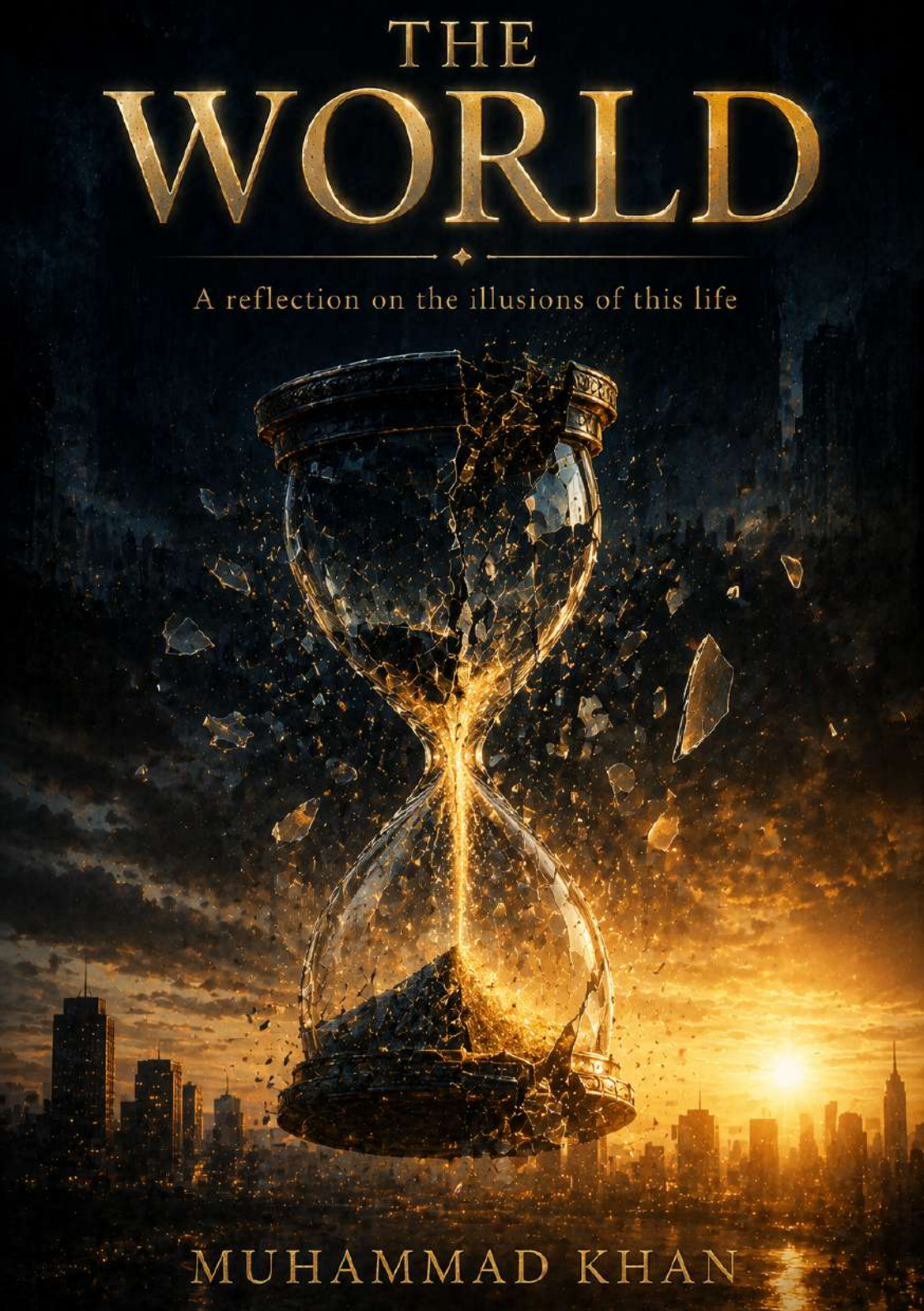
THE WORLD

A reflection on the illusions of this life



MUHAMMAD KHAN

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PREFACE

The purpose of this book is not to hurt anyone’s feelings, but rather to shed light on the bitter realities of this world — truths that we often ignore or brush aside in jest. It is my sincere hope that by reading these pages, you will find the inspiration to reflect upon and reform your own life.

In shā’ Allāh.

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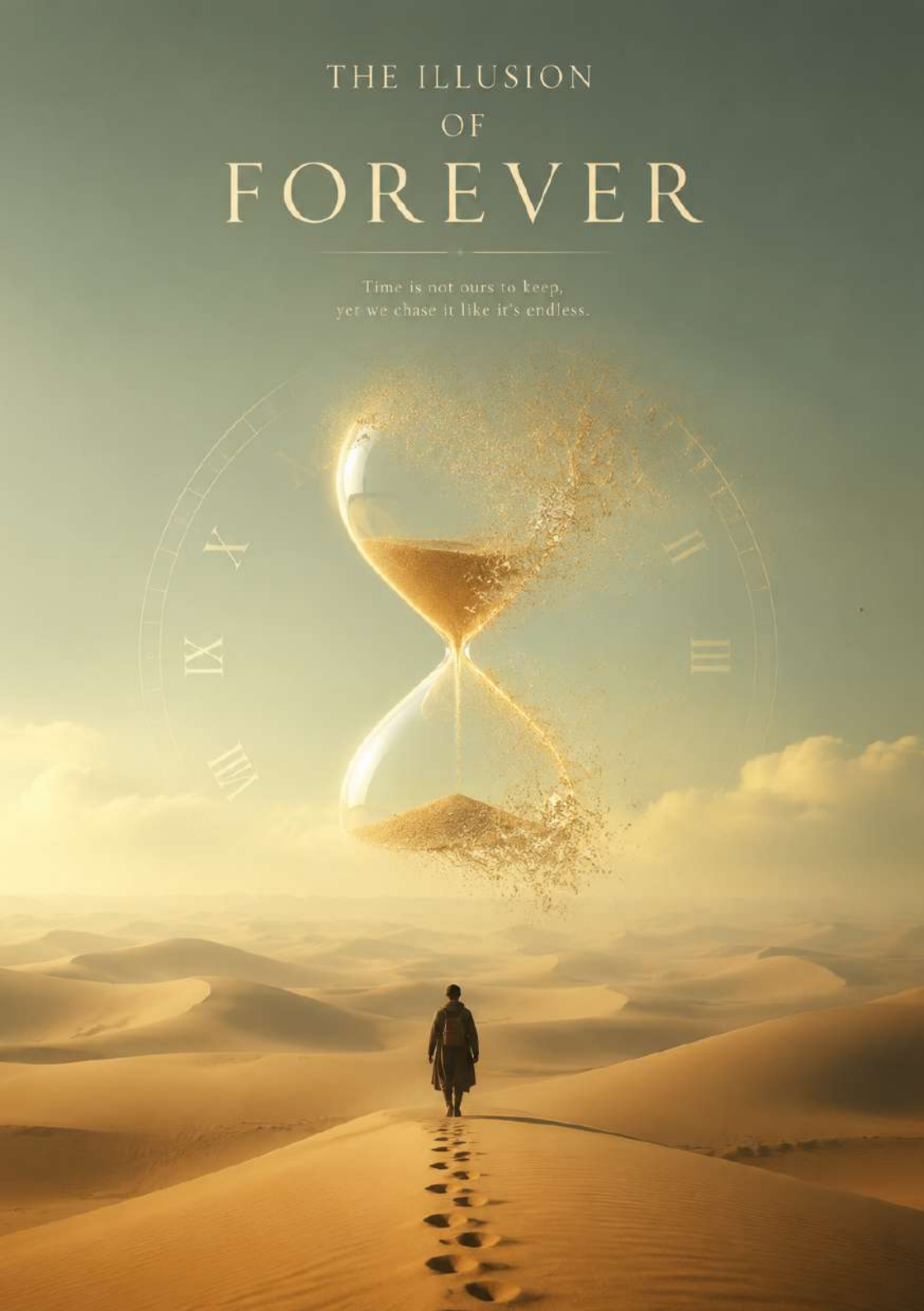
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THE ILLUSION OF FOREVER

Time is not ours to keep,
yet we chase it like it's endless.



CHAPTER 1

The Illusion of Forever

Humanity is engaged in a relentless pursuit of permanence in a world fundamentally designed to be temporary. We construct towering monuments, hoard wealth we could never possibly spend in a single lifetime, and form attachments so deep that the very thought of losing them shatters our sanity. We walk upon this earth as if we hold a guaranteed deed to eternity. Yet every heartbeat is simply a countdown to an inevitable departure. The world is a beautifully painted illusion — a grand stage where we forget that the play must eventually end.

Look around. You will see two distinct kinds of people. There are those who laugh loudly, intoxicated by the immediate pleasures of life, entirely absorbed in the accumulation of status, beauty, and material gain. Then there are those who sit in silence, crushed by the weight of their own existence, paralysed by the sudden realisation that everything they chased was a mirage. Both are victims of the exact same deception: the deep-rooted belief that the world owes them everlasting peace.

Allah — the Most High — has repeatedly warned humanity about the fleeting nature of this existence. In the Noble Qur'an, He perfectly diagnoses our collective tragedy:

"And what is the life of this world except the enjoyment of delusion."

(Qur'an 3:185)

To call life a "delusion" is not to suggest that our pain or joy is not real. When a heart breaks, the agony is fiercely real. When a child is born, the joy is absolute. The delusion lies entirely in our expectations. We expect relationships never to change, wealth to shield us from grief, and our bodies never to age. The deception is not the world itself; the deception is our demand for the world to be a permanent paradise, when it was only ever meant to be a waiting room on the way to the Hereafter.

We suffer because we anchor our souls to sinking ships. We attach our infinite spiritual potential to finite, expiring objects. When those objects inevitably decay or disappear, a part of us dies with them. This is the root cause of the anxiety, depression, and profound sadness that plagues so many hearts today. We are utterly exhausted because we spend our lives trying to hold onto water with clenched fists.

How, then, does a believer survive this reality without falling into despair? How do we live in a world that is

constantly slipping through our fingers? The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ addressed this exact crisis with a simple yet transformative instruction:

> *"Be in this world as if you were a stranger or a traveller along a path."*
>
> *(Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī)*

Consider the mindset of a traveller. A traveller appreciates the beauty of the landscape, rests under the shade of a tree, and greets those he meets. But he never forgets that he is only passing through. He does not build a permanent mansion at a temporary rest stop. He does not weep uncontrollably when he leaves the inn, because he always knew he was heading towards a final destination.

If we adopt the mindset of a traveller, the heavy burdens of life suddenly become lighter. A financial loss, while painful, becomes just a bump in the road. A betrayal by a close friend becomes a harsh but necessary lesson learned on the journey. Even the joys — the promotions, the celebrations, the moments of intense happiness — are enjoyed fully, but without the desperate, suffocating need to freeze time. A traveller knows how to let go gracefully.

This does not ask us to abandon society, stop loving, or cease striving for excellence. It simply asks us to change our internal relationship with the world. Work hard, but do not let your job title define your worth. Love deeply, but understand that every worldly connection is ultimately

temporary. Build a good legacy, but do not let your ego be chained to it.

The tragedy of the modern human is that we have become permanent residents in a transient world. We have forgotten how to be travellers. We decorate our temporary hotel rooms with such obsession that we completely forget we must check out in the morning.

As you read these words, take a moment to reflect on your own life. What are you holding onto so tightly that it is causing your own hands to bleed? What illusions of ‘forever’ are you currently chasing? Awakening to the reality that nothing lasts is not meant to depress you. On the contrary, it is the ultimate liberation. Once you accept that the world is temporary, you are no longer enslaved by the fear of losing it. You become free to truly worship, and to truly live.

The illusion of permanence becomes most shattering when we look at the concept of time. We divide our lives into past, present, and future, treating time as an endless resource we can afford to waste. We say, “I will find peace tomorrow,” or “I will change my ways when I am older.” We procrastinate on our own reform, assuming the clock will wait for us.

But time is a river, eroding the banks of our existence with every passing second. The laughter of youth quickly turns into the fragile silence of old age. The strength we once wielded becomes a distant memory. The Prophet

warned us of two specific blessings we tend to squander:

“There are two blessings which many people lose: health and free time.”

(Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī)

Why do we lose these blessings? Because when we are healthy, we act as if illness is a myth meant only for others. We abuse our bodies, neglect our hearts, and waste our strength on futile arguments. And when we have free time, we drown ourselves in endless distractions, scrolling through digital voids, delaying the ṣalāh, the du‘ā’, and the meaningful actions that could actually save us.

We only appreciate the value of breath when we are suffocating. We only recognise the value of peace when we are consumed by chaos. The tragedy is not that life is short; the tragedy is that we realise how short it is only when it is already over.

To understand the world, one must look at a graveyard. Beneath the soil lie individuals who were once just like us. They had grand plans for the next week, business deals to close, families to feed, and ambitions to build. They too thought they had more time. Yet the soil made no distinction between their wealth, their poverty, their joy, or their grief. The earth swallowed their ambitions, leaving behind nothing but lessons for those who still walk upon it.

This is the paradox of the heedless heart: we are fully aware that death is the only absolute certainty, yet we live

as if it is the only thing that will never happen to us. We plan for a future we may never see, while completely ignoring the reality of the present moment before Allah.

The ones who truly conquer the illusion of ‘forever’ are those who look at the world through the eyes of a brief visitor. They do not allow the temporary storms of life to break their inner sanctuary, nor do they allow the passing sunshine of material success to make them arrogant. They remain grounded, knowing that both the storm and the sunshine will eventually pass, leaving behind only the truth of who they were before their Lord.

The world is merely a passing shadow. It is time we stop breaking our own hearts trying to hold it in our hands, and start learning how to simply walk through it. But before we can truly awaken to this reality, we must first confront the greatest deception of all — not the lies the world tells us, but the lies we wear on our own faces every single day.

THE MASKS WE WEAR

BEHIND EVERY MASK, A SOUL THAT LONGS TO BE SEEN.



CHAPTER 2

The Masks We Wear

From the moment we step out of our doors, we step onto a stage. Society hands us a script, and without even realising it, we become actors in our own lives. We master the art of the performance, hiding our most intense internal battles behind a carefully rehearsed smile. We wear masks — not of plastic or cloth, but of forced politeness, hollow laughter, and feigned strength. We smile when we want to scream, and we say we are fine when our entire world is collapsing inward.

The necessity of these masks stems from a collective fear of vulnerability. The world is often cruel to those who bleed openly. To show our true, unedited selves is to risk judgment, rejection, or pity. So the broken man goes to work and speaks with unwavering confidence. The grieving woman greets the neighbourhood with a cheerful face. We become a community of silent sufferers, terrified of the moment the curtain might fall and our true faces be revealed.

Yet this constant performance takes a devastating toll. When you wear a mask long enough, you eventually forget the face beneath it. This split between who we are in the dark of our rooms and who we pretend to be in the light of the public creates a profound loneliness. You can be surrounded by a thousand people who love the character you are playing, but you will still feel entirely alone, because none of them actually know you.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ warned the ummah against the spiritual and moral danger of living a double life:

“The worst of people is the two-faced person who comes to these with one face and to those with another face.”

(Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī)

While this ḥadīth directly addresses hypocrisy, it also speaks to a deeper truth: when we constantly shift our personality to please every crowd, we lose our authentic core. We become hollow echoes of what people want us to be, rather than what Allah created us to be. We exhaust ourselves maintaining different versions of our identity for different audiences.

We may fool the audience; we may even fool ourselves. But we can never fool the Creator. Allah says in the Qur’an:

“And conceal your speech or publicise it; indeed, He is Knowing of that within the breasts.”

(Qur’an 67:13)

Our reality is not defined by the curated image we present to the world, but by the unspoken truths resting in our hearts. Allah does not judge us by our masks; He knows the silent intentions and the hidden scars we desperately try to cover up.

The ultimate liberation in this temporary world is the courage to drop the act — to say, “I am tired,” when you are truly exhausted; to allow tears to fall when the heart is heavy; to reject the script that demands perpetual perfection. Taking off the mask is one of the most difficult things a person can do, but it is the only way to truly breathe.

In our era, this masquerade has found a new, more deceptive stage: the digital world. Social media has become a gallery of masks. We carefully curate our feeds with exaggerated joy, flawless beauty, and artificial success. We crop out our sadness, filter our insecurities, and construct a virtual life we ourselves do not live. We measure our worth by the validation of strangers, trading our authentic peace for a moment of digital applause.

This obsession is not only exhausting; it is spiritually destructive. It breeds arrogance and quiet anxiety. The Prophet ﷺ warned the ummah about riyā’ — showing off, or performing deeds for the eyes of people. He described it as the hidden shirk, teaching that any action done merely to be seen and praised by others is stripped of its reward before Allah (see Sunan Ibn Mājah). When we live for the

gaze of the audience, our inner selves rot away. We become beautiful on the outside, and empty within.

We spend so much time editing our lives for the world that we forget how to live them for our Lord. We preach values we do not practise, and we display a happiness we do not feel. Allah addresses this directly:

"O you who have believed, why do you say what you do not do?"

(Qur'an 61:2)

This is not a condemnation of joy; it is a call to honesty. Allah asks us why we pretend to be unbreakable when our souls are bleeding; why we project wealth when we are bankrupt in peace. The longer we wear the mask, the heavier it becomes, until the weight of the performance crushes the performer.

There is a bitter irony in our condition: the very masks we wear to protect ourselves from being hurt are the exact things keeping us from being truly loved. A mask cannot feel. It cannot heal. It can only hide.

We can run from the judgment of people, and we can hide behind our carefully crafted digital and physical faces. But the day always ends. The crowds disperse, the screens turn off, and the artificial lights fade. When the performance is over and the audience leaves, we must sit alone with the heavy truth we have been avoiding all day. And it is in that terrifying quiet that we must confront our

deepest reality — a reality where no masks can save us from the deafening echoes of our own silence.


ECHOES OF
SILENCE
In the stillness, we hear what
words could never say.

CHAPTER 3

Echoes of Silence

We live in a world terrified of silence. From the moment we wake up to the moment we drift into sleep, we surround ourselves with a constant barrage of noise — the hum of technology, the chatter of social circles, and the background static of our own racing thoughts. We treat silence as an empty space that must be filled, a void that needs to be occupied, because we fear what might emerge if the noise ever stops. We fear that if we truly go quiet, we will finally have to hear the voices we have been drowning out for years.

Silence is not an absence; it is a presence. It is a powerful, uncompromising mirror. When the external world goes quiet, the internal world begins to speak. For many, this is a painful experience. It is in the silence that the regrets we suppressed, the sins we hid, the dreams we abandoned, and the questions we refused to answer finally find their voice. These are the echoes of silence — the reverberations of our own souls demanding to be acknowledged.

This discomfort is not new; it is part of the human struggle. Even the most active among us must eventually face the stillness. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ gave a profound piece of advice regarding the relationship between speech, silence, and īmān:

“Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him speak good or remain silent.”

(Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī)

While this teaches us to guard our tongue, it also implies a deeper discipline: knowing when to quiet the mind to reflect on what is truly good and true. If we cannot master our own silence, we cannot master our own thoughts. We become reactive, tossed around by every opinion, because we never take the time to sit quietly and remember Allah.

The Qur’an speaks directly to this need for reflection, warning us of the price of a heedless life:

“And do not be like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget themselves.”

(Qur’an 59:19)

To “forget oneself” is the ultimate tragedy of the loud life. When we live only in the noise, we lose the map to our own existence. We become strangers to our own hearts. Silence is the process of remembering. It is the act of stepping away from the crowd to reclaim the identity our Lord gave us.

Many believe silence is a sign of weakness or loneliness, but it is actually the source of supreme strength. The loudest souls are often the most fragile, constantly needing validation to prove their existence. The strongest souls are those who can sit in stillness with the remembrance of Allah, at peace with their own presence, needing nothing from the outside to feel whole.

The echoes of silence are not meant to destroy you; they are meant to guide you. If you can stop running from the quiet, if you can stop filling every second with distraction, you will discover that silence is not empty — it is full of the answers you have been searching for everywhere else.

It is vital to distinguish between being alone and being lonely. Loneliness is a state of deprivation — a heavy, painful sense of being disconnected, a feeling of "lacking" that makes the heart ache for company. Solitude, however, is a state of fullness — a deliberate, courageous choice to be with oneself and one's Lord.

Loneliness is what happens when you fear the silence. Solitude is what happens when you befriend it.

When you are lonely, you look for people to distract you from your inner void. When you are in solitude, you turn to Allah to fill that void with purpose and reflection. This is the difference between running away and coming home. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ often sought moments of deep solitude in the Cave of Ḥirā', far from the noise of Makkah. He did not go there because he was lonely; he went there

to cultivate the silence in which the truth was ultimately revealed.

If you can reach a stage where you are content in the company of your Lord, you become invincible. You are no longer desperate for the approval of others, nor crushed by their absence. You realise that your value was never dependent on how many people stood beside you, but on the depth of your connection with Allah.

We spend our lives running toward the horizon, chasing the noise of success and the applause of the crowd, fearing that if we stop, we will disappear. But the truth is the opposite: it is only when we stop running, embrace the silence, and listen to the echoes of our own souls that we truly begin to live. The journey home does not begin with a loud cry; it begins with the courage to be quiet.


CHASING
SHADOWS
Some truths are always
just out of reach.

CHAPTER 4

Chasing Shadows

Life often feels like a race under the midday sun. We see a mirage in the distance — a vision of happiness, success, or validation — and we sprint toward it with everything we have. We are convinced that if we just run a little faster, reach a little further, and sacrifice a little more, we will finally grasp what we are chasing. But the tragic reality of chasing shadows is that the faster you run toward them, the more they recede. Shadows are not objects to be held; they are merely the absence of light caused by the objects we have already placed in front of us.

The shadows we chase are the shifting, temporary goals that people demand we value: the perfect reputation, the endless accumulation of wealth, the desperate need to be envied. We sacrifice our peace, our integrity, and our limited time on earth to capture these illusions, only to find that when we finally “arrive,” they provide no lasting satisfaction. The shadow slips through our fingers, and we are left exactly where we started — empty-handed and exhausted.

This pursuit is a distraction from the only truth that matters: the purification of the soul and preparation for the meeting with Allah. The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ warned us of the bottomless hunger of the human heart:

“If the son of Ādam had a valley full of gold, he would love to have a second one, and nothing will fill his mouth except the dust (of the grave).”

(Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī)

This is not a condemnation of work or ambition; it is a diagnosis of a heart that is permanently hollow. When our ambitions are focused solely on chasing shadows, we become addicted to the “next” thing, never finding contentment in the “now.” We lose the ability to see the sunlight because we are too focused on the dark shapes moving across the ground.

Allah highlights this restless state of the human heart, reminding us that the dunyā is a test of priorities:

“Beautified for people is the love of that which they desire — of women and sons, heaped-up sums of gold and silver… that is the enjoyment of worldly life, but Allah has with Him the best return.”

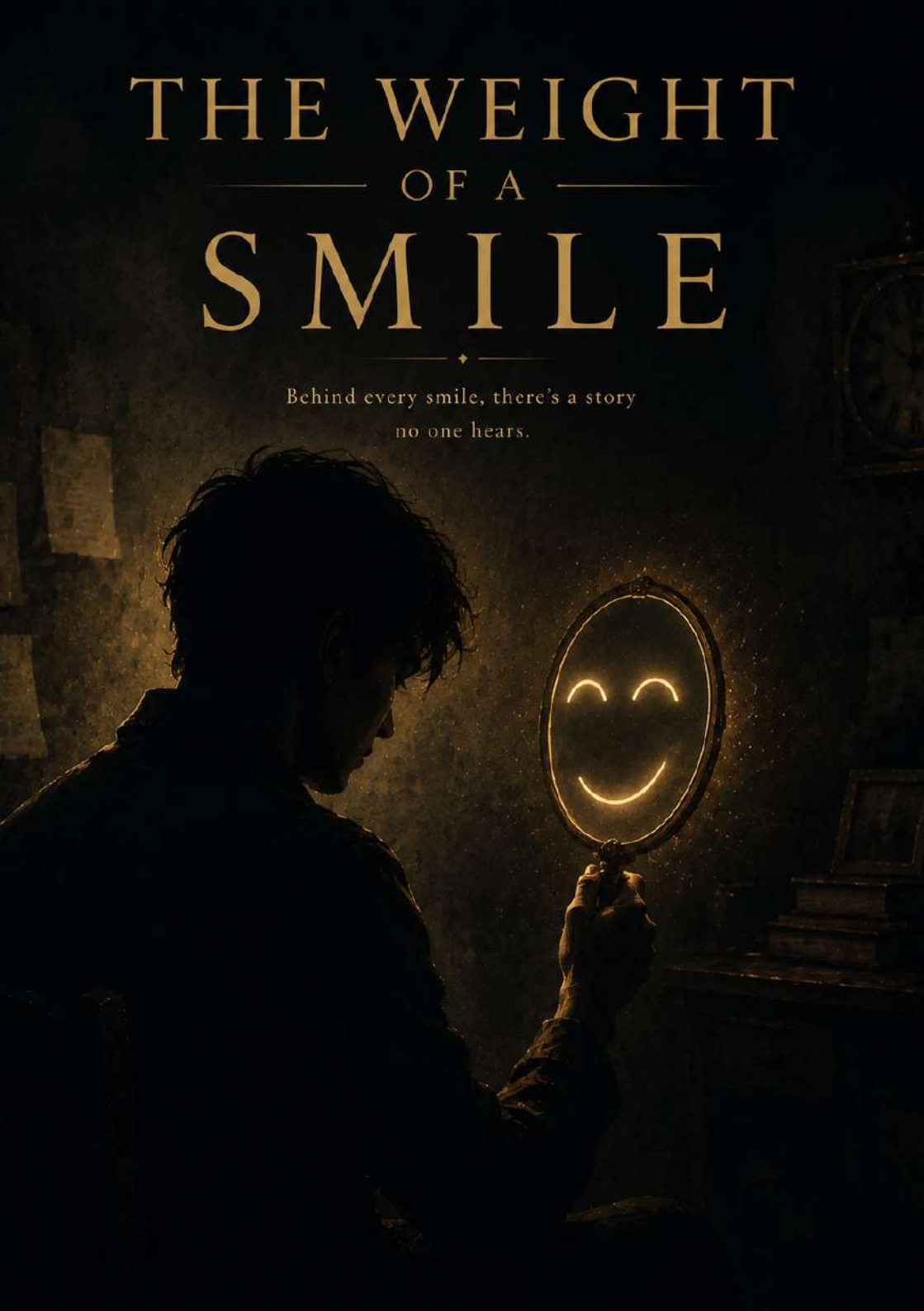
(Qur’an 3:14)

The problem is not the existence of these things; the problem is when we make them the purpose of our existence. When we allow these desires to define our worth, we become shadows ourselves — faint, shifting,

disconnected from the stable identity Allah has honoured us with.

To stop chasing shadows, one must turn around and face the source of the light. Instead of running toward the dark shapes in front of you, focus on the truth Allah has placed within your heart. When you align your life with values that are permanent — honesty, compassion, patience, and taqwā — you no longer need to chase anything. You become a person of substance, no longer swayed by the flickering illusions of the world.

We spend our youth running after shadows, fearing that if we stop, we will lose everything. But in the end, we realise that the only things worth keeping are the ones that never cast a shadow in the first place — the ṣalāh we preserved, the truth we spoke, and the love we gave for the sake of Allah. The chase is not a journey toward success; it is a long, tiring flight from ourselves. It is time to stop running, stand still, and finally step out of the shadows.


THE WEIGHT
OF A
SMILE
Behind every smile, there's a story
no one hears.

CHAPTER 5

The Weight of a Smile

We often mistake a smile for a sign of ease. We look at a person who smiles and assume their life is untouched by sorrow, their path cleared of obstacles. But a smile is rarely a sign of ease; more often than not, it is a sign of immense strength. It is the weight a person chooses to carry so that they do not have to drag others into their shadows. In a world defined by bitter realities, a genuine smile is an act of profound defiance.

The weight of a smile is heavy. It is the effort of holding back tears, the discipline of choosing kindness over bitterness, and the courage to offer light to others when your own internal world feels cold. Many believe that to be “real,” one must always display their pain. But there is a higher, more sacred honesty in choosing to be a source of peace for someone else, even while your own heart is breaking.

The Prophet Muhammad transformed our understanding of this simple human expression. He did not view a smile as a trivial gesture, but as a moral

responsibility — a form of charity that costs nothing yet heals everything:

“Your smile in the face of your brother is a charity (ṣadaqah) for you.”

(Sunan al-Tirmidhī)

This is not a call to be performative or fake. It is a call to be a healer. When you smile at someone who is struggling, you are offering them a moment of respite from their own internal war. You are silently telling them, “You are seen, you are safe, and you are not alone.”

Allah reinforces the weight of even the smallest good deeds in the final balance of our existence:

“So whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see it.”

(Qur’an 99:7)

A sincere smile is that atom’s weight of good. It is a tiny vibration that can ripple across a room, shifting the atmosphere from despair toward hope. It does not solve the problems of the world, but it provides the strength to face them.

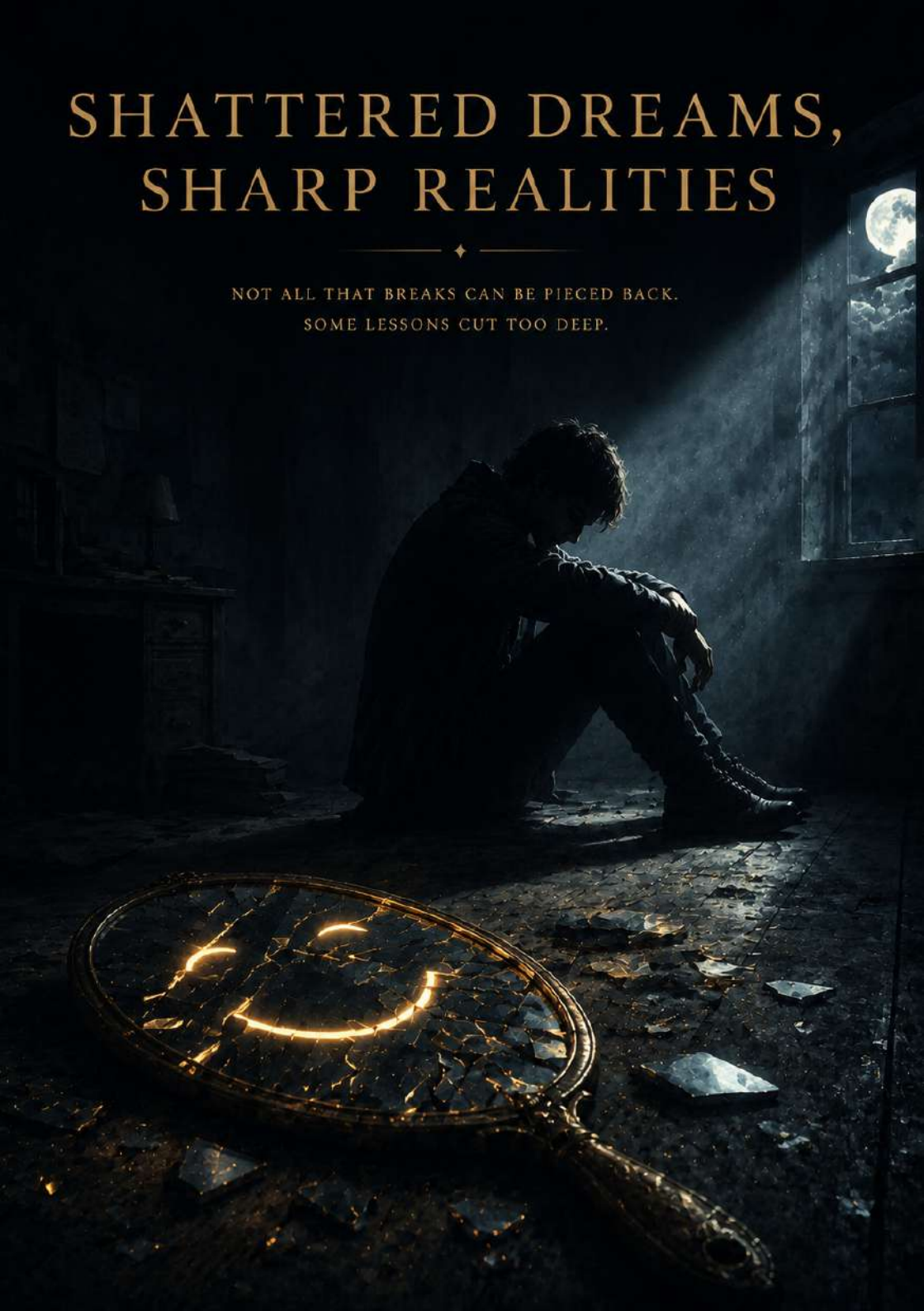
The most powerful people are not those who command armies or possess great wealth; they are the ones who can endure the weight of their own private tragedies and still find the strength to lift the spirits of those around them. They understand that their pain does not have to be the

end of their story, and it certainly does not have to be the only thing they offer to the world.

We are all carrying burdens no one else can see. We are all walking through our own private wilderness, desperate for a sign that we will survive. Perhaps that is the secret: we don’t need to be perfect, and we don’t need to be strong all the time. We just need to be kind. Sometimes, the heaviest thing you will ever carry is the smile you wear to keep someone else’s world from falling apart. And in that small act of selfless grace, you will find that you have become the very light you were searching for.

SHATTERED DREAMS, SHARP REALITIES

NOT ALL THAT BREAKS CAN BE PIECED BACK.
SOME LESSONS CUT TOO DEEP.



CHAPTER 6

Shattered Dreams, Sharp Realities

We all carry a blueprint of the life we intend to live. We dream of seamless paths, guaranteed successes, and futures where the storms of life somehow bypass our door. But reality rarely adheres to our blueprints. Reality is a sharp, unyielding edge that cuts through the fragile glass of our expectations. When our dreams shatter — not because we failed, but because life simply unfolded differently — we are left standing amidst the broken shards of what we thought was our destiny.

The pain of a shattered dream is often mistaken for the pain of failure. But there is a vital difference. Failure is a lack of effort; a shattered dream is often the collision between a human heart and the qadar of Allah. We are taught to chase our dreams until they come true, but we are rarely taught how to survive when those dreams are dismantled by circumstance, loss, or time.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ offered a perspective that transforms how we view these sudden shifts:

“Strange is the affair of the believer, for there is good in all his affairs; and this is not so for anyone except the believer. If ease befalls him, he is grateful and it is good for him; and if hardship befalls him, he is patient and it is good for him.”

(Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim)

The shattering of a dream is not necessarily the end of the journey; it is a redirection. It is the removal of a smaller reality so that a deeper, more resilient one can take its place — one written by Allah, not by our limited hands.

Allah reminds us that our narrow vision is the primary reason we grieve over what we think we have lost:

“But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not.”

(Qur’an 2:216)

The sharpness of reality is designed to strip away our illusions. When a dream shatters, it feels like a tragedy, but often it is a mercy. It is the breaking of a container that was too small to hold the growth we were meant to experience. We are not defined by the dreams we successfully built, but by how we stand and what we build after the glass has been broken.

If you are currently standing amidst the debris of a life you thought you would have, understand this: your value has not shattered. The dream was only a reflection, not the

source of your light. The sharpness of reality is not meant to wound you permanently; it is meant to prune away the parts of your life that were keeping you from becoming who Allah wants you to be.

We spend our lives trying to glue the broken pieces of our dreams back together, hoping to recreate the perfect image we once held. But the wisdom lies not in restoration, but in acceptance of Allah’s decree. Some things are meant to break so that we can finally see what lies beneath the surface. When you stop trying to fix what is gone and start walking through the reality Allah has left for you, you will realise that you were never broken — you were only being opened.


TEARS
IN THE
RAIN
When the sky cries with you,
no one sees the tears.

CHAPTER 7

Tears in the Rain

There is a profound, quiet agony in suffering alone. Often we find ourselves in situations where we are surrounded by people — family, friends, or coworkers — yet feel completely isolated in our pain. We carry heavy hearts and unspoken grievances, but we keep our composure, fearful that showing our vulnerability will make us appear weak or burdensome. This is the condition of tears in the rain — when we weep inside while the world sees only a calm, unbothered exterior.

We live in a culture that celebrates strength but stigmatises the expression of pain. We are told to “keep it together,” to “stay positive,” and to “move on.” While these are often well-intentioned, they frequently force us to bury our emotions deep within. But emotions, like water, must flow. When they are dammed up, they do not disappear; they stagnate, turning into bitterness, anxiety, or a chronic sense of emptiness.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ opened for us a compassionate window into this reality. He was not a

distant, stoic figure, but a man who felt deeply and wept openly for his loved ones and for the suffering of his ummah. When his own son Ibrāhīm passed away, tears fell from his eyes, and he said:

“The eyes shed tears and the heart is grieved, but we will not say except what pleases our Lord. Indeed, O Ibrāhīm, we are grieved by your departure.”

(Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī)

This teaches us that true strength is not the absence of emotion, but the ability to feel pain while maintaining one’s connection to Allah.

Tears are not a sign of defeat; they are a sign of being alive. They are the soul’s way of washing away the dust of disappointment and the grime of grief. When you cry before Allah, you are not failing; you are purging. You are allowing the heaviness of your existence to leave your body so that you do not have to carry it for a moment longer.

The Qur’an, in its infinite understanding of the human heart, acknowledges the reality of our sorrow without judgment, reminding us that even in our darkest moments, we are never truly alone:

“So do not weaken and do not grieve, and you will be superior, if you are [true] believers.”

(Qur’an 3:139)

This is not a dismissal of your pain, but a promise of a presence that transcends it — the presence of the One who is closer to you than your jugular vein.

If you are currently hiding your tears in the rain, know that your pain is being witnessed. Even if no human eye sees your struggle, there is comfort in knowing that Allah, al-Laṭīf, al-Khabīr, sees every drop. You do not need to perform for the world. You do not need to pretend to be made of stone. The most healing act you can perform is to stop running from your own sadness, turn to your Lord, and let the rain wash over you.

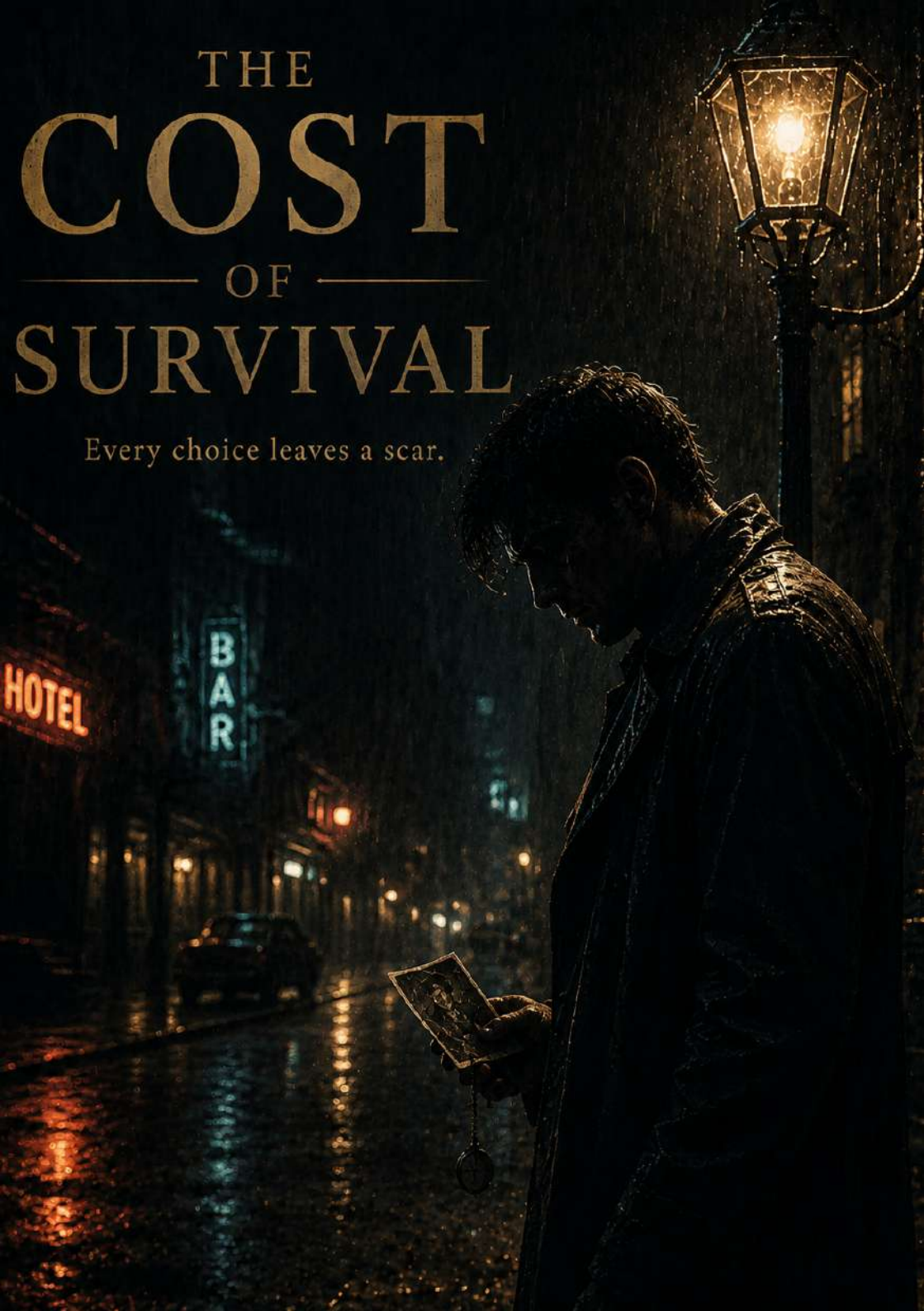
It is a common misconception that ṣabr is a form of emotional suppression — biting one's lip, holding back tears, and presenting a face of indifference. True ṣabr is far more profound. It is the bridge between the overwhelming reality of our grief and the steady ground of our īmān. It is not about not feeling the pain; it is about not letting the pain define your destination.

When you lose something or someone precious, the grief is immediate and raw. Ṣabr does not ask you to erase that grief. Instead, it invites you to hold it in one hand while holding onto your trust in Allah with the other. It is the recognition that while your heart is breaking, your existence is still being held by a Power greater than your sorrow.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ demonstrated this perfectly. He grieved, he wept, and he felt the weight of his losses,

yet he never once allowed his heart to lose its direction. His ṣabr was an active surrender — a conscious decision to acknowledge the pain while remaining anchored in the belief that nothing in this world is permanent, and that every loss is a precursor to a wisdom we cannot yet see.

True ṣabr is the refusal to let your tears turn into despair. It is the ability to say, “I am hurting, but I am still standing,” because you know that the storm you are currently in is only a part of the journey, not the end of it. By accepting your grief as part of your test, you do not become less of a believer; you become a more honest one.


THE
COST
OF
SURVIVAL
Every choice leaves a scar.
HOTEL
BAR

CHAPTER 8

The Cost of Survival

In the relentless rush of existence, we often forget that survival itself has a price. We do not just “live”; we navigate a complex web of sacrifices, compromises, and exhausting negotiations with our own values. To survive in a world that demands conformity, we often chip away at parts of ourselves — our innocence, our time, our peace — hoping that what remains will be enough to call a life. But as we climb the ladder of survival, we must ask: what are we leaving behind in the debris?

The cost of survival is often paid in the currency of the soul. We trade our authenticity for security, our stillness for status, and our deep human connections for superficial networks. We tell ourselves this is the “cost of doing business” in life. Yet, when the noise of the struggle dies down, we are often left with a hollow victory — we have survived the race, but we have lost the person who started it.

The Prophet Muhammad ﷺ taught a radical alternative to this grinding struggle. He emphasised that true

provision is not something to be wrestled from the world with anxiety, but something secured through tawakkul upon Allah:

> *“If you were to rely upon Allah with the reliance He deserves, He would provide for you as He provides for the birds; they go out in the morning with empty stomachs and return in the evening with full ones.”*
>
> *(Sunan al-Tirmidhī)*

This does not negate effort; it shifts the burden of survival from our shoulders to the care of the Creator. We work, we strive, we plan — but we no longer worship our work as though it were our provider.

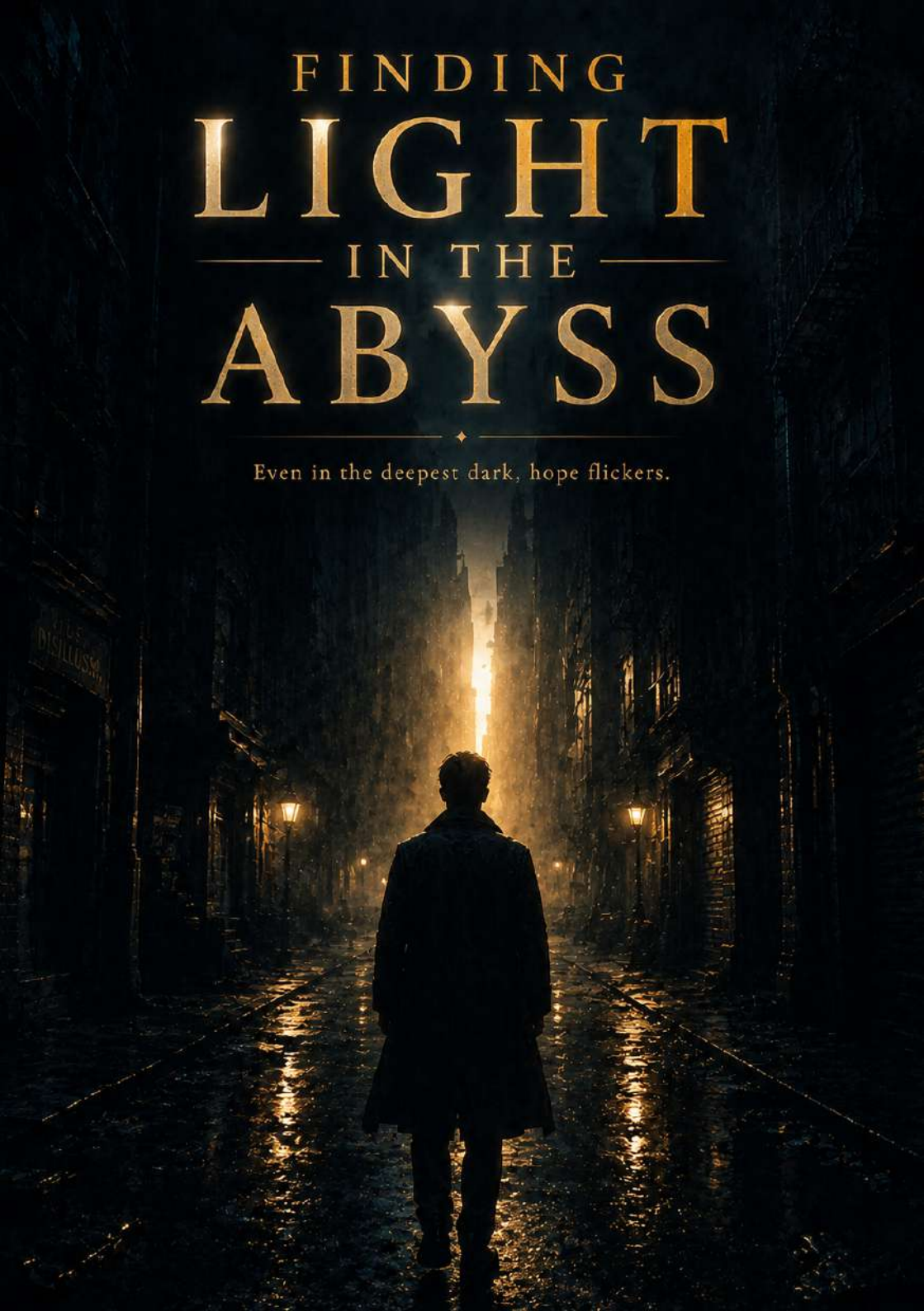
The tragedy of the modern survivor is that we have equated survival with competition. We look at others as obstacles to our sustenance. Allah directly addresses this obsession with scarcity, reminding us that the fear of not having enough is a primary driver of moral compromise:

> *“And do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We provide for them and for you. Indeed, their killing is ever a great sin.”*
>
> *(Qur’an 17:31)*

While this āyah addresses a specific crime, the principle is universal: fear of the future drives us to sacrifice what is sacred.

To survive without losing yourself, you must redefine the cost. You do not have to sell your integrity to earn your keep. You do not have to abandon your prayer to secure your position. The greatest survival strategy is not to harden your heart against the world, but to cultivate a heart so rooted in truth that no external storm can uproot it.

We are so preoccupied with the cost of surviving that we lose sight of the purpose of living. In the end, it will not matter how much you accumulated or how many battles you won if you lost your soul in the process. The highest form of survival is not merely existing, but existing in a way that pleases your Lord. When you stop fighting the world and start walking with Allah, you find that the cost of your survival is already covered. You are not a competitor in a race; you are a guest in a temporary home, on your way back to the eternal one.


FINDING
LIGHT
IN THE
ABYSS
Even in the deepest dark, hope flickers.

CHAPTER 9

Finding Light in the Abyss

When you are standing in the deepest, coldest part of the abyss, where even your own shadows seem to have abandoned you, the silence can be deafening. It is here, in the moments of total darkness, that we are forced to confront the ultimate truth: light is not something we find outside ourselves — it is something Allah places within us when we finally turn to Him. The abyss is not a punishment; it is a testing ground for the soul, where the superficial is burned away, leaving only what is truly real.

We often fear the darkness because we believe it is an absence. But in reality, darkness is simply the canvas upon which our inner light of īmān is meant to be painted. When you have lost everything you thought defined you — your status, your plans, your temporary attachments — you are finally in a position to discover who you actually are before your Lord.

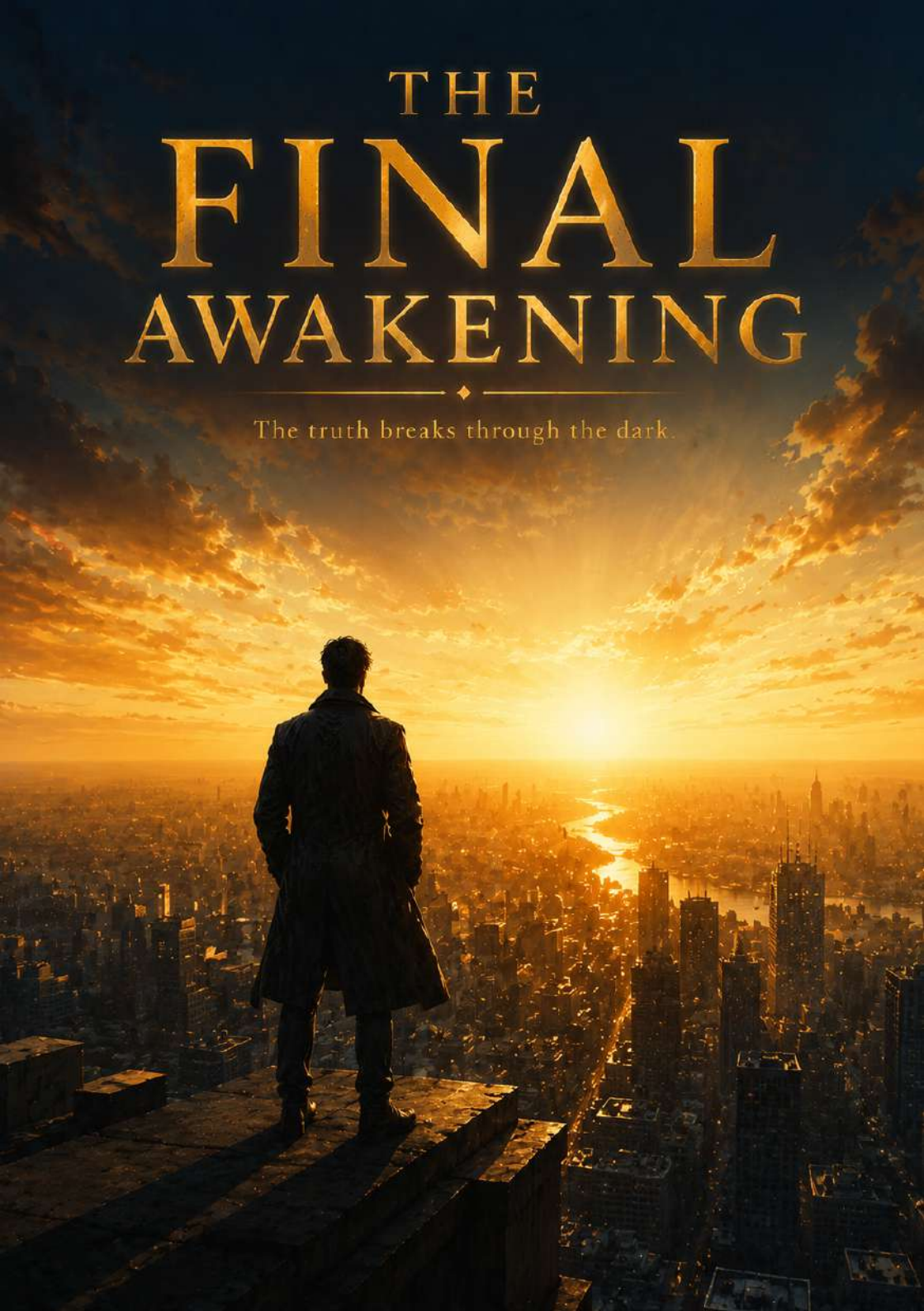
Allah teaches us that this state of struggle is actually a precursor to relief:

“For indeed, with hardship [will be] ease. Indeed, with hardship [will be] ease.”

(Qur’an 94:5–6)

This does not mean the hardship disappears, but that through it, you develop the vision to see the ease that was always there, hidden by your own anxiety. You do not find the light by running from your darkness; you find it by lighting the lamp of ṣalāh, du‘ā’, gratitude, and reflection in the very centre of your despair.

When you reach the absolute bottom, you learn a vital lesson: there is nowhere left to fall, and that is where your ascent begins. Carry your īmān like a lantern, protect it from the winds of doubt, and you will see that the darkness was never the master of your life — it was merely the darkness that allowed the light of your Lord to finally be seen.


THE
FINAL
AWAKENING
The truth breaks through the dark.

CHAPTER 10

The Final Awakening

The final awakening is the profound realisation that the world we were so desperate to master, control, and hoard was never meant to be our permanent home. We came here as travellers, and we leave as witnesses to a brief, beautiful, and demanding journey. We spent our lives building monuments on shifting sand, forgetting that the tide of time inevitably claims everything we construct.

True success is not measured by the empires we built or the applause we gathered, but by the state of our hearts when we finally return to Allah. It is the moment the masks we wore fall away, the shadows we chased dissipate, and we finally see the truth with clarity. We realise that the weight we were carrying was largely self-imposed. The attachments we feared losing were never ours to begin with; they were amānāt — trusts and temporary blessings meant to test our capacity to give and to let go.

Close the book on your illusions. You have learned that silence is a source of strength, that kindness is a sacred charity, and that the only true destination is the meeting

with your Lord. The journey was never about conquering the world; it was about conquering the distractions, the ego, and the fear that kept you from your true purpose — to worship Allah alone. You are not defined by what you had, but by who you became on the way back to Him.

The path is clear now. You are awake. You are free. Now, take the truth you have found and live it, with every breath you have left.

A FINAL REFLECTION

The pages of this book may end, but your journey is only beginning. You have walked through the illusions, faced the masks, and sat with the silence. Do not fear the path ahead, for you are no longer the person who started this book. You have learned that this world is not a place to stay, but a place to grow.

Carry this truth within you like a quiet flame, and let it guide you through the storms that may come. You were born for something deeper than the shadows of this world. Step forward with courage, live with sincerity, and remember: you are not just a traveller passing through — you are a servant of Allah walking home.

The world is temporary, but the soul you nurture today, by His mercy, is eternal.

THE END



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