

Hane

Made Her Final Decision



Author: Mofaq Arif Loni

Illustration: Roza Zana

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A Story for Young People
2024

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Sitting in a corner of the school courtyard, Hane feels disheartened. She's bored and sad. She doesn't care for school, her lessons, and the new school year which started just a few days ago. Her classmates and other students in the courtyard are busy playing games, sport and chatting, but Hane feels hopeless and miserable. Hane feels disoriented because last year she was careless and failed 8th grade. She spent most of her time playing computer games and chatting on social media. Still, she told her family that she progressed to the 9th grade.

Hane's parents did not have the time or energy to take care of her; her mother was busy with housework and caring for Hane's brother, who has a disability; and her father is a busy architect at a property firm, providing financially for his family. Hane took advantage of the lack of attention and instead of studying and doing her homework, she turned her attention to games and social media. Now, Hane is paying the price. Even when she tries to focus or work toward a new goal, her thoughts go in all directions. She feels like she is in a vortex, consumed by uncertainty and anxiety.



Suddenly, the bell rings and students slowly move toward their classes, except Hane. She feels hopeless and stuck. She feels like it's her own fault that she is in this situation, but she has lost all her strength. Hane looks worried and devastated. Hazhha and Khanda, two of Hane's new classmates, quietly approach her and try to convince her to go with them; setting aside her shyness and fear. Hane is not convinced by their advice. She distances herself somewhat angrily, and insists on remaining alone. But the two girls don't give up. They continue pushing her to accompany them to the class. "Even if a person has failed, this doesn't mean that they should feel like it's the end of the world and lose all hope. It is better to learn a lesson from it and continue trying," exclaims Hazha. Hane was fed up with this trite advice. If they had not been new acquaintances, Hane would have mocked them and laughed at their advice; but she contained herself and asked them to leave her alone. Khanda could feel how upset Hane was, and insisted that she forget the past, not lose hope, and start a new chapter. The two girls did their best to be good new friends. Wanting to show that they care, they consoled her and encouraged her to quit having such a negative attitude. "Please, why don't you leave me alone? Whatever I do has nothing to do with you," Hane blurted out at them. Disheartened, the two girls left for class. On their way, they decided to talk to their student counselor, Ms. Sara, before the situation could get any worse.



After they left, Hane snuck out through a backdoor so that the principal nor any of the teachers would notice. She headed to the nearest café. There, she met her friend Shada, who was drinking coffee while talking with one of her friends. “Why are you late? I have been waiting for you,” Shada rebuked. “I attended one lesson which was boring, so during the break I occupied myself and didn’t go to the second lesson. But in the second break, two teachers appeared and blocked my way,” explained Hane as she laughed. Shada thought her response was strange. Hane told them the story of her two new classmates who had tried to convince her to attend the class. “Welcome to the school truants group! This is my friend Dler,” stated Shada with glee.

Hane did not have any friends that were boys so she thought it was strange that Shada seemed so nonchalant. She became even more worried and frightened when she realized that Dler was not Shada’s acquaintance or relative, but that she knew him from social media. She did not know how to feel, but continued talking to them nonetheless. After a while, Hane started to see how sneaky and arrogant Dler was. She became apprehensive; she hated that he was so full of himself. Hane refused to drink anything, making the excuse that she needed to leave and pick up some fruit or she would get home too late.



Today was not one of Hane's happiest days. She began overthinking. Shada's inappropriate behavior and Dler's arrogance confused and concerned her. She tried to think through the situation in her mind. "How come Shada so quickly trusts this guy who is clearly stuck up and is older than her? How can she date him without her family's knowledge?" These and other questions made her feel really confused, and like her mind was going in circles.

When Hane reached home, her father, sister, and younger brother were sitting around the table. Her mother came in from the kitchen carrying a pot and told them that lunch was ready. "What is this? The delicious Biryani again?" Hane said mockingly. She would have preferred to order food from a restaurant, but started eating anyway.



Hane's father could sense that his daughter was annoyed about something. He sympathized with his daughter's sadness and distress, but he thought that what she was feeling was perhaps due to her studies. "She will get accustomed to it very soon and things will return to normal," her father told himself.

Suddenly, somebody knocked at the door. Hane's younger sister answered it and returned quickly, telling Hane that her two friends were waiting for her outside. Hane's mother wanted to welcome them in but Hane immediately stood up and told her mother that she will take care of it. She panicked. When she saw Khanda and Hazha, she welcomed them, but when she realized that they had talked with Ms. Sara and that she had told them to visit Hane at home and talk with Hane's mother about her truancy, Hane blocked their way. She quickly came up with an excuse, saying that she had returned home earlier to help her aunt who had given birth, and that she had had to help her because her own mother had a backache. The two girls congratulated her and prayed for the quick recovery of her mother. They again encouraged her to not stop her studies, and said they were ready to offer any kind of help she needed. Hane thanked them and bid them farewell. When she went back inside, her mother was busy collecting the dirty dishes while her father prepared himself to go back to work. For fear of them asking too many questions, she said, "The two girls are my new classmates. They have recently moved to this street. They offered that I commute with them in their rented bus, but I refused and told them that the school is close by and that I could walk instead." Her father quickly replied, "My dear! In order for you not to be very tired, I will hire you a taxi or I will ask my own driver to help you." Hane remained silent.



Later that night, Hane's father was sitting in his armchair drinking tea and watching TV, occasionally smiling to himself. Her mother was pouring them tea, focused slightly on the TV. Her sister and brother were busy doing their homework, and the baby was lying and gurgling in its swing. Hane sat in a corner and chatted with Shada and her other friends. She demanded that Shada give an explanation regarding her new friend Dler. Shada said that even though he is a little bit arrogant, he is a good boy and a faithful friend, and encouraged Hane to find a boyfriend because she's not a little girl anymore. Hane refused to talk about the subject and told Shada that she does not think about this stuff. Then, Shada, trying not to put her under pressure, suggested that they go out together the following afternoon. Hane declined, saying that she would never be allowed to go out at that time, but after some persuasion, they decide to go out in the morning instead. To make her parents believe that she is at school, Hane turns to her father and said, "My dear father! My classmates just told me that tomorrow our classes will go on a scientific visit to the museum, and therefore, the headmaster said that we do not have to wear school uniform." Her mother, becoming suspicious interjects, "It is the beginning of the new school year. What kind of scientific visit is this? Why don't you go in your uniforms?" Despite this, Hane's father consents and gives her some money too, "I hope you enjoy the visit and take good care of yourselves." Hane takes the money and kisses her father, "I love you, dad!"

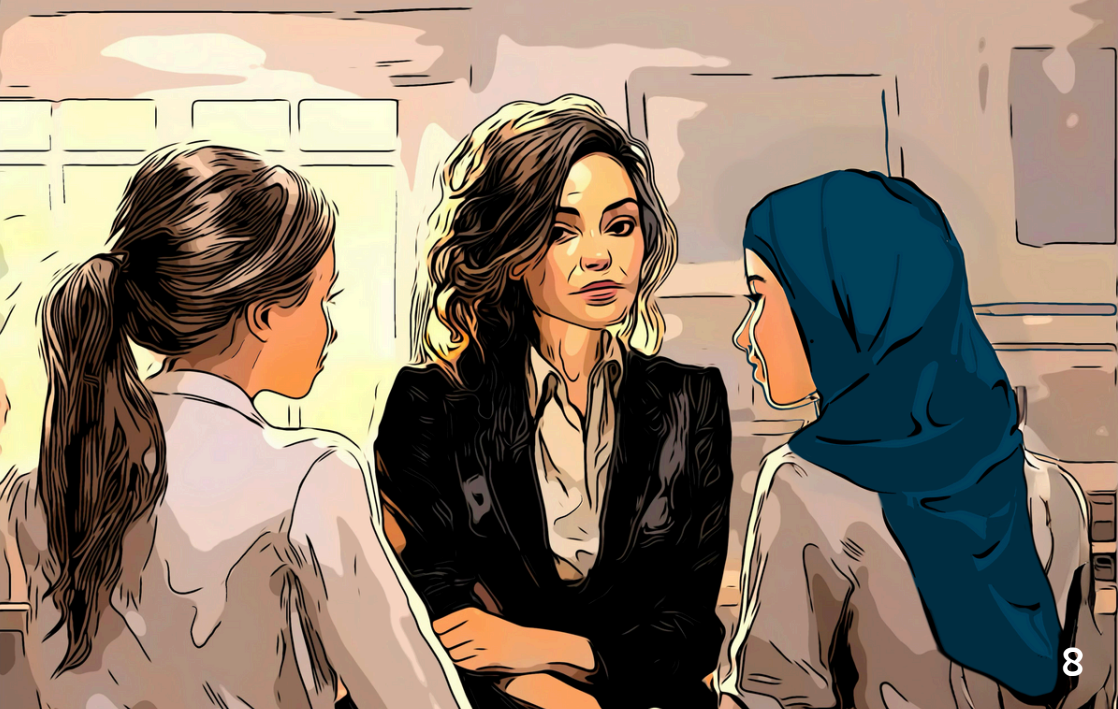


After all the children are in bed, Hane's mother, concerned, tells her husband that Hane is not the same child that she used to be. She pleads with him not to pamper her to the point of her losing control. Hane's father smiles, "A child at any age needs the attention of their parents." But Hane's mother interrupts, "At her age, she is in need of advice and to be closely watched, which we haven't been doing." Hane's father is confident and assures his wife, "When we were her age, we were deprived of many things. Let her live for herself. I believe that confidence is important to help her find her own personality."



The science teacher takes the class's attendance, and then gives some information about the new equipment for the lesson. The class representative tells the teacher that Chro is sick and Hane is absent. "Hane attends the lessons as she pleases," says one of the students sarcastically. "She is still in bed," adds another. A wave of laughter compels Khanda to say something, "No, it is not like that. Why do you assume things that are not true?" She walks to the teacher and whispers to him, "Dear teacher, yesterday I and Hazha visited her at home. She told us that her aunt has given birth and Hane must stay home and help her." The teacher praises them, "Then it would be a good idea for either her mother or father to come to school and officially submit a leave request on her behalf."

The teacher starts to present the lesson. He talks about the internet and social media, stressing that if they are used correctly, they can be helpful and enriching in various aspects of our lives, including science and education. After the lesson ends, the two girls go to the school counselor, Ms. Sara, to give her an account of Hane's situation, asking her to not mark her absent. But she refuses, "You are two clever and faithful students. I believe what you are saying, but Hane is a student here; it is better for her to come back to her studies. As for the leave request, a member of her family should come and ask for it. I thank you for your sympathy." Khanda and Hazha decide that it would be best to convey this message to Hane's mother so that Hane will not miss many more of her classes.



Shada and her friends were sitting in a café, cheerfully talking. Hane did not go to school. Upset, she approaches them. Dier and Shada greet her and introduce her to the rest of the group. She sits on a chair beside a boy. He is older than her and his name is Shamal. She is not delighted at all and stares coyly at the group. Some of them smoke cigarettes or windpipes. They converse freely and some of them exchange messages on their mobile phones or watch films. The atmosphere is quite unfamiliar to Hane. She feels as if she is sitting on sharp thorns. “What is this! You are shy and a loner. There is no need to be...you are one of us from now on, and you are a respectful and a dear friend of ours,” says Shamal, startling Hane. This helps her to relax a bit. “Thank you very much, I see you as an older brother,” she replies. Shamal smiles, “Why shouldn’t we be friends instead.” At this, Shada quickly interjects, talking about the beauty and holiness of friendship as if they are a bunch of very loyal, dear and trustworthy individuals who Hane does not need to hesitate to be shy around. Shamal, no longer feeling the need to hold back, began talking pompously and trying to deceive Hane in order to get closer to her and get her phone number and social media. Hane declined the request. She remained quiet and kept her distance. When she realized that he would not leave her alone or stop trying to bother her, she changed her place, moving beside Shada. “What is this!?! He is very bothersome, rude and cheeky. You told me we would go to a nice place. This is not a nice place at all!” Hane exclaims.



Shada tries to calm her down. She promises that soon they would go to the nearest park and take a break.

On the pretext of Hane being sick, the two girls excuse themselves and leave the café. On the way to the park, Hane reprimands Shada saying that these kinds of boys will create problems for them, “Having connections with them is not compatible with our manners and traditions,” Hane states. She suggests that it would be better to distance themselves from such people. Shada, on the other hand, held a different perspective, “I have great confidence in Dler and I trust him. If you knew Shamal better, you would change your idea of him. He is a close friend to Dler. If he wasn’t a nice person, Dler would not introduce him to us.” Along the way, in the park, and long into lunchtime, they continued arguing with one another. Neither of them succeeded in changing the other’s position.





Hane's mother was on maternity leave. In addition to doing her chores and helping her son, she, on a daily basis, made herself busy with reading, taking care of the garden, flowers, and potted plants. Like any other mother, deep in her heart, she hoped her children would become successful in their lives; be lucky and enjoy a bright future. As Hane's father only had a very short lunch break, her mother started to prepare a delicious meal and waited for everyone to arrive home.

Hane arrived before everyone else. She was distraught, confused and tired. She greeted her mother, and after changing her clothes, she was asked to help lay the table. "Dear mother! You can start without me. I will eat my lunch later," said Hane excusing herself. She was feeling exhausted and she wanted to rest a little. As she moved towards the bed to lay down, her thoughts engulfed her. She was depressed and heartbroken. "What am I doing? I am about to be drowned in mistakes and lies. Now I should have come back from school, not from truancy and self-indulgence. I have lost a year because of my own negligence and bad friends. Oh God! What shall I do?" she said to herself, almost crying.

Later in the evening, before her father returned home, Hane's mother was in the garden with the other children. Hane emerged from her bedroom and into the hall, where she sat on the sofa, downhearted. She picked up her mobile and saw that she had many messages from Shada, angry at her for not replying. "I am sorry. Believe me I was so exhausted coming home. I am not even aware of where I am," she replies. She added that she cannot be online at night because she gets headaches and needs some rest. But Shada, not satisfied, tells Hane this is not good enough because Shamal wanted to check up on her on social media. Hearing this, Hane becomes furious. "This is not OK. I do not approve of you giving my personal information to anyone. I will not talk to you anymore or be your friend any longer." At that moment, her mother enters the room.





After asking about her health, she asks Hane to show her photos from the day's visit to the museum. For a second, Hane is confused. She tells her mother that the staff of the museum did not allow anyone to take photos. Hungry and having evaded her mother's request, Hane heads to the kitchen to find something to eat. Hane feels like she is about to completely lose control. If she continues behaving in the same manner, she will have to find a new strategy each day to continue carrying on with her annoying friends. She will probably also face other difficulties as a result and finally she will drown in her serious miscalculations. So, how will she confront her parents and how will she save herself from these troubles? No more. Not any longer! Hane decides that she should re-evaluate her strategy and try to make better decisions in future. But this will not be easy. It requires strength and daring. Eventually, she will be able to enjoy peace of mind and regain other people's confidence in her. In this moment, Hane is anxious, worried, and deeply saddened.

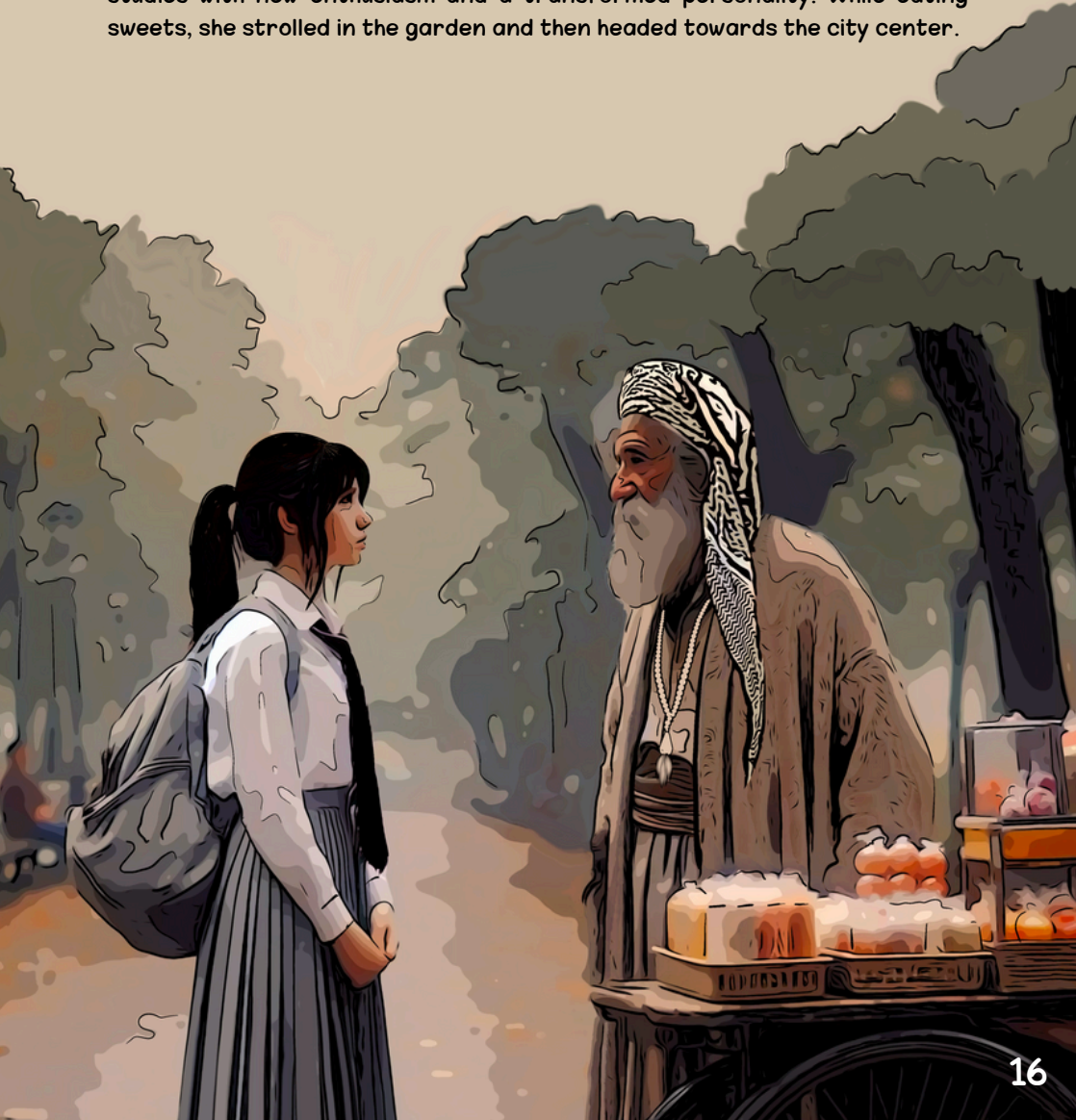
Hane's father is a busy architect. He is an honest and faithful employee with his company and is currently supervising a few construction projects. He is well-liked by everyone because of his calm attitude. Like any other day, this morning he is busy with his work.



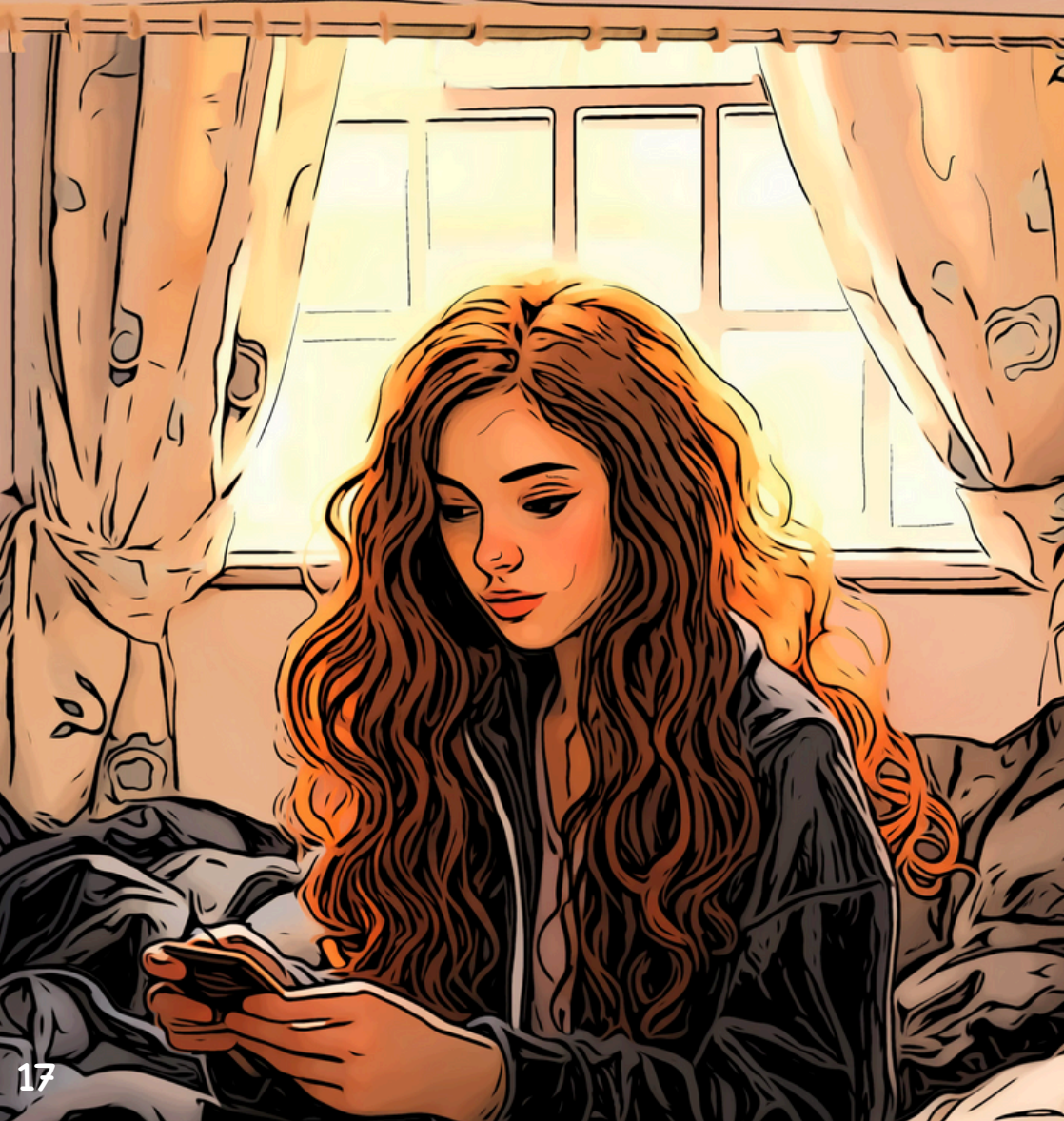
Hane is in her school uniform, in a garden near her school. She is sitting alone on a chair. She is sad and drowning in her thoughts. Again, she has lied to her mother, telling her that she was on her way to school. She has become used to her loneliness and reclusiveness. For some time now, Hane has known that she is in need of a professional psychologist to help her work through her anxiety and psychological dilemmas. "No, I am not sick. This is a temporary condition that will vanish soon," she suddenly exclaims. Hane has preferred not to let anyone know about her challenges. She wanted to be strong and be able to overcome them. But she doesn't know how or what to do. Inside, she is suffering from conflicting emotions. What is best to do? Should she go back to school to continue her studies and succeed in order not to destroy her own future? By doing this will she also regain the confidence of her lovely and compassionate parents? Or should she continue as she has been doing up until now?



“New and hot sweets.” Rings the voice of a street vendor peddling sweets. He was an old man pushing a carriage. Hane buys some sweets from him. “My dear girl, why aren’t you at school? Or...” says the old man, after thanking her. To avoid his questions, Hane told him that she was waiting for her mother to arrive so that they could go together to the bazaar and buy some school equipment. The old man was delighted with her response. “I earn my family’s living in this way so that my sons and daughters continue their studies.” He wished her good-luck and resumed his work. Hane felt calmed by his sweet words. She felt motivated to try and overcome her obstacles, and once home, to tell her parents the truth. Tomorrow she will go back to her studies with new enthusiasm and a transformed personality. While eating sweets, she strolled in the garden and then headed towards the city center.



It is almost noon. Shada is still in bed. She is sleepy, her mobile phone in hand. She has told her parents that their school is being renovated and lessons haven't started yet. "I would like to know why this timid and fearful girl has not been online since yesterday. Why doesn't she answer my messages?" she thinks to herself. Shada tries many times to phone her but the line is dead. From the kitchen, Shada's mother calls out, "My dear child, now it is noon, haven't you had enough sleep? Please wake up and come and help me." Shada is startled and she quickly sends a voice message on her phone. "My mother is calling me, wait and I will be with you again soon." Reluctantly and slowly, she gets out of her bed and exits the room.



Hane's father was busy talking to one of the plaster masons at work, when a worker on the upper floor was cleaning. Without checking for people below, the worker threw down a wheelbarrow full of broken cement and bricks. Hane's father quickly pushed the mason aside to safety, but some pieces of the discarded material hit him on the arm and thigh. Hane's father fell to the ground screaming. His assistants hurried to help him. They sent for the company's emergency team and he was taken to the emergency hospital immediately.



Hane's mother welcomed Hazha and Khanda into the courtyard. It was lunchtime and the table was laid. "Thank you very much, I hope we do not make the matter worse because we know that you already have guests in the house," says Khanda. Hane's mother corrects them; there are no guests, she is waiting for Hane and her father to return. She is bewildered that the girls arrived ahead of Hane. An odd circumstance; neither Hane's mother nor the girls understand each other. Then Hazha quietly tells Hane's mother the reason for their visit, and Khanda conveys Ms. Sara's message to her. Hane's mother begins to cry. Tears roll down her face incessantly. Weeping, she cannot utter a word. In order not to disparage her daughter in front of these girls, Hane's mother keeps her response deep in her heart, thinking "Hane, how could you succeed in hiding all this without us noticing this?" Out of sorrow, she could only clasp her hands and weep. Hazha and Khanda are astonished. They do not understand what is the matter.

Right at this sensitive moment, Hane, who has now decided to change her life and correct her past mistakes, opens the door happily. But instantly she is shocked to behold the scene in front of her. She hesitates about whether to welcome her friends or hug her dejected mother, put her hands on her chest, tell her the truth and apologize. The situation looked like a clip from a film. None of them utters a word. Flabbergasted, they all stare at each other. This continues for some time until her mother's phone rings and startles them. With her mother unable to answer it, Hane responds, "Go ahead please. My mother is busy for now, I am her daughter. Go ahead please, what? Which hospital? What?" She screams and shrieks, startling everyone.



Arriving at the hospital, Hane and her mother see that the doctors and staff had done everything necessary for her father. The doctors required him to stay at the hospital in order to monitor his broken leg and other injuries. That night her uncle watched him. Hane's father wasn't able to sleep due to the pain.

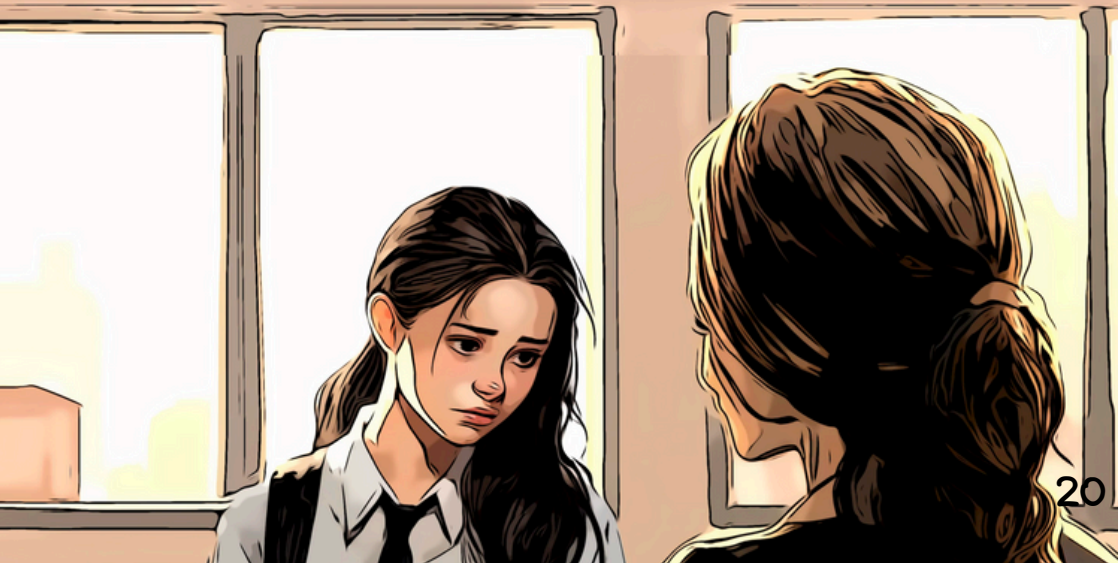
Back at home, eyes filled with tears, Hane told her mother the truth about everything, expressing her regret. "Please do not hide anything from us," her mother said softly. "My dear mother, I apologize for everything. From now on, I will not tell you lies," Hane replied. Hane's mother comforted her and reminded her that honest people are always happy and fortunate. They embraced each other, crying.

Hane couldn't sleep that night, but even with low spirits, Hane headed to school the next morning. Without hesitation, she went to see Ms. Sara. She bravely explained everything about the latest events and apologized for her lies and mistakes. Hane told Ms. Sara of her father's condition as well.

Hane now felt at ease. Ms. Sara, with motherly instinct, opened her arms tenderly, hugging Hane and wiping her tears. "My loving daughter! We all make mistakes. The most important thing is that we learn something from them," shared Ms. Sara. She thanked Hane for her daring and candid attitude and wished her father a speedy recovery. Ms. Sara asked Hane not to neglect her studies.

Hane decided that from now on, she will be honest and truthful and try to take constructive steps forward. With a serene and calm mind, she walked to class. She thanked her classmates, especially Hazha and Khanda, who had been true and faithful friends.

Enquiring about the situation at home, Ms. Sara contacted Hane's mother. She asked her to be kind to Hane, sharing that she regretted her actions and had promised not to repeat her mistakes again.



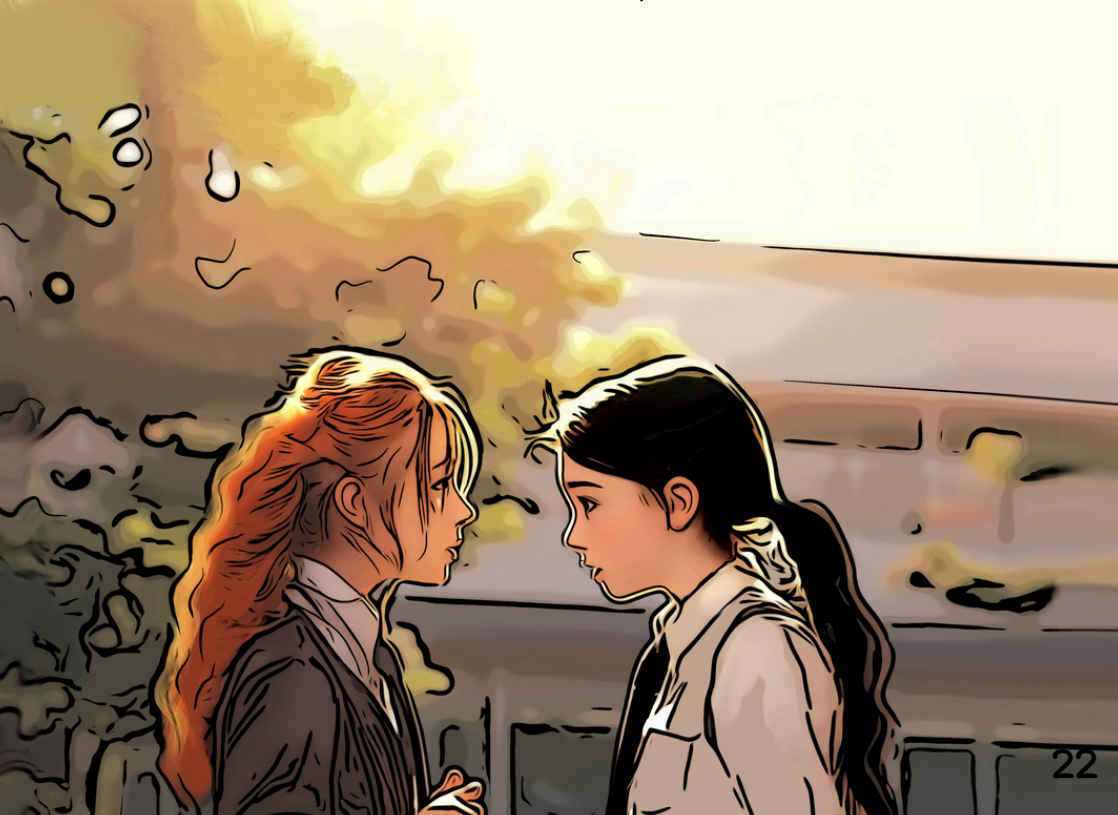
Sadly, Hane's friend Shada continued enjoying her unhealthy lifestyle, unaware of what had happened to Hane. Her suspicious relations with Dier, Shamal, and others also progressed.

A week later, in a break between lessons, Hazha and Khanda helped Hane to review the subjects and materials she had missed. Hane felt more at ease now. Serenity shined on her face. Her father's condition had improved and he was stable. The presence of her two new, true, and faithful friends, and the respect and cooperation of Ms. Sara, together with her loyal and dedicated teachers, made Hane tremendously happy. When their break ended, they continue walking towards their classroom. "Hane! Hane!" Hane recognizes the voice. She turns around and sees Shada. She is desolate, devastated, and with discolored features. When Hane sees her in this stunned condition, she gives her a hug. On their way, they talk, reproaching one another. Hane realizes that Shada is in great trouble. They decide that after the next lesson, they will go back home and talk about their friendship.

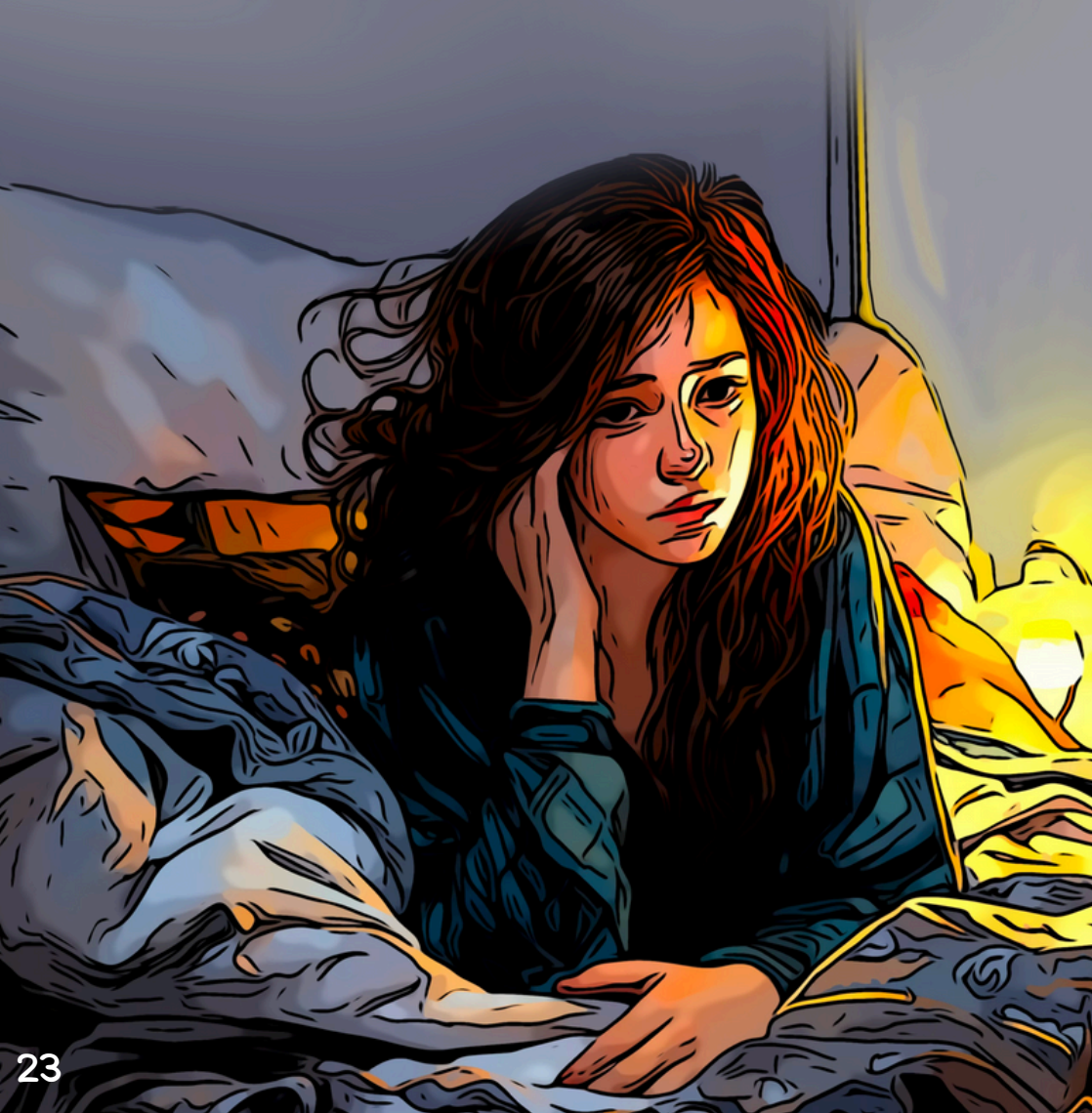


Heading home, Hane tells Shada about her wishes and reprimands her. She tells her the news about her father. Shada sympathizes with her and lets Hane know about her own grievances and misfortunes. Despite all the trust she had in Dler and his friends, they have exploited her naivety. They have, using fake accounts and identities, threatened to publish her private photos if she does not send them money and meet their other inappropriate demands.

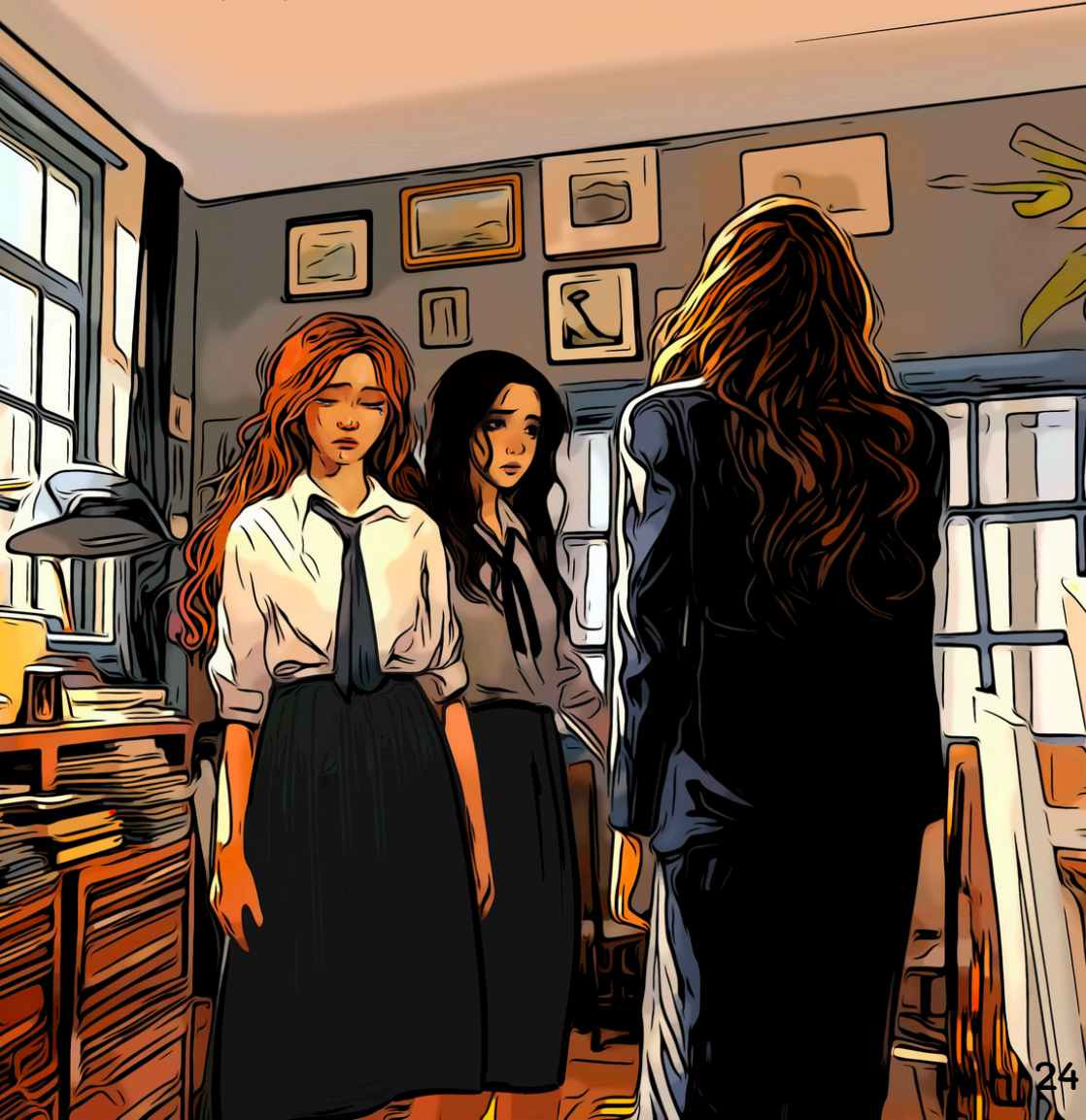
Hane is shocked. She wondered how Shada could so easily believe and trust such deceptive people and send them her private photos. "What shall I do? Sometimes you only see one side of events. I thought they were the most trustworthy of friends," Shada sobs. "No, we should never simply believe and trust someone who is unfamiliar to us, especially those we meet on social networks," states Hane. Nearing her home, Hane asks Shada to be strong and steadfast and to wipe her tears. They enter, eat lunch, and then leave to visit her father in the hospital. The two girls agree on a plan to discuss the matter with Ms. Sara in the morning and find a solution. Ms. Sara is well acquainted with such problems and often tells her students, "If you have any difficulty or disagreements, truthfully and without any doubt, come and inform me. I will assist and support you." Even though Shada disagrees, because she doesn't want anyone to know about her secrets, Hane persuades her that in such cases, trustworthy people must be consulted.



During the night, Shada tries to approach her dilemma from different angles. She has lost her peace of mind. She couldn't close her teary eyes, not even for a second. She felt as if she was cornered in a prison cell. Everything around her had turned into a nightmare. If she accepts their demands, she will have to sell the gold necklace her mother gifted her last year. If she meets their inappropriate requests, involving improper acts, then her name will be tarnished and her family's reputation destroyed. But if she refuses, they won't give up easily, and things will not end well. Oh God! What should she do? All this pessimism preoccupies her mind. She cannot see any light at the end of the tunnel. Shada seems unaware that her faith will help her, and that every problem has its own solution.



In the morning, Shada's eyes are bloodshot. Although things appeared hopeless, they headed directly to see Ms. Sara. Crying and embarrassed, Shada retold everything. Ms. Sara, with her positive disposition and kind understanding, promised that the solution was straightforward. "There is no need for all this crying. To begin with, try to keep quiet and do not give in to their threats. Please, do not tell anybody about this matter. If you trust me, then the problem will be solved without any damages," she promised the girls. Almost immediately, Ms. Sara, with some help from the principal, began legal proceedings. She handed over copies of the messages and the suspected account details to the police. With the help of new and advanced technology, they were able to find the suspects.



With the passage of time, many things tend to change. Even in hard times, Hane did not abandon her friend. She continued helping, comforting, and supporting her in her studies. She also helped her distance herself from computer games and her useless friends. Every day, after doing her homework, Hane assisted her mother with house chores. Her father was getting physical therapy and daily training in the hospital, and day after day, his health improved. During first term exams, the four new friends were always together. They studied their lectures and worked through difficult subjects together.

The principal and Ms. Sara, shouldered the responsibility of Shada's case. They were cooperating with special police units to find clues that would help identify criminals and eventually stop them from exploiting others online.

Today, after the last exam, the principal sent for Hane and Shada. While they were on their way to her office, many questions crossed their minds. "What have they done to be called to the principal? Have they been unsuccessful in their exams? Were their answers inadequate? Or? Or?"



Quite worried and very anxious they entered the office. Seeing Ms. Sara, they regained their calm. The principal, smiling, asked them, "Girls! Do not be perplexed. Please sit down." She recounted the legal proceedings, and how they were able to find the guilty individuals. "G. H" was a person who had many fake accounts. Dler and Shamal were also deceived and victimized by this criminal. Now the three criminals are arrested and later will be put on trial. Shada could not contain herself and began crying because of the happy news. The girls thanked the principal and Ms. Sara and they, in turn, opened their loving arms for the girls. "I am sure that you have learned a lesson from these missteps. I believe in you and trust that you will not repeat the same mistakes again. Remember that this is something that is very serious," said the principal. She reminded them of the many advantages of communication technology, the internet, and social networks. She said that if used correctly, they can make life easier, including science and education.



As they left, they inhaled a breath of happiness and gratification. Shada felt as if she had been rescued from drowning deep at sea. As if something very heavy had been lifted off her shoulders, and with genuine gratitude, she embraced Hane. Together they shed tears of happiness.

Hane, now excessively happy, headed home. From a distance, she observed an unusual crowd in front of their house. "What has happened? I hope God will not spoil this happiness," she thought. She moved quickly. Her younger sister, somewhat distracted, stood in front of her. "My beloved sister Hane! Our father has left the hospital." What great news. She hugged and kissed her sister. Approaching the house, she bid the guests farewell. They had come to welcome her father home. Hane hurried inside. When she saw her father, she could hardly restrain herself. She began loudly crying and held her father tight. "My lovely daughter! Please do not cry. I feel good. Soon, I will be on my feet again." Hane's mother and uncle comforted her.



Life and joy returned to the family on this day. At a beautifully laid table, they ate a very delicious meal together.

Hane, now a more truthful girl, expressed her well-wishes and gratitude for her faithful friends. They became her teachers and guides. They were the main reason for her not abandoning the right path in life, or drowning in the murky waters of her bad judgment or personal mistakes.



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