



JAAMIA ZAINAB

# CHOICES

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AmaturRahman Muhammad







The scene was somewhat strange. A rarely used path winded between towering willow trees. It looked lonely and forbidding. Aside from the path, the landscape was picturesque. It appeared almost unreal in its beauty. Roses bloomed in clusters, the golden sunlight highlighting their vivid red color. Butterflies flitted aimlessly between flowers, their wings painted bright. A river gushed somewhere in the background, its melodic gurgle adding magic to the scene. A low honeyed tune floated with the breeze. An instrument rang out somewhere further down the hill. A guitar, perhaps? Breathily laughter wafted through the air, the sound oozing joy.





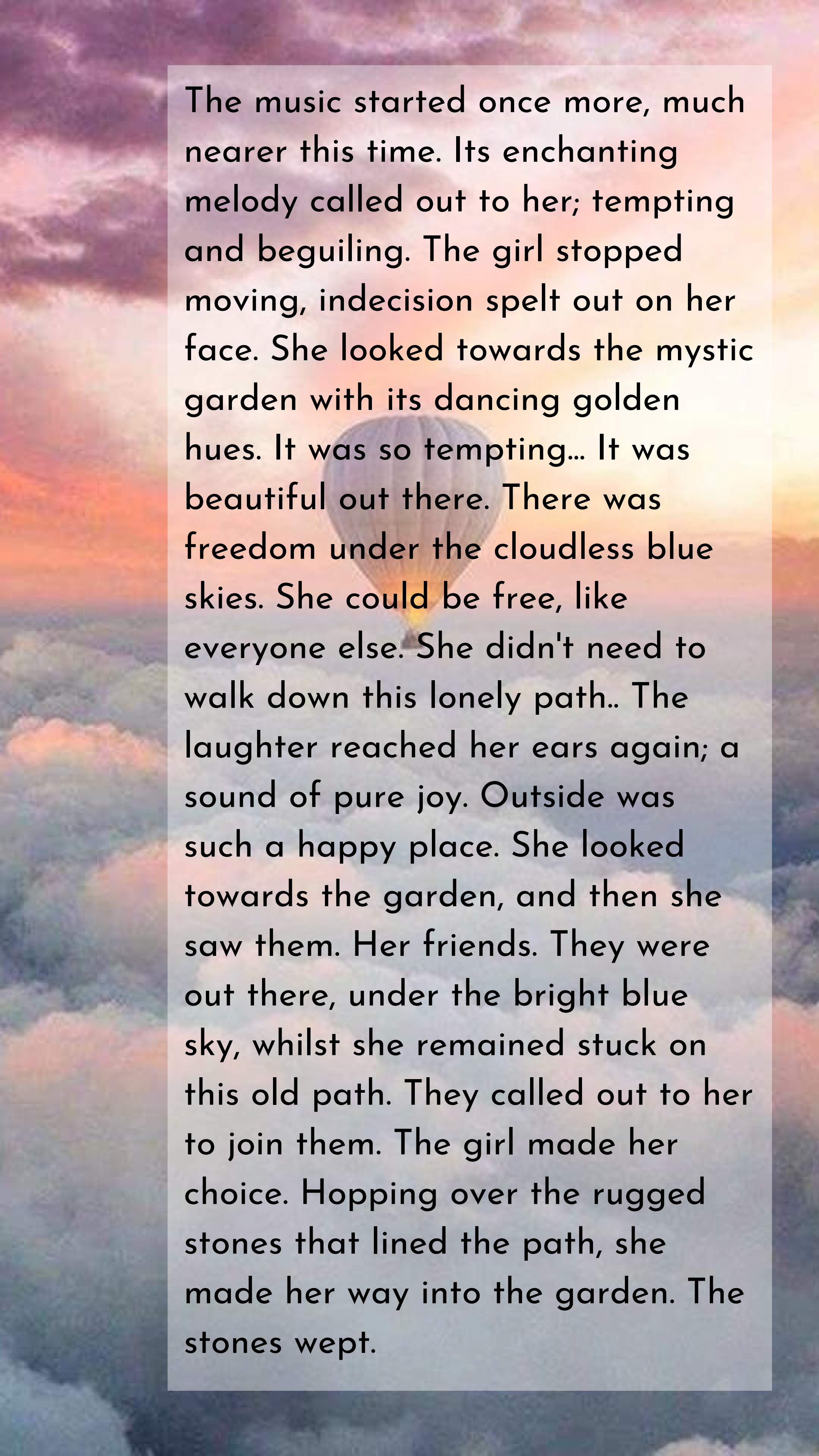
The path looked almost ridiculous in this ambiance. It stood glaring obvious against the sunny backdrop; strange and forbidding. At its edge, stood a girl. At first glance, she was almost imperceivable. Her still form effortlessly blending in with the grey sand. A lonely pair of footprints marked a worn out trail down the path. It was a path for strangers; for outcasts. The girl shivered slightly, her arms wrapped around her torso. The golden sunlight beckoned her to leave the dreary path. More laughter echoed across the hillside. Wouldn't she join in their delight? She stood unsure, her feet inching away from the strange road. And yet, she knew it was wrong. She knew this road. This lonely path with its worn out footprints was part of her.

Could she do it?

Could she make the choice that would alienate her from the golden world beyond?

Could she make it down this curious path, with its twists and turns?



A hot air balloon is visible in the background, floating in a sky with a sunset or sunrise background. The balloon is positioned in the center of the image, and the sky transitions from a warm orange and yellow at the top to a cooler blue and purple at the bottom. The text is overlaid on this background.

The music started once more, much nearer this time. Its enchanting melody called out to her; tempting and beguiling. The girl stopped moving, indecision spelt out on her face. She looked towards the mystic garden with its dancing golden hues. It was so tempting.. It was beautiful out there. There was freedom under the cloudless blue skies. She could be free, like everyone else. She didn't need to walk down this lonely path.. The laughter reached her ears again; a sound of pure joy. Outside was such a happy place. She looked towards the garden, and then she saw them. Her friends. They were out there, under the bright blue sky, whilst she remained stuck on this old path. They called out to her to join them. The girl made her choice. Hopping over the rugged stones that lined the path, she made her way into the garden. The stones wept.



That girl could be every one of us. Me. You. Your next door neighbor. Each one of us has been give a choice in our life. To choose between this lonely path, and the golden world beyond. To choose between fitting in and standing out. To choose between the creation and Creator. Encapsulated beautifully in the timeless words of the Qur'an:

**"We showed him (man) the path; to be either grateful or ungrateful."**

**- Al Insan: 3**

In our modern 21st century world, the dazzling garden is a representation of the temptations we face in our lives. We all have 'gardens' that tempt us daily, and they come in various forms and shapes. At times, our garden comes in the form of music. When you're breezing through the mall and suddenly your fav song comes blaring over the speakers. That's your garden right there. Will you walk in to the trap, or will you stand firm? Sometimes it comes as a friend request from the guy you've been crushing on for eternity. Sometimes it comes in the form of our best friends. When you're trying so hard to change and your friends keep pulling you back to your old habits. In that moment, you are forced to choose between your Deen and your friends.



The question is, what will you choose? Will you opt to go with the flow? Will you let yourself be dazzled by the temporal glitter of the world? Or will you have the strength to be different, to stand out?

Remember, it is easy to fit in. There is no challenge in following the dictates of our modern world. There is no bravery required in listening to music and dressing to the nines. True strength and fortitude lies in standing out; in refusing to bow down to the pressure of society. Resilience lies in reflecting the light of Imaan in a world of darkness. Courage lies in choosing Deen over Dunya.

Let us all take a moment to review the choices we've made so far in our lives. How often have we been beguiled into the tempting gardens of dunya? How many times have we left our path to chase the mundane things of this world? How many times have we preferred the creation to the Creator? The stark reality of the matter is that anytime you choose

Allah ﷻ over anything else of this world, He ﷻ will replace you with something you did not fathom having. However, if you choose the transitory glamor of this world over His pleasure and commands, then rest assured, you will find no replacement in the universe for Him.





Beautifully expressed in the Arabic language:

لكل شيء اذا فارقتة عوض  
..وليس لله ان فارقتة من عوض

*"For everything that you lose, you can find a replacement*

*However, there is no replacement if you lose Allah."*

When Yusuf AS chose the pleasure of Allah ﷻ over a woman, Allah ﷻ compensated him with rulership over the kingdom of Egypt. When the Sahaba <sup>رضي</sup> preferred to leave their wealth and homeland for the sake of their Rabb, He ﷻ awarded them with dominion over the world.

Try it today. Choose your Rabb.

Choose Him over your favourite song.

Choose Him over social media.

Choose Him over your friends.

Choose Him over the desires of your Nafs.

Choose Allah  over the entire world, and you will witness your wings soar to heaven.

Has the time not come for those who have Imaan, that their hearts should become humbly submissive to the remembrance of Allah?"

- Al Hadid