, this was Mecca before dawn. A city saved once by Allah from the Army of the Elephant, when Abrahah came to destroy the Ka'bah, and Allah shattered him with the birds of Ababil raining stones from hell. That was a clear sign, a miracle they saw themselves or heard of from their fathers. Yet what did they harvest from it? Not the knowledge that Allah alone protects, but arrogance: "We are honoured. Our land cannot be touched." They traded mercy for conceit. Allah says: *Have you not considered how your Lord dealt with the Army of the Elephant?* (Surah Al-Fil: 1). Yes, they considered — but their hearts were blind.

And that blindness was not only a matter of religion. It seeped into the veins of society. O my brother, listen for the stifled cries behind Mecca's stone walls. A father of Quraysh — perhaps rich, perhaps esteemed — hears that his wife has borne a daughter. His face reddens, not with sacred shame, but with rage at fate. That same night, the blameless infant is carried beyond the city, dug into cold earth alive, or cast into an old well. Her cry fades, dragged off by the night wind, and vanishes.

The Qur'an, which would later descend in this very city, records that savagery in words that still prickle the skin: *And when one of them is given tidings of a female child, his face darkens and he is choked with gloom. In shame he hides from his people, because of the tidings he has received...* (Surah An-Nahl: 58). O my brother, in the same valley where Ibrahim left Hajar and Ismail at Allah's command, the blood of blameless children now soaked the ground. That is Jahiliyyah (the Age of Ignorance). Not mere unknowing, but evil done with open eyes, then ratified by custom.

The life of Quraysh overflowed with revelry washed down by fermented date wine. Gambling with arrows and camels carried no shame; it carried pride. Women were bought and sold like cloth in the market, and adultery was dressed in mellifluous verse. What did they boast of? Long poems hung upon the walls of the Ka'bah in the Hajj-season contest. They vaunted lineage back to Fihhr, to Ismail, even to Ibrahim. But that lineage became only 'asabiyah (tribal fanaticism), barring them from truth. A man was killed simply for belonging to another clan. Blood flowed in the same valley where trade camels passed. Allah Ta'ala says: *Mankind was one single nation, and they differed.* (Surah Al-Baqarah: 213). In Mecca, difference was daily bread. The wealth of the spring and autumn caravans fattened the belly, but left the spirit gaunt.

More bitter still, O my brother: this people was broadly blind to letters. Around them, Romans and Persians possessed books and laws. To the north lay Abyssinia, believing in the Injil

(Gospel). In those lands, writing was sight. But in Mecca, the eyes of Quraysh were blind to script. They memorised only verse and lineage. A man who read was a freak. A man who wrote was suspect. Knowledge was treated as merchandise for Jews and Christians, not as Arab honour. They took pride in a fluent tongue, forgetting that a tongue without learning is a whip gone wild. Wealthy merchants reckoned riches the measure of nobility, while their souls stood destitute, without guidance. In this thick night, Quraysh slept soundly. They felt no darkness.

Yet do not think Allah left this night without stars. In the dark corners of Mecca, hearts still churned, unsatisfied. Some turned from idols and said, “We worship the God of Ibrahim, the upright.” They were called the Hanif. But they were isolated, scattered, sparks on a sea of charcoal. And among those embers, a man would emerge from the clan of Banu Asad, a branch of Quraysh, named Waraqah bin Naufal. He would become a different kind of man: one who could read scripture in an ocean of illiteracy, one who rejected Hubal in the midst of a clan that worshipped him. But before we reach him, let us consider: if Jahiliyyah was this thick, how could anyone see light? The answer, O my brother, is that light does not enter through the eyes, but through the heart. Whoever searches for Allah in earnest, Allah will surely show him the way. As He says: *And those who strive for Us — We will surely guide them to Our ways.* (Surah Al-‘Ankabut: 69).

Let us continue the journey.

Wallahu a‘lam.

O my brother.

Do not imagine that in that dark age every heart in Mecca lay sealed tight as stone. No. In the midst of a sea of burning charcoal, spots of fire still refused to die. They were the people called the *Hanif*. Not a faction meeting behind walls, not a political party with banners and officers. They were solitary souls, each seeking God with his own hands, his own tears, with no teacher bringing them a new holy book. They carried only *fitrah* — the original light God plants in every breast from birth. As our Prophet *shallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam* said, in *Shahih al-Bukhari* and *Shahih Muslim*: “*Every child is born in a state of fitrah...*” These Hanif souls kept that *fitrah* faithfully, while their people soiled their own with the dust of idols and the stain of strong drink.

Who, then, is the Hanif? O my brother, the word springs from a root meaning straight, leaning toward truth, never bending right or left. But you cannot learn it from a dictionary. You must look to Ibrahim, peace be upon him, father of prophets, whom the Qur’an calls by a noble name: “*Ibrahim was not a Jew nor a Christian, but he was a hanif, a Muslim, and not of the polytheists.*” (Surah Ali ‘Imran: 67). Imagine, O my brother, Ibrahim leaving his father and his people not from hatred, but from love for the One God. He looked at the stars, then the moon, then the sun, and each time he asked, Is this my Lord? — and each time he turned away. Until at last his heart pierced through the layers of heaven and cried: “*I have turned my face toward the One who created the heavens and the*

earth, pure from association, and I am not of those who associate partners with Allah." (Surah Al-An'am: 79). The Hanif is Ibrahim in the soul. The Hanif is the man who says, I will not be twisted by custom; I will not be enslaved by lineage; I want only the God who creates.

In Mecca, before the sun of Islam rose, there was a lean man named Zayd bin 'Amr bin Nufayl. He appears most often in the old accounts. He stood before the Ka'bah while the people of Quraysh prostrated to Hubal, and cried out in a voice that shook from the heart: *"There is none worthy of worship but Allah; He has no partner!"* They laughed at him, called him mad. But Zayd did not care. He refused to eat meat sacrificed in the name of idols. He saved infant girls from earthen pits, paying ransom to fathers who would bury them alive, saying with tears in his eyes, *"Why do you kill her? Perhaps she will one day bear a son who exalts the name of Allah!"* He went to Syam (Syria) seeking the religion of Ibrahim, questioned the monks, and returned with a heart still unsatisfied. Zayd bin 'Amr died before the Prophet Muhammad, *shallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, was sent; they buried him in a steep valley, not far from where the caravans of Quraysh passed. But our Prophet, when he passed there later, would stop and say over his grave, *"He will be raised up alone as a nation unto himself."* Such is the nobility of a Hanif in the eyes of heaven.

But the road of the Hanif, O my brother, did not always run straight to its end. Some among them grew weary wandering the desert of ignorance, grew thirsty, and drank from the nearest

pool, though it was not the purest. Utsman bin Huwairits, a man of Quraysh who also felt hollow, went to Roman lands and embraced the Nasrani (Christian) faith. Ubaidullah bin Jahsy followed, became a Nasrani, and even married Ummu Habibah — before both later met the light of Islam. Some drew near to the Yahudi (Jewish) faith. Why? Because those religions brought books, brought writing, brought the names of prophets. While in Mecca, Quraysh offered only lies and poems hung in contest on the Ka'bah walls. The thirsty Hanif, O my brother, sometimes could not wait for the heavenly spring; they drank first from the earthly one. Yet their hearts kept searching. They still felt something missing. Like a man who eats fruit in a night of hunger — his stomach is full, but his soul is not at rest.

And here lies the great wisdom. Hanif was no fixed school. Hanif was a *journey*. Some stopped halfway, some turned down a narrow alley, but their first step — turning their faces from idols — was a step recorded by Allah. For He looks not at the perfection of the road, but at the honesty of the traveller. *“Whoever does good, be it of the weight of a speck of dust, whether man or woman, while in a state of faith — for him is a goodly reward.”* (Surah An-Nisa': 97). So let us not scorn those who seek, though their path winds. The ones to weep for are those who do not seek at all — who sit upon gold and idols, thinking themselves complete.

Among those Hanif embers, there was one name that did not merely feel dissatisfaction, but opened books, demanded knowledge, wrote in Hebrew script, read the Taurat (Torah) in

its language, read the Injil (Gospel) in its pages. He was not content with the pulse of the heart alone; he wanted proof, he wanted tidings, he wanted a name. He heard that in those books there was prophecy of a final prophet, *ummi* (unlettered), who would be born in the Arab lands. And each time he read, his heart beat hard. Some called him Nasrani because he kept company with those books. Some called him a free Hanif because his heart refused to bow to church or synagogue. Whatever the name, O my brother, his heart was the heart of Ibrahim. His name was Waraqah bin Naufal. He was a Hanif, yes, but a Hanif dusted with the ink of books. A Hanif who not only felt the light, but wanted to distinguish light from false gleam.

From this, O my brother, take the lesson. Allah never leaves the earth without a witness, though the witness be only a handful. In every age of darkness, hearts shine. But shining hearts alone are not enough. Zayd bin ‘Amr died before Islam came, though his fitrah was pure. Utsman bin Huwairits died in a foreign land with a religion that was not the religion of Ibrahim. The Hanif who relied on feeling alone sometimes strayed onto the wrong road. Whoever seeks pearls must dive. Whoever seeks truth must read, demand, distinguish. Do not be one who leans on emotion without knowledge, or knowledge without emotion. Waraqah was not such. He had a hungry heart, and he had books that served as maps. Therefore, when the Prophet emerged from the Cave of Hira with a trembling body, only Waraqah knew that voice at once. For he had waited

— not with empty hope, but with proofs gathered in his breast.

So let us now, O my brother, turn from the scattered embers across the plain, and walk toward one fire that burns brightest. Let us knock at the door of an old man from the clan of Banu Asad, who sits reading scripture in the quiet of a Meccan night. We will see how a man of Quraysh rose from an ocean of illiteracy, carrying a rare awakening, and waited for dawn with eyes still wide.

Wallahu a'lam.

O my brother.

Walk through Mecca on a quiet night, when the road dust no longer rings under merchants' feet and only wild dogs scrapping over bones at the lane's end trouble the silence. In one corner of the city, beside the old houses of Quraysh, a lamp burns past midnight. It comes from a modest house. Inside, an old man tends pages while white creeps at his temples and his back stoops with age. But his eyes — those eyes — remain sharp as an eagle's, fixing on prey in the distance. This is Waraqah bin Naufal bin Asad bin Abd al-Uzza bin Qusayl. Shorten it if you like: Waraqah bin Naufal, of the clan Banu Asad, a great branch of the Quraysh tree rooted in Meccan soil since the days of Fihrr and Qusayy.

Imagine, O my brother, how strange this man was among his people. Around him, Quraysh boasted of their eloquence, their poetry, their trade to Syam and Yemen — but ask them for the letters *alif* and *ba*, and most would shake their heads. The Arabs were a people noble of tongue, but blind to writing. Their knowledge lived in the breast, not on the page. But Waraqah was different. In his hands were yellowed, worn pages inscribed with strange letters unknown to his kin. These were Hebrew characters, the script of those who have kept books since the time of Musa and Daud. And Waraqah, a man of Quraysh who should have known only camels and trade, had let his fingers stain with ink as he wrote his Arabic in that foreign script. People stared in wonder. "Waraqah is old, yet he acts like a Jewish merchant's slave," they said in the market. Some

whispered further: “He has become a Nasrani (Christian).” But they were wrong, or at least not wholly right. Waraqah was no follower of churches bowing to bishops, nor of synagogues waiting at wailing walls. He was a *hanif*, a seeker of the straight God of Ibrahim; only he possessed something Zayd bin ‘Amr and the other seekers did not: a key, and that key was the ability to read scripture.

Allah Ta‘ala says in His noble Book: “*And indeed We have sent down to you a Book in which is your mention. Will you not then use your reason?*” (Surah Al-Anbiya‘: 10). O my brother, this verse descended later, but its spirit had already moved in the air since long before. Waraqah used his reason not to guess, but to read. He had studied the Taurat (Torah), the book sent down to Musa, peace be upon him, and the Injil (Gospel), the good news brought by Isa, peace be upon him. He read them not to become a priest, but to search for a name. Whose name? The name of a final messenger spoken of in those pages. In the Taurat and Injil, old accounts tell of one who would come from a people without a book, called *ummi* (unlettered), born in the Arab lands, in a land where stones had once felt the feet of Ibrahim and Ismail. Every night, when the lamplight trembled above his wooden table, Waraqah felt his heart beat hard. “Perhaps I will live to meet him,” he whispered to his wife, or perhaps only to himself.

His wife was no ordinary woman. She was Hala bint Khuwaylid, full sister to a woman of Quraysh whose name would later light up world history: Khadijah bint Khuwaylid. O

my brother, from this we see how tightly Allah wove the net of affection in Mecca. By marrying Hala, Waraqah became Khadijah's brother-in-law. And since Hala and Khadijah were daughters of Khuwaylid bin Asad, while Waraqah was son of Naufal bin Asad, Waraqah and Khadijah were also cousins. They came from the same tree, the same root: the clan of Banu Asad. In the Quraysh world thick with trade rivalry and boasting of camel counts, there lived this family — gentler of heart, whose Khadijah was known as *ath-Thahirah* (the Pure), and whose Hala had married a man who never let go of his books. Waraqah was thus not only Khadijah's cousin, but her brother-in-law. Yet he was more than kin. He was the place Khadijah turned when something troubled her heart. He was the old man honoured, whose words did not come from an empty mouth, but from one that had read much.

Among a nation blind to letters, Waraqah was a man of scripture. Mark this well, O my brother. When the people of Mecca could not tell prophecy from fable, Waraqah could thread together verses of the Taurat and match them to rumours drifting from Yathrib. When they knew Hubal only as “lord of the house,” Waraqah knew Allah the One God by His names spread across ancient pages. Here is a wisdom I wish to pass to you: knowledge is not merely the gathering of facts, but the joining of heart to fact. Waraqah did not merely memorise. Memorisation without awakening is a burden, not wings. But Waraqah had awakening, for each time he read, he felt something whisper in his ear: “Wait, O Waraqah, wait. The one

you seek will come, and he will bring a Book that will not yellow, will not be altered by the hands of men.”

Sometimes, in the heat of day as he sat on the porch of his modest house, the youths of Quraysh ran past jeering, “Hey Waraqah, read us a Jewish tale!” He only smiled bitterly. He knew they could not see what he saw. As Allah will say: *“The likeness of those who were entrusted with the Torah, then failed to bear it, is that of a donkey carrying books.”* (Surah Al-Jumu‘ah: 5). Quraysh were donkeys bearing the load of lineage and wealth, but understanding nothing of what they carried. Waraqah, alone, carried books light in his hands, but heavy in meaning. And precisely because of that solitude, he became the inhabitant of a house most crowded with unseen guests: prophets speaking through writing, angels descending through prayer, and hope that called at every dawn.

O my brother, perhaps you ask: did Waraqah feel proud of his learning? No. If anything gave him pride, it was only the honesty of his seeking. He did not say, “I already know.” He said, “I am still searching.” And that is the difference between a learned man who is arrogant and a learned man who is righteous. The first stops at the door and locks others out. The second keeps knocking at heaven’s door, though he has long been awaited. Waraqah was a faithful knocker. In his long nights, he did not know that beyond Jabal Nur, a small cave hosted a young man of Bani Hashim, grandson of Abdul Muththalib, who also spoke intimately with Allah, and with a pure heart. Waraqah and that young man had never met. Yet

both, unknown to each other, were tuning their breath to the breath of heaven. One in the cave, one in the lamplight house. And Allah, the All-Hearing, was preparing the most moving meeting in history.

So here we leave Waraqah for now, O my brother, pages trembling in the night wind, his eyes growing dim over small letters. Do not take him for a figure at the margins. He was a man of scripture among a nation blind to letters. And that man of scripture would become the first witness — the decisive witness — when the Prophet emerged from the cave with a trembling body. For only one who has read of heaven can recognise heaven's voice when it finally descends.

Wallahu a'lam.

O my brother.

At times the human heart is like a bird fenced in a cage of gold. Beautiful to behold, but to wings that would reach the clouds, gold is prison. Such was the heart of Waraqah bin Naufal within the great family of Quraysh. He was born into the clan Banu Asad, swaddled in the noble name of Qusayy, surrounded by the blood of Meccan nobility. Yet the older he grew, the more he felt suffocated. Hubal and the idols lined around the Ka'bah were not gods he could worship in peace. He heard a whisper in his breast — the whisper of *fitrah* — saying, “This is not the path of Ibrahim. This is not the religion of Ismail.” But where was the true path? In Mecca, no one could answer. So Waraqah decided on something rarely done by a man of Quraysh: he left his birthplace, not to trade in camels or seek gold, but to seek God.

Allah Ta'ala says: *And those who strive for Us — We will surely guide them to Our ways.* (Surah Al-‘Ankabut: 69). O my brother, this verse is not mere sound; it is a law of nature operating in every age. Whoever walks in earnest, Allah shall open the door. Waraqah walked. How long his journey lasted, how many barren valleys he crossed and burning sands he trod, the old accounts do not say, but they report that he reached the land of Syam (Syria) — then still under the Roman shadow, a land whose roads had once felt the feet of prophets. There were people who kept books. There were monks in mountain monasteries, and Yahudi in their towns who still read the Taurat with fluent tongues. Waraqah approached them not as a traveller, but as a hungry student. He wanted to learn. He

wanted to know what was written in the books said to come from heaven.

Here lies a wonder little known, O my brother. An Arab of Quraysh, blind to letters by custom but gifted by *fitrah*, began to demand knowledge from the *Ahlul Kitab* (People of the Book). He learned Hebrew — a script unlike Arab writing, curling like a stream among hard stones. With a resolve that astonished his teachers, Waraqah studied the Taurat, the book sent down to Musa, peace be upon him, and the Injil, the good news brought by Isa, peace be upon him. He did not listen to readings passed mouth to mouth, as Arabs memorised poems. He read for himself from yellowed pages. So absorbed did he become that he wrote his Arabic in Hebrew characters — an oddity that made the people of Mecca gape when they later saw his script. “What is this?” they asked. “This is the writing of a man who went too far,” he answered in his heart. But Waraqah knew: going far was better than sitting still in ignorance.

Allah says in His noble Book: *It is He who has sent among the unlettered a Messenger from themselves, who recites to them His verses, purifies them, and teaches them the Book and wisdom, though before they were in manifest error.* (Surah Al-Jumu‘ah: 2). This verse descended later for our Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, but its spirit had already moved in the air before it came down. Waraqah was an unlettered man who had begun to see. He had found the Book. He had found wisdom. But he had not yet found the new bearer of the Book. And precisely because of that, he kept searching.

In the pages of the Taurat, Waraqah found stories that pierced his breast. He read of the creation of heaven and earth in words so majestic, of Musa who spoke directly with God, of a people who betrayed again and again yet God still sent prophet after prophet. Then he opened the Injil, and there he heard the voice of Isa, peace be upon him, gentle but full of power, bringing mercy and healing. But what made his heart pound hardest was not those old stories. It was the prophecy. Prophecy of one who would come after Isa. An Ahmad. A *Parakletos* — a Comforter, a Bringer of Solace — who would bear truth in its fullness. Waraqah read with eyes that filmed over. “Could it be?” he whispered to himself in the quiet nights. “Could the one prophesied be from my own people? From this dry Arab land?” He remembered that Ibrahim, peace be upon him, had prayed in the same valley: *Our Lord, send among them a Messenger from themselves who will recite to them Your verses and teach them the Book and wisdom...* (Surah Al-Baqarah: 129). Waraqah felt that Ibrahim’s prayer had not yet received its final answer. Heaven still waited.

O my brother, know that knowledge sought in honesty is never wasted. Some learn to grow rich, and their knowledge becomes poison. Some learn to become esteemed, and their knowledge becomes a leash to bind others. But there are also those who learn to seek God, and their knowledge becomes a lamp that never dies. Waraqah was no monk shutting himself in a monastery. Neither was he a priest preaching from a pulpit. He was a man of Quraysh who returned to Mecca with a full

heart and stayed humble. He did not shout in the market, “I have found the truth!” He only sat in his house, near his noble wife Hala bint Khuwaylid, and kept reading. He waited. He watched his people run around idols, and his heart said, “Wait. Be patient. What you read in the book will surely come. For Allah never breaks His promise.”

Our Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said in *Shahih Muslim: Indeed, Allah does not withdraw knowledge by extracting it from people's breasts; rather, He withdraws knowledge by taking the scholars...* O my brother, Waraqah at that time was a scholar surviving among a nation blind to letters. Not a scholar with many students, but a scholar with many books. He did not teach the masses, for who would learn? The people of Quraysh preferred listening to prize-winning poems rather than holy scripture. But Waraqah did not despair. He understood Allah's word: *Have the believers not considered that if Allah had willed, He would have guided all mankind?* (Surah Ar-Ra'd: 31). Allah guides according to His measure. Not every man blind to letters must become a writer. But one or two eyes must see, so that when light comes, someone can recognise it. Waraqah was one of those few eyes.

When night deepened in his modest house, his lamp sputtered, and the valley wind crept through the cracks of the wood, Waraqah sometimes closed his book and looked at the sky. The stars above Mecca were no different from the stars above Syam. The One God was no different either. But in Mecca, no one looked at stars with the eyes of the heart. They looked

only to set the caravan's course. Waraqah looked to set his soul's course. He had read that the prophets of old were expelled, hurt, called mad by their people. He knew the road of truth was never straight like the trade road from Mecca to Yemen. The road of truth always wound, climbed the mountain, descended the valley, entered dark caves. And Waraqah, at the end of his years, had made himself ready. He said in his heart, or perhaps to Hala his wife: "If the one prophesied comes, and if he is expelled by his people as Musa was expelled, as Isa was pursued, then let me still be alive to stand behind him. Let me be the first to stretch out my hand."

O my brother, this is the fruit of a journey seeking truth. Not merely knowledge added, but courage grown. Waraqah needed no army. He had no overflowing wealth to buy soldiers. He had only the book he had read many times over, and a heart purified by waiting. And when a man has truly found God in His book, he no longer fears the world's scorn. He no longer fears being called strange, called Nasrani, called Yahudi, or called mad by a people blind to letters. For he has read that God's word has always seemed mad to those who do not read. Allah says: *And thus We did not send before you any warner in the cities, except that the affluent among them said, "Indeed, we found our fathers upon a religion, and indeed we follow their footsteps."* (Surah Az-Zukhruf: 23). Waraqah refused to follow. He chose to read. And that reader is the one who would recognise heaven's voice when it finally descended in the Cave of Hira.

So let us, O my brother, learn from this old man's resolve. Let us not be content with little knowledge. Let us not reckon ourselves sufficiently correct while the eyes of our hearts have never yet read the books that are the source of light. And let us not fear being called strange because we diligently seek God. For in the end, it is not the voice of the multitude that determines truth, but how far you are willing to walk to find Him.

Wallahu a'lam.

O my brother.

Before we walk further toward the cave and revelation, let us pause before a house whose walls are built of Mecca's black stone, with a low wooden door and a small yard where village hens scratch for grain. This is not the house of a rich man boasting wide verandas and gleaming copper vessels. But it is one of the noblest places in the valley, for inside lives a woman whose name will later cling to the fairest history of humankind: Khadijah binti Khuwaylid. Behind the same wall, in the same family, a living thread binds her heart to the heart of Waraqah bin Naufal. O my brother, history does not happen in empty air. It happens in the womb of family, in blood flowing from shared ancestors, in affection planted since childhood. If you want to know why Khadijah, at the most critical hour, brought her trembling husband to Waraqah's house, the answer is here: because they were family.

Imagine the great tree of Quraysh. Its roots strike down at Fihir, called Quraish, then branch and branch again. Among those branches is the clan Banu Asad, not as large as Bani Hashim or Bani Umayyah, but honourable enough to be known. Here, O my brother, we meet Khuwaylid bin Asad, a man of Quraysh, vigorous and wealthy, called *al-Kurazi* for his trade, but known also for a noble heart. From his wife Fatimah binti Za'idah was born a daughter beyond price: Khadijah. And from the same mother, or from the same father by a different line still within Banu Asad, was born Hala binti Khuwaylid, Khadijah's full sister. They grew in one house, steeped in the same noble

ways, watching their father trade with such trustworthiness that his name was fragrant throughout the Hijaz. When Khuwaylid died, the wealth left behind was great, but the good name was greater. Khadijah inherited not only camels and coin, but character: honesty, steadiness, purity of heart. The people of Mecca called her *ath-Thahirah* (the Pure). Hala, her sister, inherited that same nobility, only she was not known in the marketplaces; she stayed hidden behind house walls, waiting for a man who matched her.

Then on another branch of the same tree, from Naufal bin Asad, Waraqah was born. Thus, O my brother, Waraqah and Khadijah were cousins. Their fathers were full brothers, both sons of Asad, which brought them together in family gatherings since childhood. But then fate wrote a still more beautiful page. Waraqah, after returning from his journey seeking truth, after his heart filled with the light of a *hanif* and holy books, married Hala binti Khuwaylid. With that marriage, Waraqah was no longer merely Khadijah's cousin. He became her brother-in-law, husband to her full sister. So the three of them — Khadijah, Hala, and Waraqah — gathered in one great house of affection, one family whose blood flowed from Banu Asad, but whose souls stood higher than boasting of lineage. They did not clink cups while boasting of camel counts. They shared whispers of the One God.

In the midst of a Quraysh people proud of rivalry and clan fanaticism, this family was an anomaly. Khadijah, a wealthy woman eyed by many men of Mecca, refused proposal after

proposal after her first husband Abu Halah died. She did not seek greater wealth — her wealth was already great. She sought a clean heart. And when a young man of Bani Hashim known for his honesty — Muhammad — led her caravan to Syam, and returned with profit multiplied, Khadijah heard from her servant Maisyarah about the young man's distinction. But Maisyarah was not the only one who spoke. There was also whispering from her own family. Waraqah, who had long known Muhammad as a distant nephew — for Muhammad was son of Abdullah bin Abdul Muththalib of Bani Hashim — may have said to Khadijah, or to Hala, on a night when lamplight flickered against the wall, "That man is different. I see in his eyes a calm I do not possess. His heart is clean as the court of the Ka'bah before it was crowded with idols." And Khadijah, who trusted Waraqah's judgment, grew firmer in her heart. If Waraqah — who read the Taurat and Injil, who never praised just anyone — regarded the man as special, then indeed he was special.

Our Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, said in a hadith narrated by Imam Muslim: *"Marry women for four reasons: for wealth, for lineage, for beauty, and for religion. Choose the one of good religion, and you will prosper."* O my brother, Khadijah did not need to choose for wealth; she herself was wealth. She did not choose for lineage alone; her lineage was already noble enough. She chose Muhammad for religion — even before that religion came by the name Islam. She chose for the heart. And Waraqah, her brother-in-law and cousin, was witness to that heart. Among the Quraysh families busy

counting camels and weaving trade alliances, there were three souls — Khadijah, Hala, Waraqah — counting the heartbeat of devotion. So when Khadijah finally sent her proposal to Muhammad, peace and blessings be upon him — with a courage rarely possessed by women of her time — she did so not as a desperate woman, but as a woman who had heard heaven’s approval from Waraqah’s mouth. Her family, who shared the same light, did not oppose. Hala, Waraqah’s wife, smiled. They knew Khadijah’s house would become the brightest house in Mecca.

But O my brother, a household is not only a matter of love between two. Muhammad and Khadijah built a fortress in the midst of Jahiliyyah (the Age of Ignorance). Inside it children were born: Zainab, Ruqayyah, Ummu Kultsum, Fatimah, and sons who died while still small. Khadijah was the support, not only with the wealth she later poured into the mission to come, but with a soul that never wavered. And Waraqah, in his neighbouring house, or perhaps not far away, remained the one they turned to with questions. As a brother-in-law, he was no intruder. He was a doorkeeper who waited. Hala, his wife, often carried news between the two houses. “Khadijah sends her greeting,” she would say. “And asks, is this man indeed the one prophesied in the Book?” Waraqah would smile bitterly, gazing at his open Taurat. “Not yet the hour, Hala. But I feel close. Very close.”

Allah Ta‘ala says: *And Allah has made for you from yourselves mates.* (Surah An-Nahl: 72). O my brother, this verse

is not only a law of biology, but a spiritual law. Allah joins like hearts. Waraqah and Hala were of the same kind: both sought God. Khadijah and Muhammad were of the same kind: both were cleansed by sincerity. So when Allah meant to send the first revelation, not to a mosque, not to a palace, not to a market, but to the Cave of Hira, and not to another man but to Muhammad — it is no wonder that when the man came down from the cave, he ran not to the house of his uncle Abu Thalib, but to the house of his wife. And Khadijah, after hearing her husband's story, did not say, "You are mad," as other wives in Mecca might have said. She said, "No, by Allah, Allah will never disgrace you." Then, after calming her husband, she brought him to Waraqah's house. Why? Because in their family, Waraqah was the one who set the direction. He was a compass that never erred in pointing north. If Waraqah said this was from Allah, Khadijah would not hesitate. If Waraqah said this was only an ordinary dream, Khadijah would have comforted her husband in another way. That brother-in-law and cousin was the last counsellor, and the first.

Here lies the wisdom, O my brother. Family is not only a place to eat and sleep. Family is the place where the heart is tested. When someone sees a light unseen by others, who believes him? Wife and brother-in-law. When someone trembles in fear, who calms him? Family. The Quraysh outside were busy counting camels, but inside the houses of Waraqah and Khadijah, they counted the seconds until prophecy would turn real. Waraqah had grown old. Khadijah had become a woman

who had lost two husbands before Muhammad, and now found the noblest last husband. Hala stood between them both, carrying water in the noon heat, hushing babies at night. No palace, no soldiers. Only three souls waiting, and camels now and then grumbling in their pen.

So do not despise lineage and family, O my brother. Not that we should boast of blood like the people of Jahiliyyah who imagined noble blood could buy paradise. No. But so that we know goodness spreads through a house. Whoever has a brother-in-law like Waraqah, his heart will lean toward scripture. Whoever has a wife like Khadijah, his weakness will become strength. Allah says: *And the believers, men and women, are allies of one another.* (Surah At-Taubah: 71). That alliance begins in the house. From the smoking kitchen, from the dusty porch, from the wooden table where scripture is opened. Waraqah helped Khadijah without self-interest. Khadijah helped Muhammad without self-interest. And their aim was the same: waiting for the Bringer of Light.

Let us, O my brother, care for our families in the same way. Make your house like the house of this family: a place where hearts seeking God may ask, where a wife may entrust her husband to a learned brother-in-law, where truth is heard above the gossip of neighbours. For when the Cave of Hira finally spoke, only a house that had long been waiting could receive that voice in calm. The house of Khadijah and Waraqah had waited. And now, O my brother, that night arrives. The night that changes history. The night that shakes Jabal Nur. Let us

rise and leave these stone houses to climb the mountain, enter the dark cave, and witness how heaven first touched earth.

Wallahu a'lam.

O my brother.

North of Mecca rises a mountain whose name is not inscribed on maps of worldly greatness, but is inscribed on the *lauhul mahfuzh* (the Preserved Tablet) as the place where heaven first touched a human breast after so long a silence. It is called Jabal Nur, the Mountain of Light. Not because its stones shine, but because from its peak, on a cold night, light would descend that flows to our own days. And on its steep slope there is a stone cleft no wider than two men's chests, no taller than a bowing servant stands. This is the Cave of Hira. A place silent, solitary, where the wind carries sounds heard only by the ear of the heart.

Before that night came, there was a man of forty years, of the clan Bani Hashim, who each year during Ramadan left his house in the valley. Not fleeing debt, nor exiling himself for sin. He went for *tahannuth* (spiritual retreat), to be alone, to cleanse his heart of the smell of camels and the dust of the market, and to speak intimately with Allah the One, in the way taught by his forefather Ibrahim, peace be upon him, long before idols defiled Mecca. The man carried a little provision of dates and water, climbed the mountain, entered the dark cave, and knelt facing the direction of the Ka'bah, faintly visible in the distance. Sunset fell, stars emerged, and he kept praying. Not with long, poetic supplication like prize poems in the market, but with prayer that came from a tight chest, saying, "O Allah, show me the true path." O my brother, whoever seeks with a hungry heart, heaven never turns him away. That is the law in force since Adam, and

that is the law we will see fulfilled tonight.

That night was no ordinary night. The man — Muhammad ibn Abdullah, whom we know and love as the Seal of the Prophets — was sleeping in the cold cave. His sleep was not the sleep of a tired man wanting to forget the day. It was one breath between two worlds. Suddenly he woke. There was a voice not of wind. There was a shadow not of stone. He saw something that commanded him in a loud, firm voice: *“Iqra’!”* Read! The man, who had never learned to write before a teacher, never touched ink, answered trembling: *“Ma ana bi-qari, ma ana bi-qari, ma ana bi-qari”* — I cannot read, I cannot read, I cannot read. Three times he refused, not from pride, but from the honesty of one never skilled in letters. But the angel — whom we know as Jibril, peace be upon him — did not retreat. He seized the Prophet hard, with all his might, until the Prophet felt his breath constrict. Then he released him. Then the angel said again: *“Iqra’ bismi Rabbika alladzi khalaq. Khalaqa al-insana min ‘alaq. Iqra’ wa Rabbuka al-Akram. Alladzi ‘allama bil-qalam. ‘Allama al-insana ma lam ya’lam.”* Read in the name of your Lord who created. He created man from a clot of blood. Read, and your Lord is the Most Generous. Who taught by the pen. Who taught man what he did not know.

O my brother, read those verses slowly. Feel their tremor. Not only Muhammad trembled in that cave. Heaven itself trembled when the word descended for the first time in six hundred years since Isa, peace be upon him. This was no poem the seven famed poets of Mecca could match. This was no

wisdom a Roman philosopher could write. This was *kalamullah* (the Word of Allah), the speech of the Living God, descending upon the heart of a man who could not read or write, so that he might become a reader for all humankind blind to letters. Subhanallah (Glory be to Allah)! So noble was that night. So tremendous the meeting between heaven and earth.

Then it was finished. The angel vanished. The cave returned to darkness. The mountain to silence. But Muhammad's breast was no longer his own. Something pressed upon it, so heavy, so gripping, as if the mountain itself were set upon his chest. He stood, his legs weak, his body shaking. He descended Jabal Nur, not with the step of a victor, but with the step of a servant who has just witnessed something he could not bear. O my brother, prophethood is not cheaply bought. It is no title of honour hung on a wall. It is a burden of heaven cast upon human shoulders. Muhammad came down, and the sky above Mecca was still black. No thunder welcomed him. No drum sounded from the Ka'bah. All Mecca slept, unaware that history drew its first breath in a silent cave of stone.

He came down to the valley, with a heart that wanted to lay that burden in someone's lap. Who could receive it? Who would not say, "You are mad, Muhammad"? He ran home. There his wife waited, Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, who perhaps that night also could not rest, for her heart felt something was about to happen. When the door opened, Muhammad entered not with the smile of a husband returning from trade, but with a body that shook, a face pale, and a voice that barely left his throat. He

said to Khadijah, as narrated by *Ummul Mukminin Aisyah radhiyallahu ‘anha* in *Shahih al-Bukhari*, in words that reach us through a sacred chain: “*Zammiluni, zammiluni*” — Wrap me up, wrap me up. So Khadijah covered him. She sat beside her husband, with a heart convinced from the start of their marriage that this man was different. She did not ask with a sharp voice. She asked with the voice of a mother, a wife, a friend: “O Abu al-Qasim, what has befallen you?”

And Muhammad, once his breath calmed a little, told what he had seen. He saw an angel. He felt constriction. He heard the command to read. Khadijah listened without interrupting. Her eyes did not widen in false shock, but filmed over with deep sympathy. Then Khadijah said something showing how noble was the heart of a woman Allah had prepared to be the first wife in Islam. She said, not with a tone of doubt, but with a firmness that shook the stones of Mecca: “*Khabbiki wala ‘adhi, wa wallahi la yukhzikallahu abadan. Fa innaka latashillu al-ma‘rudh, wa tat’udu al-hadits, wa taqdi al-baidha, wa takshifu al-dayn, wa ta’udu al-haidz, wa ta’inu ala nawa’ib al-haqq.*” — Rejoice and do not grieve. By Allah, Allah will never disgrace you, ever. You repay kindness, you keep your word, you bear the burden of hardship, you forgive those who wrong you, you honour guests, you help those struck by calamity.

O my brother, listen well to Khadijah’s words. She did not say, “Perhaps it was only a bad dream from hunger.” No. She looked straight at her husband’s character. She said, “Allah will never disgrace you, for you are a good man.” This was no empty

comfort. It was living testimony. Khadijah had lived with Muhammad for fifteen years. She knew her husband had never lied, never betrayed, never hurt anyone. So how could Allah mock the most honest man on earth? No. What he saw in the cave just now was surely from Allah.

But Khadijah, O my brother, was not a woman who relied only on feeling. She was daughter of Khuwaylid, sister of Hala, sister-in-law of Waraqah. She knew that in her family there was a compass that always pointed north. She knew Waraqah had waited for this news all his life. So after Muhammad had calmed a little, after the wrap was lifted and his sweat dried, Khadijah said, "I will take you to someone who can explain what you saw. I will take you to Waraqah bin Naufal."

Imagine, O my brother, their steps in the dark that still held the night. Perhaps Khadijah held her husband's hand, still cold. Perhaps they passed through silent stone lanes, while wild dogs stopped barking, as if sensing something great was passing. They went to Waraqah's house. The house of an old man whose failing eyes still stayed awake in the light of scripture. The house where the Taurat and Injil lay open, waiting. The house where a *hanif* who had read those prophecies would for the first time in his life hear the voice he had awaited since returning from Syam: the voice of a prophet who had just received revelation.

O my brother, take from this night lessons that time cannot age. First: truth does not come to one who merely sits and waits for fortune. Muhammad climbed the mountain. He walked. He laboured. Only then did revelation descend. Second: when light

comes, it does not always come with joy. It can come with trembling, with constriction, with tears. Do not think faith is always sweet. The faith of prophets is bitter at first, sweet at the end. Third: when you tremble, seek one whose heart is clean to calm you. Khadijah did not look at wealth or rank. She looked at character. And fourth: when you are confused by light newly touching your heart, seek one who reads. Seek a student of knowledge. For a clean heart alone is not enough; you also need eyes that can read the signs of heaven. That is why Khadijah brought Muhammad to Waraqah, and not to anyone else in Mecca.

So that night ended at the threshold of Waraqah's house. The sky was still dark. The stars still silent. But in the breasts of three people — Muhammad who had just received revelation, Khadijah who was faithful, and Waraqah who sat reading, waiting — a fire began to catch. That fire would burn all of Jahiliyyah. But before the flame spreads, let us enter Waraqah's house, sit on his worn mat, and listen to what will be said by a mouth that long read of Musa, when that mouth now faces a bearer of revelation more noble than Musa.

Wallahu a'lam.

O my brother.

Have you ever seen a man who has just been touched by the hand of heaven? Not a gentle touch like morning dew, but a mighty touch like lightning striking a treetop. His body is whole; no wound on the skin, no blood flowing. But his soul shakes as if he has just borne the weight of a mountain. His eyes are wide open, but what he sees is no longer the stone walls of the house or the familiar face of his wife. He is still between two worlds: the world he normally treads with his soles, and the world that has just surged into his breast from a cave among the clouds. Such was Muhammad ibn Abdullah, *shallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, when he arrived at his house on that dark night. And such was how Khadijah bint Khuwaylid found him: not as a husband returning from trading camels, but as a human being whom heaven had just chosen to bear a great secret.

He entered the house. Khadijah, waiting — perhaps arranging pillows, perhaps blowing on a kitchen fire nearly dead — heard a step that was not an ordinary step. The door opened, and what entered was a figure she did not recognise: not his face, of course, that face was still Muhammad, but the light in his eyes was no longer the light of an ordinary man. His body shivered. His lips trembled. His voice came out with difficulty, like a man who has run for days in the desert without water, though the distance from the Cave of Hira to his house was no more than a few stone-throws. He spoke with gasping breath, as narrated by *Ummul Mukminin Aisyah radiyallahu 'anha* in the book *Shahih al-Bukhari*, in words that reach us through a

chain of sacred narrators: “*Zammiluni, zammiluni*” — Wrap me up, wrap me up. So Khadijah rushed. She took the blanket at hand, or perhaps a thick cloth used on cold nights, and covered her husband. She sat beside him, not with questions that wound, not with suspicion, but with the voice of a mother who sees her child fall from a tree. “O Abu al-Qasim, what has befallen you?”

Muhammad told his story. Perhaps not all, for his tongue was still stiff. Perhaps only a scrap: I saw an angel, I was commanded to read, I felt constricted. But Khadijah listened with eyes that did not blink. She did not interrupt. She did not say, “Ah, that was only a dream from hunger.” No. Her heart, which had lived with this man for fifteen years, knew that her husband had never lied about even the smallest matter, let alone something this great. Muhammad was *al-Amin* (the Trustworthy). Muhammad was *ash-Shadiq* (the Truthful) in every word he spoke. If he said he saw an angel, then indeed he saw an angel. And if he trembled, that trembling was not fear of a devil, but tremor after seeing what no human breast can hold.

Then Khadijah spoke. O my brother, write these words in your heart, for they are the first to come from the mouth of a woman who became the first Muslim on earth, as narrated by *Aisyah radhiyallahu ‘anha* in *Shahih al-Bukhari*: “*Khabbiki wala ‘adhi, wa wallahi la yukhzikallahu abadan. Fa innaka latashillu al-ma’rudh, wa tat’udu al-hadits, wa taqdi al-baidha, wa takshifu al-dayn, wa ta’udu al-haidz, wa ta’inu ala nawa’ib al-haqq.*” — Rejoice and do not grieve. By Allah,

Allah will never disgrace you, ever. You repay kindness, you keep your word, you bear the burden of hardship, you forgive those who wrong you, you honour guests, and you help those struck by calamity.

O my brother, listen to the wisdom behind those words. Khadijah did not say, “I believe because I love you.” No. She named proofs of character. She said, “Allah will never disgrace you, for you are a good man.” This is the highest argument. She did not defend her husband with a wife’s blind emotion. She defended him with living testimony she had witnessed for fifteen years. Muhammad never disappointed those who did good to him. Muhammad never broke a promise, even a promise to a child waiting for a toy. Muhammad never let anyone suffer without helping, never let a guest leave without food, never hurt anyone. So how could Allah the Most Just mock the most just man on earth? No. What Muhammad saw in the cave just now was surely from Allah. Surely.

Here we see, O my brother, the difference between shallow love and love that knows God. Shallow love says, “I believe in you because I am blinded by your beauty.” Khadijah’s love said, “I believe in you because I see Allah in your character.” Allah says: *And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates, that you might find rest in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy.* (Surah Ar-Rum: 21). Affection and mercy are not only for a soft pillow on a cold night. Affection is the mirror that shows the true face. Khadijah was the first mirror to reflect Muhammad’s light back to him.

When she saw her husband tremble, she did not see a madman. She saw a prophet whose name she did not yet know, but whose heart she already knew.

But Khadijah, O my brother, was not a woman who relied only on feeling. She was daughter of Khuwaylid, sister of Hala, sister-in-law of Waraqah. She knew that in her family there was an old man who had read the Taurat and Injil, who had awaited this news since returning from Syam. If there was anyone in Mecca who could distinguish between heavenly light and the gleam of devils, that man was Waraqah bin Naufal. So once Muhammad's breath calmed a little, once the wrap was lifted and the sweat on his forehead wiped, Khadijah said gently but firmly, as a wife who brings her husband not to a sorcerer or fortune-teller, but to knowledge: "Let us go to Waraqah. He can read what you experienced. He can explain."

Muhammad agreed. Perhaps he too felt that his heart, newly filled with revelation, still needed a human hand to steady it. So the two of them walked through the quiet night. Khadijah held her husband's hand — not because she feared losing him, but because she wanted to give him strength. They passed through dark stone lanes while the sky above them began to shift from deep black to dark blue on the eastern horizon. The wild dogs that usually barked at passers-by perhaps stayed silent that night. As if they too felt that something great was passing. Khadijah's step did not falter. She was a woman accustomed to managing trade caravans alone, who had once walked from Mecca to Syam without a husband. Tonight she was no camel

merchant. She was a guide of hearts. She brought the bearer of revelation to one who could read the signs.

Suddenly, before Waraqah's modest house, they stopped. Khadijah knocked at the door, or perhaps did not need to knock, for lamplight from within already glowed through the cracks in the wood. Waraqah was still awake. He sat reading his book, as always, awaiting a dawn he did not know when it would come. When the door opened, those old eyes saw Khadijah and Muhammad. He saw the pale face of his nephew by marriage. He saw Muhammad's eyes still carrying heaven's burden. And in Waraqah's dimming heart, something beat hard. Like a man who has read a map for so long, and suddenly sees the land he awaited appear before his eyes.

O my brother, take from Khadijah several seeds of wisdom you must not miss. First: believe in one whose character is known to heaven. Do not believe in someone merely because his tongue is sweet, but see whether he keeps his word, whether he helps the afflicted, whether he forgives the one at fault. Second: when the one you love is struck by something great, do not comfort him with lies. Comfort him with truth. Khadijah said, "Allah will never disgrace you," not "Ah, you will feel better soon." She said so because she knew who Muhammad was before Allah. Third: a clean heart must be paired with wise action. Khadijah did not say, "Let us simply wait." No. She brought Muhammad to knowledge. She understood that revelation from heaven needs interpretation from books that had descended before. And fourth: true affection is not only

crying together, but walking together toward truth.

Khadijah had calmed her husband. Now let us enter Waraqah's house. Let us sit on his worn mat, near the flickering lamp, and listen to what will come from the mouth of an old man who has awaited this night all his life.

Wallahu a'lam.

O my brother.

There are houses in this world that are not large, whose walls carry no costly carving, whose yards hold no copper vessels from the land of Syam. Yet when you step inside, you feel something in the air that no thousand camels could buy. The house is filled with the scent of yellowed paper mingling with simple incense, with the sound of an old man drawing the night deep into his lungs, and with the tremor of a heart that has long awaited a guest from heaven. The house of Waraqah bin Naufal was one such. In a quiet corner of Mecca, among cold black stones, his lamp burned low on that dark night. Waraqah sat kneeling. His eyes were dim, for age had stolen their light. But his heart, O my brother, was an eye that never dimmed. He held the pages of his book, not to read with his eyes, for the script had blurred, but to feel the texture of paper that had once held the word of God. He read with his fingers, and he read with memory. He knew by heart the stories of the Taurat: how Musa trembled at the fire in Midian, how their own people expelled the prophets, how Jewish priests pursued Isa. And he waited. He waited, saying to himself, or perhaps to Hala his wife who had already slept in the next room, "It is near. It has drawn close. I feel my breath is different tonight."

Suddenly, a knock at the door. A knock not of a thief, not of a beggar, not of one seeking cool drink on a hot night. That knock was firm yet soft, like the knocking of a heart that could no longer hold its secret. "Who is there?" asked Waraqah in a hoarse voice. "It is I, Khadijah," came the answer from outside.

“And with me is Muhammad.”

Waraqah felt his heart beat once, hard. Like the drumbeat before a qasidah begins. He spoke, quick, almost choking on emotion, “Enter.”

The wooden door opened. Khadijah entered first, holding the arm of her husband, still cold from the mountain’s night sweat. Muhammad ibn Abdullah, who had just descended from Jabal Nur, still carried revelation in his breast like a man embraced by something greater than himself. He stepped into his brother-in-law’s house. The lamplight flared a moment, then dimmed, as if the lamp itself felt unworthy to illuminate a face that an angel had just gazed upon. Waraqah did not see clearly. He saw shadows, saw posture, saw sweat on the brow. But more than that, he felt. He felt something in the room that did not come from Mecca. Wind from Jabal Nur had entered with Muhammad.

“Sit, O my nephew,” said Waraqah, crawling forward on his mat. His voice was soft, full of an expectation buried for so long. “Khadijah, what has befallen your husband?”

Khadijah, sitting beside Muhammad, spoke in a voice still steady though her heart pounded: “I bring to you what you have awaited, O my brother-in-law. Tell him what you told me, O Abu al-Qasim.”

So Muhammad told his story. His voice still trembled; his breath still caught. He spoke of the Cave of Hira, of sleep cut short, of the angel who came with the command *Iqra’*. He spoke

of the embrace that squeezed his chest until his bones seemed near to breaking, and of verses that poured from the angel's mouth like a waterfall from heaven. He told how the angel left him in the cave's dark, his body shaking violently. He told how he came down the mountain not with an ordinary man's step, but with the step of one whom God's hand had just touched. Waraqah listened. His dim eyes closed. His wrinkled hands gripped his knees tight. He did not interrupt once. He only listened, as Musa listened to Allah from the burning bush: with fear filled with hope.

When Muhammad finished his story, silence. Deep silence. Only the sound of night wind slipping through the cracks in the stone walls. Then Waraqah bin Naufal drew a long breath. A breath from the chest of an old man who had awaited this news for years. He raised his head. His clouded eyes tried to gaze toward Muhammad, but in truth he looked far ahead, to the future, to the horizon of history. And he spoke. O my brother, write this sentence in golden ink upon your heart. It is the first acknowledgment of prophethood from a human mouth after the angel, narrated by *Ummul Mukminin Aisyah radhiyallahu 'anha* in *Shahih al-Bukhari*, reaching us mouth to mouth through a sacred chain: "*Hadha an-Namus alladzi anzallahu 'ala Musa.*" — **This is the Namus that Allah sent down to Musa.**

O my brother, hear the sound of that sentence in your ear. Not "perhaps," not "it seems," not "maybe a good dream." No. Waraqah spoke with complete conviction, with knowledge

learned across decades, with a heart purified by waiting. *Namus*. The great secret. The angelic messenger who came to Musa in the valley of Thuwa. Waraqah had read of it in the Taurat. He knew how Allah spoke to Musa from the burning bush. And now, when Muhammad told of the angel who came with the command *Iqra'*, Waraqah recognised that voice at once. He recognised its mark. As a man who has learned to watch the stars across years can point to the sky and say, "That is the star I awaited."

But Waraqah did not stop there. After witnessing and recognising, his old heart was overcome by two warring feelings: overflowing joy, because his waiting had been answered; and piercing sorrow, because he knew heaven's law. He knew how humankind receives the bearers of light. So he said to Muhammad in a trembling voice, full of hope blocked by age, as recorded in the narration of *Shahih al-Bukhari*: "*Ya laitani kuntu fataan, fa akuna ila waqt yakhrujuka qawmuka, fa akuna ma'aka hizban qawiyyan.*" — **Would that I were young, so that I might live until the time your people expel you, then I would be a strong supporter for you.**

Muhammad, who still sat with the wrap partly fallen from his shoulders, looked up. His people had never scorned him. He was *al-Amin*, the one trusted, the one revered. So in a tone still full of wonder, he asked, as narrated by Aisyah: "*Amukhrijyahum qawmi?*" — **Will my people expel me?**

Waraqah answered. His voice was not loud, but every word fell like a stone to the bottom of a pool: "*Na'am. Ma ja'a ahadun*

bi-mithli ma ji'ta bihi illa usiya, wa in yusbirni Allah bi-yawmi yakhrujuka, fa innani la-hizun laka hizban qawiyyan." — **Yes. Never has anyone come with the like of what you have brought except he was treated with hostility. And if Allah grants me life until the day you are expelled, then indeed I will be a strong supporter for you.**

O my brother, imagine that moment. An old man nearly blind, whose body had already stooped, whose name was not spoken in the markets of Mecca, said to the bearer of revelation who had just descended from heaven: "I will stand behind you. I will oppose my own people for you." This was no political promise. This was no promise seeking profit. This was a promise from a mouth that had read the history of prophets. Waraqah knew Muhammad's road would not be straight. He knew that Quraysh, sleeping now, once awakened by the call *La ilaha illallah*, would become roaring lions. So he wanted to become a shield. He wanted to be the one who stretched out his hand when all others drew theirs back. But age. Age that had eaten his eyes, weakened his knees, stood as a wall between desire and reality. So he could only say, "Would that I were young."

Allah Ta'ala says: *And indeed, We have created man, and We know what his soul whispers to him; and We are nearer to him than his jugular vein.* (Surah Qaf: 16). O my brother, Waraqah perhaps could not see with his eyes, but Allah saw his heart. And Waraqah's heart that night was the purest heart in Mecca. He asked for no miraculous proof. He asked for no mountain to be tamed, no sun to stand still. Muhammad's story,

the description of the angel, the constriction in the chest — that was enough for Waraqah to recognise heaven's signature. For he had learned to read those signs across decades. That knowledge was no wasted treasure. It was seed planted in the field of the heart, bearing fruit at the proper hour.

Khadijah, who sat between the two of them, listened with filming eyes. She needed no further proof. Waraqah, who never praised lightly, had praised her husband with the highest praise: likening him to Musa. Not to a king, not to a warrior, but to a prophet who spoke directly with Allah. So Khadijah's tears fell, not tears of sorrow, but tears of one who had just seen her family united by truth. In this modest house, on a night still dark, three souls gathered: the man newborn to prophecy, the faithful wife, and the aged witness. There was no fourth person. There was no sound of dogs barking to disturb them. There was only Allah watching from above the seven heavens, and perhaps Jibril still standing at the unseen threshold, giving a small nod at that first acknowledgment.

Waraqah then took Muhammad's hand. The old man's fingers were wrinkled and cold, but warm. "Go home, O my nephew," he said. "Rest your body. Tomorrow, or the day after, or the months to come, you will need strength greater than this. For what has descended upon you is no ordinary burden. It is a trust from heaven. And heaven is never light." Muhammad stood, helped by Khadijah. He looked at Waraqah for the last time in full wakefulness. He looked at those dim eyes still straining to gaze at him. And in the young Prophet's heart,

perhaps there grew a love that could not be spoken in words: love for the one who first recognised him, though the world had not yet known him.

O my brother, take from this night several pearls that must not be lost to time. First: knowledge sought in honesty becomes the mirror that reflects the light of revelation when revelation comes. Without the Taurat and Injil that Waraqah read, perhaps there would have been no acknowledgment so swift and sure. Second: age is no barrier to becoming a witness, but it can be a barrier to becoming a warrior. So use your youth before old age steals your strength. Third: acknowledging truth requires courage. Waraqah did not know whether he would live until Muhammad was expelled, yet he dared to say, “I will stand behind you.” And fourth: Allah does not let His hungry servant wait without answer. Waraqah had waited, and that night, at the end of his years, his answer arrived in the form of a pale man who had just descended from the Cave of Hira.

They went home, Khadijah and Muhammad, leaving a house whose lamp began to die down. Waraqah sat alone, or perhaps Hala had woken and sat beside him. He gazed toward the door that had just closed. He spoke, perhaps to his wife, or perhaps only to the quiet night, “He has come. The one I awaited has come. Now, I can die.”

But death, O my brother, is not something to be hurried or delayed at will. It comes according to a schedule written before the pen drew the earth. Waraqah lived a few days more. A few days that became a *fatrah* — a pause — between the first

revelation and the revelation to follow. And in that pause lies a great secret. But that is a story for the coming chapter. Now, let us stand a moment at the threshold of Waraqah's house, feeling the lingering warmth of three souls who have just gathered, and understanding that this modest house was the first witness to the acknowledgment of prophethood on the soil of Mecca.

Wallahu a'lam.

O my brother.

There are moments in human life when a single sentence is enough to alter the river of history. Not a long speech, not a fiery oration, not a poem hung in contest on the Ka'bah walls. Only one short sentence, from the mouth of an old man nearly blind, sitting on a worn mat in the corner of a Meccan stone house. But that sentence was the key that opened the door between heaven and earth. It joined the revelation newly descended with the Book that had descended six hundred years before. That was the sentence that came from the lips of Waraqah bin Naufal when Muhammad ibn Abdullah, *shallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, finished telling what he had experienced in the Cave of Hira.

Imagine the atmosphere inside that house for a moment. The lamp trembled on the wall, as if the night wind slipping through the cracks in the wood held its breath. Khadijah sat upright, her eyes fixed on Waraqah, waiting. Muhammad sat opposite, his body still limp, but his heart beginning to calm, for he felt the man before him was no ordinary man. This was Waraqah, the reader of books, the seeker who had returned from the land of Syam bearing the Taurat and Injil in his breast. And Waraqah, after listening to the story from beginning to end without interrupting, raised his head. His dim eyes tried to gaze toward Muhammad, but in truth he looked far beyond the room, beyond the stones of Mecca, beyond the stars hanging in the sky. He spoke in a voice not loud, yet every letter fell like rock to the ocean floor: "*Hadha an-Namus alladzi anzallahu 'ala Musa.*" **This is the *Namus* (the angelic messenger of**

revelation) that Allah sent down to Musa.

O my brother, hear that sentence in your heart. Before it, Muhammad was a man trembling, who had just come down from the mountain with an experience he could not explain to anyone in the market. After it, Muhammad was a prophet. Not acknowledgment from the crowd, not from rulers, not from the pens of historians. But acknowledgment from one who had learned to read the signs of heaven across decades. Waraqah did not say, “Ah, a beautiful dream.” No. He said, “This is *Namus*.” And what is *Namus*? O my brother, in Arabic *Namus* means the great secret, the secret delivered by the angel who bears revelation. Waraqah, who had read the *Taurat* in Hebrew, knew this term. He knew how Musa, peace be upon him, in the valley of *Thuwa*, saw fire in the bush and heard a voice that was not wind. That was *Namus*. The angel bearing the word of Allah, or deeper still, the revelation itself descending in majestic awe. So when Waraqah named it “*Namus*,” he did not merely label Muhammad’s experience. He was saying, “You have experienced what Musa experienced. You have been chosen by the Lord who created heaven and earth.”

Allah Ta‘ala says in His noble Book: *And who speaks better than one who calls to Allah and does righteous deeds, and says, “Indeed, I am among those who submit”?* (Surah Fussilat: 33). Waraqah that night was the one whose speech was most true, for it came from a mouth filled with knowledge and a heart filled with honesty. He did not speak with a tongue hungry for popularity. He spoke with a tongue that had long read of

prophets expelled, of messengers crucified in the heart before they were crucified on wood, and of truth-seekers who died alone in the desert. So when he looked at Muhammad, he saw the figure he knew best from his holy books: the image of an ordinary man chosen by heaven to carry a weight the mountains could not bear.

Then, as immortalised in the narration of *Ummul Mukminin Aisyah radhiyallahu ‘anha* in the renowned *Shahih al-Bukhari*, Waraqah did not stop there. That acknowledgment, though enough to fill the heart with joy, was paired with a prediction drawn from his knowledge of the history of prophets. He said to Muhammad in a trembling voice, full of love yet full of warning: “*Ya laitani kuntu fataan, fa akuna ila waqt yakhrujuka qawmuka, fa akuna ma’aka hizban qawiyyan.*” **Would that I were young, so that I might live until the time your people expel you, then I would be a strong supporter for you.**

O my brother, ponder this promise. An old man nearly blind, of the clan Banu Asad of Quraysh, the same people as Muhammad, said, “I will oppose my own people to stand behind you.” He did not say, “I will try to make peace.” No. He said, “I will become a *hizb qawiyy* — a strong ally.” Not an ally of a thousand horsemen, but an ally of one soul armed with knowledge. Waraqah knew the road of truth is always strewn with stones of hostility. He had read it in the Taurat: how Pharaoh expelled Musa, how the Children of Israel betrayed prophet after prophet, how the Jewish priests pursued Isa from

town to town. So he knew, with a certainty no false hope could shake, that Quraysh would not receive Muhammad with flowers and incense. Quraysh would receive him with mockery, with stones, with expulsion, and perhaps with swords.

Muhammad, who had not yet tasted the bitterness of such hostility, asked in wonder, as narrated by Aisyah: *“Amukhrijyahum qawmi?”* **Will my people expel me?** That voice came from the mouth of a man lately praised by all Mecca as *al-Amin* (the Trustworthy). How could the most trusted man be expelled? How could the most beloved be driven out? But Waraqah answered with a certainty that struck the breast: *“Na’am. Ma ja’a ahadun bi-mithla ma ji’ta bihi illa usiya.”* **Yes. Never has anyone come with the like of what you have brought except he was treated with hostility.**

O my brother, this was no soothsayer’s vague divination. This was knowledge of *sunnatullah* (the way of Allah), the law in force since Adam until Isa. Each time truth comes in its pure form, falsehood will gather to oppose it. As Allah says: *And thus We did not send before you any warner in the cities, except that the affluent among them said, “Indeed, we found our fathers upon a religion, and indeed we follow their footsteps.”* (Surah Az-Zukhruf: 23). Waraqah had read verses like these, not yet in the Qur’an that had not descended, but in the same spirit flowing through the Taurat and Injil. He knew a people living in ease, boasting of lineage and idols, would not surrender their power willingly. So expulsion was not mere possibility; expulsion was certainty.

Yet behind that dark prediction, a light pierced through. Waraqah also said: *“Wa in yusbirni Allah bi-yawmi yakhrujuka, fa innani la-hizun laka hizban qawiyyan.”* **And if Allah grants me life until the day you are expelled, then indeed I will be a strong supporter for you.** Waraqah did not know whether he would live to that day. He was old. His eyes dim. His body frail. But his will to stand behind truth was not frail. He wanted to become like Harun who stood with Musa, like the followers of Isa who did not flee when the priests came. So from the mouth of an old man nearly blind came a spirit of struggle burning no less fierce than the spirit of youths who bore swords. For true struggle is not only with the sword, but with acknowledgment, with opposition to falsehood, with the courage to say, “Here I stand, I believe,” when the whole world says, “We reject.”

Khadijah, who witnessed this dialogue, wept. Not tears of fear, but tears of one who saw her whole life gathered into a single point of light. She had married Muhammad for his character. She had brought him to Waraqah for his knowledge. And now both met in the same acknowledgment: that her husband was the bearer of revelation, and that the road ahead would bleed, but there was one willing to bleed with him. Khadijah said in her heart, or perhaps whispered through trembling lips, “O Allah, make me too a strong supporter for him. Make me the Khadijah who remains at his side when all others leave.”

O my brother, take from Waraqah's words several pearls that must not be lost. First: true knowledge guides the heart to recognise truth, though the eyes are dim. Waraqah was nearly blind, but his heart saw clearly. Be one who is blind of eye but awake of heart, never the reverse. Second: acknowledging truth requires courage to face consequence. Waraqah did not merely say, "I believe." He said, "I will stand behind you, though my people expel you." Third: the path of the prophets is one path: expelled, slandered, hurt. So do not marvel if you meet stones on the road of truth. What is marvellous is the road of falsehood, paved with flowers and no thorns. Fourth: if you cannot be a warrior with the sword, be a warrior with the truthful tongue. Waraqah had no sword, but he had the sentence that became the first shield of prophethood.

Allah Ta'ala says: *And those who strive for Us — We will surely guide them to Our ways. And indeed, Allah is with those who do good.* (Surah Al-'Ankabut: 69). Waraqah had striven for decades: striving to seek knowledge, striving to read scripture in a foreign tongue, striving to endure the mockery of Quraysh who called him strange. So that night, Allah showed him His way in the most beautiful manner: He showed him the face of the prophet he had awaited, directly before his dimming eyes.

So that meeting ended. Muhammad and Khadijah rose to go home. Waraqah sat alone on his mat, or perhaps Hala his wife had woken and sat behind him, watching the entire event in silence. In Waraqah's breast was a relief no words could explain. He had waited. He had read. He had been patient. And now,

when light had come, he felt his task was almost complete. He said in his heart, “O Allah, thank You for showing me this day before You blind my eyes forever. Thank You for letting me live long enough to know the Namus newly descended. Now, let me depart in peace.”

But let me, O my brother, add one more counsel before we leave this modest house. Many among us read the history of the Prophet with eyes that see only the Prophet. We see Muhammad, we see Khadijah, and we stop. But history is wider. There is Waraqah in the corner. There is a worn mat we do not see. There is a dim lamp that illuminates no one but itself. That is the true picture of this community. Not everyone becomes a Prophet. Not everyone becomes a famous Khadijah. But there are Waraqahs in the corners: those who read, those who wait, those who, when light comes, say, “I recognise it, for I have long studied.” They are the foundation. They are the ones who lay the first stones underground, before the grand building is raised above. Do not despise the role of the scripture-reader in the dark corner. For without them, light sometimes descends, yet no one is there to know it.

Waraqah had spoken his sentence. Namus had been named. Acknowledgment had been made. Now, O my brother, one thing remained: that acknowledgment would be tested by time, and Waraqah would be tested by age. So let us prepare to witness how an old man who had found truth faced a death that arrived sooner than the expulsion he had foretold. Let us go to the next chapter: tears at the end of his years.

Wallahu a'lam.

O my brother.

After light fills the heart, the body sometimes hurries back to earth sooner. Like a candle flaring brightest before the wick runs out. So it was with Waraqah bin Naufal. The night he met Muhammad in his house was not the beginning of a long spring. It was the crest of autumn, where the last leaf burns reddest before it falls. Waraqah had waited his whole life. When that waiting was answered, his hungry heart was full. His body, long held up only by will, knew its work was done.

Imagine, O my brother, the dawn after that night. Sunlight crept through cracks in the stone walls, falling on an old face that had not slept. He sat on his mat. Hala, his wife, watched him with filming eyes. She knew something vast had occurred. Waraqah smiled — a smile she had not seen since their wedding decades past. “I have met the one I awaited, Hala,” he said, hoarse. “Khadijah brought him in the night. I have known him. Now I have no more business in this world.” Hala wanted to weep, but held back. Her husband disliked false tears. “Do not grieve,” Waraqah continued. “To die after finding truth is not failure. It is victory.”

A few days later, O my brother, Waraqah’s body, already aged, sank further. Accounts from the writers of *sirah* (biography) say he died not long after — some say within days. His illness was no spreading plague, no bleeding wound, but age running its course. Like salt long dissolved in water, he returned to his source. But before he left, one thing remained to see. He wanted to hear again. He wanted to know whether revelation

would descend once more, or if he had only been granted the rising of the curtain, not the full play. Here lies a secret told by historians and writers of *sirah*: some connect the *fatrah* — the pause between revelations — with Waraqah’s death. After the old man passed, heaven fell silent. The Cave of Hira received no angel. The Prophet Muhammad, *shallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, felt a terrible emptiness, as if abandoned alone in a plain gone suddenly dark. He grew sad, heartsick; he even feared Allah had left him. Then, with unexpected wisdom, calming verses descended: *By the sun and its brightness, and the moon as it follows, and the day as it reveals, and the night as it shrouds, and the sky and what built it, and the earth and what spread it, and the soul and what proportioned it...* (Surah Ash-Shams: 1-7). O my brother, if that account is true, then Waraqah was not only the witness who acknowledged, but also the one who held heaven silent before heaven spoke again. He was a pillar Allah removed for a moment, so the Prophet might feel the weight of standing alone, before Allah strengthened him again with His next word.

Then the hour came. Waraqah lay on his simple deathbed. His dim eyes barely saw. But he did not need to see. He had seen enough. Hala sat beside him, holding his wrinkled hand. Outside, the voices of Quraysh children ran and played, unaware that inside this stone house, one eye of scripture would close forever. Waraqah moved slowly. He wanted to face the Ka’bah. Hala helped him turn. Then he spoke, his voice faint but clear, for these words had long been composed: “O Allah, You know I

never worshipped Hubal. I never prostrated to ‘Uzza. I left my people because I sought You. And You showed me — before my eyes went dark — the face of the bearer of truth. Receive me as a *hanif*. Make me his follower, though I did not live to see victory.” Hala wept. Her tears fell on his hand. Waraqah felt their warmth, and smiled. “Do not weep for me, Hala. Khadijah will keep him company. And I will keep company with the prophets I read in my books. Is that not the noblest homecoming?”

Then he left. Slowly, like dew seeping into soil, without sound, without thunder. A man of Quraysh, of Banu Asad, once thought strange by his people, once called Nasrani by those who did not understand — he left Mecca not with a caravan of camels, but with a soul winging to God’s mercy. He died before the Prophet Muhammad, *shallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, began his public call. He died before the first *adhan* was called. He died before any man of Quraysh said “*La ilaha illallah*” in the open. But he died in the noblest state: a *mu’min* (believer) who had known the messenger before the world knew him. That makes his death no tragedy, but *syahadah* (testimony) in its gentlest form.

O my brother, when the news reached Muhammad and Khadijah, what was in their hearts? Khadijah wept — not only for a lost brother-in-law, but for a lost refuge. Waraqah was the one who had affirmed her husband’s experience that first night. Waraqah was the compass showing her husband’s road was the road of Musa and Isa. Now the compass was gone. But the

Prophet Muhammad, still shaken by the first tremors of revelation, responded in a way that showed his deep love for the old man. Narrations reaching us tell that the Prophet, *shallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam*, bore witness to Waraqah’s salvation. Some accounts even say he was promised paradise. The Prophet did not say, “He was a good man; may Allah forgive him.” No. The Prophet bore witness with certainty, as if heaven had already told him that the soul which first spoke “*Namus*” had been received at His side. Is that not honour enough? No grand burial rite. No gold-adorned stone. Only testimony from the Prophet’s tongue — nobler than any tomb on earth.

Allah Ta‘ala says: *Indeed, those who say, “Our Lord is Allah,” and then remain steadfast — the angels will descend upon them, saying, “Do not fear and do not grieve, but rejoice in the garden you have been promised.”* (Surah Fussilat: 30). O my brother, I imagine angels descending to greet Waraqah with those words. “Fear not, O servant who read the Taurat through quiet nights. Grieve not, O man thought strange by his people. Rejoice, for you knew the *Namus* before the *Namus* was known.” Waraqah, blind in the world, saw at last. Waraqah, alone on his mat, was suddenly surrounded by the followers of prophets he had read in ancient pages. Musa stood there, with his staff that became a serpent. Isa stood there, with his voice that raised the dead. And they said together, “Welcome, O first witness of the last nation.”

O my brother, take from Waraqah’s death several wisdoms you must not pass by. First: age is no measure; content is the

measure. Waraqah did not live a thousand years. He lived long enough to know truth, and died before seeing truth prevail. Many live a century without knowing anything. Waraqah lived his final decade as the richest man in Mecca — not in gold, but in knowledge. Second: to die in faith is a gift no gold, not even the weight of Mount Uhud, can buy. Waraqah never performed the five daily prayers as we know them. He never fasted Ramadan in the completed Islam. But he died a *hanif*, in acknowledgment, in waiting. And Allah, the Most Just, never wrongs an honest servant. Third: the first to believe is sometimes not the nearest, but the farthest in the world's reckoning. Waraqah was no kinsman of Bani Hashim. He was no uncle to the Prophet. Only a distant brother-in-law, an old man thought strange. Yet that heart was the readiest. So do not despise the strange ones around you. Perhaps among them are Waraqahs awaiting light.

Fourth: the death of the righteous is not the end of their support. Waraqah died, but his name lives. Every time we read Aisyah's narration in *Shahih al-Bukhari*, Waraqah's name surfaces. Every time we hear the words "*Hadha an-Namus alladzi anzallahu 'ala Musa*," Waraqah's soul speaks again. So who died? Only his body. His name is a prayer the Muslim community recites until the Last Day. That is true immortality.

And fifth: before the Prophet walked alone down a road of thorns, Allah gave him Khadijah to comfort him at home, and Waraqah to affirm him in his brother-in-law's house. Two houses, two guardians of the heart. When Waraqah died, the

Prophet lost one guardian. But that guardian had already locked the door of truth inside the Prophet's breast, so no one could unlock it with doubt. Waraqah had said, "This is from Allah." That was enough to strengthen his steps for the thirteen years to come, though those steps later bled.

Waraqah's house is silent now. His lamp has gone out. His Taurat and Injil may have been kept by Hala, or taken by Khadijah, or left to yellow with time. But the content of those books had moved into a Prophet's breast. And from that breast, it would descend again in the most perfect form: the Qur'an. O my brother, that is the unbroken golden chain. Ibrahim prayed, Musa wrote, Isa brought good news, Waraqah read, Muhammad received, and we — we are the ones who hear.

So if one day you pass near graves unknown to the world, and see one weathered stone at a corner, do not think that nameless bones sleep beneath. Perhaps a Waraqah lies there, who once became a pillar supporting heaven before heaven spoke again. Pray for them. Those who die waiting for truth are our noblest brothers.

Wallahu a'lam.

O my brother.

Try to imagine an assembly on a quiet night in centuries past. Olive-oil lamps stand on copper holders, lighting the stone walls of a house in Baghdad, or Kufah, or some corner of Andalusia. Several men in white robes sit cross-legged. Before them lie open books: *Shahih al-Bukhari*, *Shahih Muslim*, *Kitab al-Maghazi* by Ibn Ishaq, *At-Tabaqat* by Ibn Sa'd. The dust of time has seeped into those pages, yet the readers' eyes are still fixed upon one seemingly small question, able to tear a man's breast into two ravines. The question is this: *Who was the first believer on this earth?* And if the question is pulled deeper, a name surfaces, too often forgotten, or too often disputed: Waraqah bin Naufal.

Some scholars raised their voices, not loud, for the learned need not force their words to stand out. They said, "Let us not stretch this long. The first to believe was Khadijah bint Khuwaylid, *radhiyallahu 'anha*. She it was who calmed the Prophet *shallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam* when he came down from the Cave of Hira. She it was who said, 'By Allah, Allah will never disgrace you.' And she it was who brought her husband to Waraqah. If Khadijah were not already certain, would she have brought him? Certainly not. So Khadijah was certain before anyone."

O my brother, this argument is strong. For in *Shahih al-Bukhari*, *Ummul Mukminin Aisyah radhiyallahu 'anha* narrated that the Prophet spoke of Khadijah with words that still bring tears: "*She believed in me when others denied me...*"

So, close the discussion? Not necessarily. For from another corner of the assembly, someone raised a finger — an elder whose eyes had read much, not only books of hadith but also the traces of history. He said, “But listen. Before Khadijah spoke belief with her tongue, had not Waraqah already known the *Namus* sent down to Musa? Was he not the first to say, ‘This is revelation’? Was he not the first to affirm with proof from scripture, not merely with a wife’s love?”

Thus began the eternal debate, like wind blowing from one generation to the next. Some said Waraqah was the first believer before the door of official preaching opened. Some said he was only a *hanif* who died on the threshold, never entering the house of Islam complete with its law. Some took the middle path, saying, “He is a believer, yes, but ‘the first believer’ is a title reserved for Abu Bakr, or Khadijah, or Ali, for Waraqah died before the *adhan* was called, before the five prayers were made obligatory, before Ramadan fasting was prescribed. How can he be a perfect believer if he never performed what we perform?”

O my brother, listen to the voice of the heart amid the clamour of tongues. Allah Ta‘ala says: *O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you...* (Surah Al-Hujurat: 13). This verse is a cooling cord sent down from heaven to hands too fond of boxing honour into categories. The most noble is not the one first to stand in the ranks, but the one deepest in faith before his Lord. Yet

because man was created with curiosity, the scholars still seek answers. And we, as readers of history, must not look upon their debate with contempt. For debate conducted with knowledge is a journey seeking truth, provided it is not accompanied by hard hearts and mutual charges of unbelief.

Let us look closer. According to the most *mashhur* narration from *Ummul Mukminin Aisyah radihiyallahu ‘anha* in *Shahih al-Bukhari*, the Prophet Muhammad *shallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam* returned from the Cave of Hira trembling, was wrapped up, and Khadijah calmed him. Khadijah was the first to see the Prophet’s face after revelation, the first to touch the hand that Jibril had just grasped, the first to say with conviction, “This is not a devil; this is mercy.” Only after that did Khadijah bring him to Waraqah. So chronologically, Khadijah’s faith bloomed in her breast before Waraqah opened his mouth in that modest house. In this, O my brother, whoever upholds Khadijah as the first believer has a firm foundation. The Prophet himself bore witness to her excellence. Who are we to dispute?

But from another chamber of that assembly, a voice came, soft yet piercing. “But, O learned ones, distinguish between faith born of a wife’s love, and faith born of recognition from scripture. Khadijah believed because she knew Muhammad’s character for fifteen years. Waraqah believed because he knew the signs of prophethood for decades. Khadijah believed in the one who brought the news. Waraqah believed in what the news was, before the bearer had time to explain. Is that not a deeper acknowledgment? Is that not eyewitness testimony from the

Book that descended before the Qur'an?" The assembly fell silent again. Some nodded. Some shook their heads. What is clear: Waraqah was not one to say, "I believe because you are my brother-in-law." No. He said, "I believe because this is the *Namus* that came to Musa." He distinguished between family love and love of truth. And in the history of this community, such acknowledgment is rare.

Then a third voice rose, from one carrying a notebook. "Consider," he said, "that Waraqah died before the Prophet *shallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam* went out to preach openly. He died during the *fatrah* — the pause between the first revelation and what followed. In the narrations of the *sirah* writers, some mention his death only days after that meeting. Some also connect the temporary silence of heaven with Waraqah's death. If he died before being commanded to pray, before wine was forbidden, before *zakat* was prescribed, then what is his ruling? Does he belong to the *ashabul-fathrah* — those who died between two messengers, or between two books, who were not called by a complete law?"

O my brother, this is a question deeper than who first stood in the ranks. This is a theological question about the mercy of Allah. What of one who knew truth before truth came in perfect form? What of one who walked in mist, waiting for dawn, then died when light had only just appeared on the horizon, before it could touch his whole face? The scholars, with the gentleness of hearts filled with piety, spoke in one resounding voice: "Waraqah is a believer. He died in a state of faith." There is no

disagreement here. Imam al-Bukhari, Imam Muslim, Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Sa'd, at-Tabari — the historians and hadith writers who are the references of this community — all agree that Waraqah died in Islam, in a state pleasing to Allah. Even the Prophet *shallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, as recorded in several narrations, bore witness for him. Some narrate that he was promised paradise. Some mention double reward, because he waited without ever seeing Madinah, without ever hearing the *adhan*, without ever seeing the Ka'bah filled with people bowing in order. His heart alone had already bowed.

Allah Ta'ala says: *The Messenger has believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord, and so have the believers. All of them have believed in Allah, His angels, His books, and His messengers. [They say], "We make no distinction between any of His messengers." And they say, "We hear and we obey. [Our Lord,] forgive us, and to You is the return."* (Surah Al-Baqarah: 285). O my brother, this verse is not only for us who perform the five daily prayers and fast Ramadan. This verse is also for Waraqah, whose heart had already said, "We make no distinction between Your messengers," before he ever saw Ali's radiant face, before he ever saw Abu Bakr weeping in the Cave of Hira later. Waraqah had believed in Musa. Waraqah had believed in Isa. And when Muhammad came, his heart, trained by the Taurat and Injil, knew at once: this is the seal. So how could he not be a believer?

But O my brother, let us not be trapped in the debate over titles like children fighting for a drum in the market. Who was

first, who was second, who was third — all are historical records worth studying, but not weapons for stabbing one another. If Khadijah was the first woman believer, that is the honour Allah decreed for her. If Abu Bakr was the first male believer who lived to witness open preaching, that is the honour Allah decreed for him. If Ali was the first child believer raised in the lap of prophethood, that is the honour Allah decreed for him. And if Waraqah — Waraqah the old, the dim-eyed, who died on the threshold — is also inscribed on the *lauhul mahfuzh* as one of the first to know the *Namus*, then let that be a special mercy we need not wrest from one another.

What I wish to convey to you here, O my brother, is something deeper than the order of numbers. Waraqah teaches us that truth can be known before truth appears clear. He teaches that a man living in the darkness of Jahiliyyah, mocked as a “Nasrani” or a “strange scribe,” may be closer to Allah than one standing at the front of the rows at the Ka’bah while his heart is empty. He teaches that the road to faith is not only through ears that hear preaching, but also through the heart’s eye that reads, waits, and dives deep. Therefore, do not despise one whose path differs from yours, as long as that path leads to truth. Do not say, “You do not join the Friday prayer with me, so you are not of my group.” For who knows, in some dark corner, there is a Waraqah reading scripture with a heart cleaner than ours, which often merely repeats words without pondering their meaning.

So if asked of my heart, not my tongue, whether Waraqah was the first believer, I would answer with a smile, as the old man smiled on his deathbed: “Waraqah was the first believer among those who knew Muhammad before Muhammad knew himself. He was the first believer among the readers of scripture who awaited the seal. He was the first believer among old men whose eyes were dim but whose hearts were awake.” And that is enough. No title needed. No trophy needed. For before Allah, what is sought is not who stood the fastest, but who stood the straightest in truth until the end of his life.

Let us, O my brother, leave that assembly of debate. Let the books remain open on the table. Let the scholars continue their courteous discourse, for scholarly discourse is the sign of a living community. But we, with hearts filled by Waraqah’s story, will step into the final chapter. We will take the most important wisdom from all this: how an old man who died alone in Mecca could teach a community numbering in the billions, until the Day of Judgment.

Wallahu a’lam.

O my brother.

After walking so far, from the dark night in the valley of Mecca to the room where the lamp guttered in the house of an old man who died alone, let me draw a long breath with you. We both know the story of Waraqah bin Naufal is not one you will often hear from the Friday pulpit. His name is not spoken in sermons that resound with grandeur. His grave is not visited by busloads from distant corners. Even his gravestone, if there ever was one, long ago crumbled to dust mixed with the barren dust of Mecca. But O my brother, let us not measure greatness by the height of a tomb. True greatness is kept in the heart that reads, and Waraqah has left his heart for us to read until the Day of Judgment. So before we close this book, let me string for you several pearls from the ocean of his story. Take what fits your necklace; save the rest for your children and grandchildren. Wisdom does not spoil with time.

First: Knowledge is light, and that light must be sought, not waited for like rain in a drought.

Waraqah did not sit on his porch fanning himself, waiting for an angel to descend and inform him. No. He walked to the land of Syam with feet reddened by sand. He approached the *Ahlul Kitab* who did not speak his tongue, bowed his head as a student, let his fingers stain with the ink of strange Hebrew script. Allah Ta'ala says: *Allah will raise those who have believed among you and those who were given knowledge, by degrees.* (Surah Al-Mujadilah: 11). O my brother, those degrees do not fall from heaven like snow. They climb, rung by rung,

with sweat on the brow. If you wish to know truth, do not rely only on emotion that flares a moment then dies. Be like Waraqah: learn to read. Learn to distinguish. Learn to wait with knowledge, not with empty longing. In our age, where the loudest voice is not the heart but the phone notification, where people more easily share images than read half a page of a book, we desperately need new Waraqahs: people willing to read the Taurat and Injil to understand the Qur'an, not to attack or to mislead, but to see the rope between the old heaven and the new. Broad knowledge is a fortress. Without it, our hearts are easily seized by every wind of lies.

Second: Truth is one river, not separate pools.

Waraqah read the Taurat and Injil, yet his heart never split. He did not say, "I am a Jew," or "I am a Christian," with blinding fanaticism. He said, "I am a *hanif*." He saw that Musa, Isa, and Muhammad — though at that time Muhammad was not yet known to the public — were streams flowing from one spring: Allah. Allah Ta'ala says: *Those to whom We have given the Book know it as they know their own sons.* (Surah Al-An'am: 20). O my brother, this verse is not only for the Jews and Christians of old. It is also for us, the Muslim community, so we do not arrogantly assume only our book is true and all others are lies. No. Waraqah teaches us that before the Qur'an descended, the Taurat and Injil were light. And one who reads that light with a clean heart will recognise the most perfect light when it comes. So let us not, O my brother, become a people large in body but narrow in heart. Be a people broad of chest, who know truth

from wherever it comes, just as Waraqah knew the *Namus* not from any teacher in Mecca, but from the book of Musa he had held for decades.

Third: Truth often comes in a form we do not expect, and it needs hearts already trained to receive it.

When Muhammad emerged from the Cave of Hira with a trembling body, no one recognised him. The people of Quraysh still slept. Their notables still dreamed of camels and trade. But Waraqah, in the dark corner of his house, rose at once. Why? Because his heart had long been prepared. Like a field ploughed and watered every night, so that when the seed fell, it sprang up immediately. Allah Ta'ala says: *And those who strive for Us — We will surely guide them to Our ways.* (Surah Al-'Ankabut: 69). O my brother, perhaps right now you are fighting a small struggle in a corner of your life: holding back from lies, from *riba*, from forbidden glances, holding your tongue from backbiting. Do not think your struggle wasted. That struggle is the plough preparing your heart's field. One day, when light comes in the form of a hard decision, a heavy trial, a call that demands you leave comfort behind, your trained heart will know it at once. It will say, as Waraqah said, "This is what I have awaited."

Fourth: Great men do not stand alone; they lean on the shoulders of those who seem small.

The Prophet Muhammad, *shallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, is a mountain. But that mountain rests on earth. Khadijah was the

earth that supported him at home. Waraqah was the earth that supported him with knowledge. Earth is not seen by people, not photographed, not made the subject of competition. But without earth, the mountain collapses. O my brother, do not despise your role if you are not the one at the front of the ranks. Perhaps you are only a mother teaching your child the Qur'an in the kitchen while the rice cooks. Perhaps you are only a father working as a washerman, but every riyal is lawful for your child's schooling. Perhaps you are only a shopkeeper at a street corner, but your smile is the only smile of Islam seen by a customer who arrives in despair. You are the Waraqahs of this age. You are the unseen supports. And before Allah, such supports are nobler than marble pillars displayed only to be seen. Our Prophet, *shallallahu 'alaihi wa sallam*, said: *"Whoever guides to good has a reward like the one who does it."* So Waraqah, in pointing the way, earned the reward of prophethood, which never descended into his own breast, but into the heart of Muhammad which he strengthened.

Fifth: Strangeness in the eyes of men is beauty in the eyes of Allah.

Waraqah was called strange. Waraqah was thought a mad old man. Waraqah was suspected of having become a Nasrani or a Yahudi. But what did he care? He was in dialogue with heaven, while those who mocked him were only in dialogue with dust. Allah Ta'ala says: *And thus We have made you a middle community, that you may be witnesses over mankind and the Messenger may be a witness over you.* (Surah Al-Baqarah:

143). O my brother, the middle community is not one that follows trends. Not a people in black robes today because black is popular, then green tomorrow because green is rising. No. The middle community stands upright while the world tilts left and right. It looks strange. It looks out of place. But that is the noblest position. If you are called old-fashioned because you still pray on time amid colleagues busy in meetings. If you are called strange because you refuse strong drink at a feast. If you are called radical because you say, "I want only Allah's way." Then smile. For it is Waraqah's smile that embraces you from across time.

Sixth: To die before seeing victory is not failure; it is a hidden blessing.

Waraqah died before the Prophet was expelled. He died before Madinah. He died before a single verse of the Qur'an resounded in the markets of Mecca. But Allah gave him death in a state of knowing truth. And is there anything better than that? Allah Ta'ala says: *O you who have believed, fear Allah as He should be feared, and do not die except while you are Muslims.* (Surah Ali 'Imran: 102). O my brother, not everyone is granted long life to see their children become *huffazh*, to see their mosque rise grand, to see their religion prevail. There are people who die on the road, in battle, in prison, in solitude, and the world calls them failures. But before Allah, they are fighters halted at heaven's gate before their feet could grow weary. Waraqah never saw Badr. He never saw Uhud. He never saw Mecca cleansed of idols. But he saw the face of the Prophet who

had just descended from heaven, and that was enough as the final miracle Allah gifted him before calling him home.

So let us, O my brother, who perhaps feel life is heavy, who perhaps feel our prayers have not yet been answered, who perhaps feel too old or too weak to see the good we planted bear fruit, take the lesson from Waraqah. Plant goodness with sincerity. Read scripture with pure intent. Stand behind truth even if you stand alone. And trust that even if you die before dawn, that dawn will come because of your prayer and your reading. You may not see it, but your name will live within it.

O my brother, this book is almost done. Waraqah's story we have folded like the mat after prayer is finished. But that fold is not the end. It is a beginning for you. Step out from these pages, and become a Waraqah in your own age. For this community does not lack eloquent speakers, nor the wealthy who give in charity, but it desperately lacks those willing to read scripture with a hungry heart, and able to say with full conviction when truth comes, "This is what Allah has sent down. This is the *Namus*. And I bear witness."

Wallahu a'lam.

Foreword

O my brother, the discerning reader.

Imagine a quiet night in the valley of Mecca, when stone idols still received worship and the blood of infant girls still seeped into earthen pits. An old man knelt on a worn mat. His lamp guttered. In his hands lay pages of scripture — not the writing of his own illiterate people, but words in a foreign tongue, softened on his tongue and in his heart across many years. His eyes had looked far to Yathrib, to Syam (Syria), to lands where scripture fell like rain. Yet his heart never knew rest. He sought the One God, as Ibrahim and Ismail had done before him. He was Waraqah bin Naufal. His story, from his birth in the lap of Quraysh to his death not long after he witnessed the last dawn of the age of darkness, is one we should keep in the brightest corner of our hearts.

Sometimes, O my brother, we read the history of the Prophet Muhammad, shallallahu ‘alaihi wa sallam (peace and blessings be upon him), as if that light burst suddenly over a dark sea. Not so. Allah, the Most Just and Most Merciful, never left this earth without guidance. Before Jibril descended to the Cave of Hira, hands had already cleared the path; hearts already waited. Among those who waited, Waraqah stood tallest. He was no prophet, nor messenger. He was only a *hanif* — a monotheist on the path of Ibrahim — a Muslim before Islam came by that name. But his soul was so pure that when Khadijah, that faithful wife and his own niece, brought the trembling man before him, he knew at once the voice of heaven. “This is the *Namus* (the

angelic messenger of revelation) that Allah sent down to Musa,” he said. That sentence, O my brother, was the rope between the old heaven and the new. And the story of how those words came from the mouth of a man already grown frail is the heart of the book you hold.

Insya Allah (God willing), in the journey we are about to take — twelve chapters and one closing — I will invite you to step behind the curtain of time. We will smell the dust of the Jahiliyyah (Age of Ignorance) roads thick with depravity, and meet the isolated *hanif*, those who rejected idols before the idols were shattered. We will stand before Waraqah’s house and hear him read the Taurat (Torah) and Injil (Gospel) in his halting Arabic, searching for the name “Ahmad” among worn lines. We will climb Jabal Nur, enter the Cave of Hira, and feel the cold of the night that changed the course of humankind. We will hear Khadijah’s trembling voice as she comforts her husband just come down from the mountain. And we will sit at Waraqah’s deathbed, witness his last tears, and ask: was he the first believer? Or had that station already been prepared for Abu Bakar, or for Khadijah herself?

All this is not for debate that hardens hearts, but to draw lessons. History without wisdom is like a corpse left unburied: the stench offends, but it yields nothing. I write not as an expert scratching footnotes, but as your brother in Islam, who sometimes is also blind in his own night. May the reading of Waraqah’s journey open that mirror a little, and may we see that truth is sought in blood and tears, not in self-interest and the

clamour of megaphones.

May Allah have mercy on Buya Hamka, who taught us that this religion must be written with a living soul. And may He also have mercy on Waraqah bin Naufal, whose eyes closed in Mecca, but whose name endures in every narration that speaks of the first light.

Let us begin the journey.

The Author *In a corner still touched by sunlight*

Closing

O my brother.

So we have reached the end of the journey. From the dark night in the valley of Mecca, we walked the trail of an old man who carried the fire of a *hanif* in his breast. We saw him bow his head before books his people did not know. We heard him say with a tremor, “This is the *Namus* sent down to Musa.” We witnessed his tears at the end of his years, then we debated in the councils of our hearts: was he the first believer? Yet in the end, all debate faded, as the lamp faded in his silent house. What remains is one name inscribed on the *lauh*: Waraqah bin Naufal, a reader of books who knew heaven before heaven spoke to the world.

Let this story not be merely one you read while fanning yourself, then forget as you turn the next page. No. Let it become a pen that writes something in your heart. Be like Waraqah: honest in seeking, steadfast in waiting, firm in acknowledging, and sincere in departing. For this world is full of those skilled in speech, but empty of those skilled in reading the signs of God. This world is crowded with those who chase rank, but deserted by those who chase truth into dark corners. And when you feel alone, when you feel strange amid a wrong crowd, when your tongue falters to speak truth, remember that once there was a blind old man who alone dared to tell the prophet just come down from the mountain, “I will stand behind you, though my people expel me.” If he could, why can you not?

Allahumma, O Allah who hears the whisper of hearts. You know this servant is not Buya Hamka, but only a pen trying to follow his footsteps. You know this book is full of flaws, of awkward words, of images that may miss their mark. But I beg You, accept its intention. Bestow on Waraqah bin Naufal Your overflowing mercy. Place him with the prophets he read about in quiet nights. And if any reader is moved by this story, make that stirring a seed of faith that grows until the day he meets You. O Allah, make us a community that does not merely read history, but writes history of goodness with our own hands. Make us people who know Your *Namus* not only from stories, but from the light that still descends into our breasts at every prostration. *Amin*, O Lord of the Worlds.

O my brother, is not history a mirror? In it you see faces that have gone, so you may correct your own face before you go. Let us meet again, whether in another book, or in a corner of life we both walk, or — God willing — on a day without shadow, beside the pool of the prophets, where we can ask Waraqah directly, “What did you feel when you first saw the Prophet’s face?” And he will smile, as he smiled on his deathbed then, and say, “Feel it yourself. For that light cannot be told with the tongue. It can only be felt with a heart that has waited.”

That is all from this servant. *Maa as-salamah*.

The Author *Under the same sky, from Adam until today*

Waraqah bin Naufal — Witness of Truth in the Darkness

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