

Islamacising Trash

Umm Junayd

Khadeejah walked into the kitchen sluggishly, not quite awake due to a late night. She sighed and rubbed her forehead, caressing her throbbing temples as she leant against the bare wall.

Here we go again, she thought as she collected empty tins of baked beans from the trash can. It had been almost a week since she'd been emptying the trash can of tins and paper and now she was finding it to be more than an irritation – it was an outright annoyance.

“How hard is it to rinse?” She said, just above a whisper as she straightened herself up.

“No one says it's hard,” her husband answered, trudging in behind her, obviously startling his agitated wife, “but I say that it's a waste of time.”

Khadeejah rolled her eyes, dreading the prospect of entering into another heated discussion about the whole matter, but it frustrated her that she couldn't get her husband to reason with her. She knew that men and women were created differently - it said so in the Qur'aan - but they couldn't be that different, could they? It didn't require one to have the IQ of Einstein to realise that she was right and her husband was just downright lazy.

“But Ahmad,” she began, “don't you realise how important it is?” she said as she shifted her position against the wall.

Ahmad tilted his head to the left, expecting to hear more. It was a well worn topic, but he decided to listen anyway. Having been married to his wife for a little over a year, he'd learnt that it was best to listen, or at least pretend to be.

Khadeejah paused, observing her husband's posture; leaning against the fridge, still dressed in his pyjamas, he looked as though he may actually listen this time. The past week had been more than a struggle, but now she decided that whether she had his full attention or not, she was determined to finally make him understand why recycling was so important to her.

Ah, she thought, where harshness fails, gentleness must prevail. Maybe I'll use a different approach. Okay girl, flutter those eyes and get the man's attention! She inched closer towards him, still leaning against the wall.

“Look, honey,” she started, batting her eyelids and softening her voice in hope that the message would hit home, “I’m not doing this because the local council says we should do it; nor am I doing it to compete with the neighbours. I’m simply doing it for the sake of Allaah.”

Ahmad chuckled a deep, hearty chuckle, staring intently at his wife. He loved her warmth and softness, and his heart danced when she gave him that pleading look - like that of a child pleading one last time for a refused cookie. He stared directly into her honey brown eyes which looked sweeter when she batted her eyelids in that way. Although they’d both had a late night of essay writing and university assignments, her scruffy appearance made reminded him of a rough cut diamond.

“Khadeejah,” he started, calling her name softly, “do you really think that Allaah needs our old tin cans or scraps of paper?” He asked raising a single eyebrow. He knew it was a provocative question, but it had to be asked. After all, he wanted her to truly justify why she was getting into the whole recycling scene. He looked upon it as a loser’s hobby; it really wasn’t his kind of thing. It was the thing that the old aged pensioners did to pass the time between visits by their grandchildren: they diligently collected their recyclable trash as though they were to be traded in for a cash reward and some even went to the trouble of sorting them into alphabetical order - or so he thought. It wasn’t for the likes of him: a young student – although married – into the latest gadgets and gizmos and enjoying life as it came. For him, recycling was a waste of time: “It’ll only be thrown away anyway”, he retorted during a heated debate the previous week. At this Khadeejah refused to speak to him for a whole hour. *One whole hour!* He didn’t know who suffered more from the deafening silence – her stubborn refusal to answer his questions or give him attention – but he knew that he never wanted to go through that again.

Crossing her arms despairingly, Khadeejah now grunted in frustration. She plopped herself into a nearby chair, resting her head in her hands. *So this is the way he wants to play?*

“Ahmad, Ahmad, Ahmad,” she said, shaking her head, “I thought you’d know better than to mock me like that. Of course Allaah doesn’t need our trash. He doesn’t even need us!” She exclaimed, trying to remain calm. Locking eyes with her husband, Khadeejah added, “What I mean is that I’m choosing to recycle in order to gain the pleasure of Allaah.”

Ahmad raised his other eyebrow, demonstrating mock surprise and increased attention. *So that’s what it’s all for.* Not wanting her to know that he’d only just understood her intention, he decided to play the ‘*oh really*’ game.

“That’s new news,” he stated, “How do you plan to do that then?”

“Well,” Khadeejah said, sitting erect in her seat, “we know that we have been sent as vicegerents on this earth, right?”

“Uh-huh,” Ahmad replied as he shifted from the fridge and leant back against the kitchen’s marble countertop, beginning to show interest.

“So, as vicegerents of the earth, we’re supposed to look after it, right?”

“Guess so,” Ahmad replied, tapping his chin in contemplation.

“So,” Khadeejah continued with elongated emphasis as she prepared to deliver the killer-line, “recycling is one of the many ways in which we can look after it,” she smiled, flaying her arms out as if to say ‘*ta-daa!*’

Ahmad scratched his head, his gaze shifting to the tin in his wife’s hand.

“Right,” he said, “so you’re saying that if we recycle our trash such as tins, paper, glass and plastic, we’re thereby looking after the earth and we’ll get reward for it, inshaa`Allaah?”

“Yes!” Khadeejah beamed, exposing her perfectly white teeth in a wide smile, “That’s exactly what I’m saying!”

Ahmad’s expression changed to one of acceptance and he nodded in affirmation as he stroked his premature beard.

“Hmmm...” he murmured, saying nothing more.

Have I won? Khadeejah thought. I must have won. He said “Hmmm”!

“Would you like a cup of coffee?” He asked as he turned to make himself a cup.

“Yes, please,” she replied, gazing lovingly at her husband. *Marriage ain’t an easy thing, she thought, but the struggles are well worth it.*

Handing Khadeejah her cup of coffee, Ahmad gently kissed her forehead as he left the kitchen, still nodding in agreement.

“Alhamdulillah,” Khadeejah sighed with relief, leaning back comfortably in the beech kitchen chair, slowly sipping some of the hot coffee.

She’d finally got through to him, after an entire week of debate and insistent refusal. However, her celebration was but premature for she hadn’t quite made it; the very next morning she was greeted with a dirty coffee jar and a milk carton side-by-side on the kitchen table. Perched in front of them was a note – in bold letters it read: ‘Welcome to the world of recycling!’

Khadeejah sighed and rubbed her forehead. *You can’t have it all, can ya?* She thought.