

JOLLY'S FIRST FAST



Sunny Bank Road

*A true story
by
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Prelude

O you who believe fasting is prescribed for you
as it was prescribed for those before you, so that
you can become pious and righteous

Surah Baqara 183



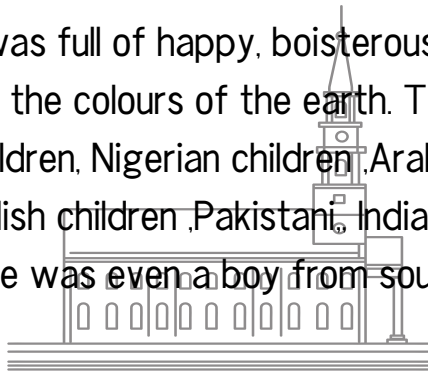
Sunny Bank Road

Once upon a time, there were two twins who lived in number 19 Sunny Bank Road, in Manchester, England. They were called Lolly and Jolly.

Lolly and Jolly were very fortunate to go to a wonderful school called St Johns Primary school. The school was an ancient looking building made of big black, rugged stone bricks and it even had a steeple.



The school was full of happy, boisterous children, created by Allah in all the colours of the earth. There were Jamaican children, Nigerian children, Arab children, Chinese children, English children, Pakistani, Indian and Bengali children, there was even a boy from south America !



The Muslim children at St. John's school loved Ramadan, especially because of the treats at iftar time, and staying up late like owls and whispering naughtily to each other during the Tarawih prayer.

Some children, and Jolly was one of them, would doze off in her sujood! That's ok because it meant she was close to Allah didn't it? As we are the closest to Allah in our sujood, although maybe being awake would be helpful!

This year they were all 10 years old and had made the decision to fast more than the previous years!



Ramadan!

The moon had been spotted, the alarms had been set, and whilst everyone slept, all the Muslim families were hustling and bustling in the kitchen preparing suhoor.

The children from St. John's School munched their suhoor meals sleepily, but one child slept through it all, Jolly! We forgot to mention, that Jolly was very thin and tall with long arms and legs, big almond eyes and two messy plaits. Lolly, on the other hand was not so thin or tall but also had big almond eyes and two neat plaits – after all they were twins!



Jolly had been told by her mummy that she could not fast because she was too thin and weak, her body could not tolerate fasting, so Jolly was left asleep as they ate suhoor.

The next day Jolly was very upset and cross as Lolly had taken suhoor, and so was allowed to fast but she had not, so could not fast.

As the days passed in 19 Sunny Bank Road, Lolly had suhoor every night and Jolly slept.

It was not fair! She was furious, Each night her anger and frustration intensified, she shouted and screamed fiercely in protest.

At school it was even worse, all the Muslim children were fasting except Jolly, she felt terribly left out and it made her feel so sad and lonely eating alone. She desperately wanted to be with the other Muslim children.

As each day passed, her loneliness grew. And to add insult to injury Lolly was given ice cream every day for iftar...and THAT was unbearable!



All Alone

Her loneliness grew as big as the tall green hedges that lined the Victorian houses on Sunny bank Road. One day, as she was sitting in the front garden looking at the hedge feeling especially miserable, a kind neighbour, Mr.

Alaahudeen who lived at number 14 Sunny Bank Road, smiled at her cheerfully as he walked past.

He was wearing his usual crumpled, oversized navy blue suit that was so familiar to her, as that was all he ever wore (and no one ever asked him why).

As she watched his flared trousers flapping around his ankles, Jolly wondered if he could help. She jumped up and began to tell him how distraught she was because she could not fast, as her mother refused to wake her up for suhoor, insisting that she was too weak to fast.

As she spoke, her big eyes filled with frustrated tears and she looked at the kind uncle for help, however her hopes were dashed as he kindly told her, that she must listen to her mother and wait until she was stronger!



The Big Decision

Everyone is so unfair she screamed silently! Why was everyone so mean? If all the children were fasting, why couldn't she? How dare they single her out like that? It was an injustice! Clearly no one cared!

Those deep hurtful emotions swirled inside her like a tsunami and as they settled they metamorphosed (a big word for changed into) into a BIG decision!

The decision was so big, it made her feel big, and the more she thought about it, the bigger and braver she felt. That night was the first night that she did not beg her mother to wake her up for suhoor.

Everyone in the family was silently uncomfortable as it was unusually quiet without Jolly's nightly routine of piercing screams and lamenting at the injustice of not being awoken for suhoor! This dramatic routine had become a part of the nightly ritual at 19 Sunny Bank Road!

Eyes darted around as everyone wondered why Jolly had suddenly become so compliant, something didn't seem right. Jolly slept peacefully with a content look on her face.

The next morning her face was adorned with a smug expression and her eyes full of hope and excitement for the day.

*big
decision*

As everyone got ready for school it was time to announce her BIG decision, I will fast today and I have decided that I don't need to take suhoor to fast!

In that moment, everyone's eyes locked, as they solved the mystery of her unusually submissive behaviour the night before.

Her eyes met theirs with defiance and strength. Jolly was a strong and fierce kitten when she wanted to be, no one had the energy to fight first thing in the morning, Jolly's mother sighed and conceded with silence.

Jolly felt victorious but her mother's expression made her feel momentarily uncomfortable, although her strength wobbled for a nano second, she quickly returned to her big decision and once again, she was a big strong mountain and so, with great confidence, she left for school.

Everyone was surprised that Jolly was fasting and she was elated to finally be part of the fasting crowd. They were proud of the fact that they did not eat or drink like the other children. They all laughed and played during lunch break and it was the best day ever! Ma shaa Allaah!



Jolly was pleased with herself, she had shown everyone how wrong they were, and how she could jolly well fast just like everyone else!

It was home time and she still did not feel hungry or weak at all! Lolly and Jolly walked home as usual, but every step that she took, her strength seemed to disappear, she no longer felt like a mountain and more like a hill!

By the time she entered the old wooden door numbered 19, that hill had become a hole! And without her school friends to distract her, she was overcome with weakness. Hunger had awoken and was growling like a baby tiger.

Jolly walked slowly into the dining room to try to find something to distract her from the growling tiger in her tummy, but to her despair all she could see was a packet of digestive biscuits!



The Battle Commences

Jolly doesn't remember how it happened nor does she remember telling her hand to reach up, but somehow in a flash, that packet of digestive biscuits was in her hand, and her hand was refusing to let go!

Jolly looked around anxiously—Lolly wasn't there and her mother wasn't there her elder sister and brother were also nowhere to be seen, but it would not be long before they saw her.

Of course she had absolutely no intention of eating the biscuits, she just wanted to hold them, to pacify the growling tiger.

But no one would believe her, they never did, they were always ready to believe the worst of her— it wasn't fair! She must find somewhere to hide where no one could see her.



She ran to the bedroom and frantically looked around, there was a big beautiful single wooden wardrobe full to the brim with her mother's clothes.

There was a big BROTHER sewing machine where their mother made their beautiful clothes, if she went under it they would see her as it was all open.

All that was left were the two big beds that everyone slept on.

Jolly jumped under the bed, it was dark and cosy, she clasped the packet of biscuits and felt content in her secret hiding place.



However, the growling tiger was now prowling around her tummy with a desperate look of hunger in his eyes! Why didn't she feel like a strong, firm mountain anymore? Why did she feel like an earthquake was about to quake? She realised it was because she was shaking all over! She looked at the packet of biscuits and it crackled due to her shaking hands. She closed her eyes and tried to understand what was happening.

Jolly reminded herself that she was fasting and needed to be strong like the other children, but that feeling of hunger was so strong and powerful that it was becoming unbearable!

She thought about her options, it was time to make another big decision, should she be patient and allow the tiger to roar inside her tummy and pretend she couldn't feel it? Or should she stop pretending that she was a strong mountain and listen to her body that was trembling with weakness?



What would everyone say if she broke her fast? They would laugh at her, she would never be able to look at them in the eyes again.

The darkness under the bed matched her mood and heart perfectly, everything was black, there was no light to help guide her to salvation.

Maybe if she smelt the biscuits the tiger would calm down and she could think straight and make a decision? With her shaking hand and a dry mouth, she bought the packet to her nose and smelt the biscuits.

Oooooohhh they smelt amazing! The plan did not work, she felt weaker. The smell of the vanilla shot through her nostrils like fighter jets and landed promptly in her tummy making her tiger roar even louder.



Another Decision

As the roaring tiger erupted in her stomach her hand made another decision without asking her heart. In a flash the packet was open and the biscuit was in her hand.

It was shouting Eat me! Eat me! Again. Jolly closed her eyes and tried to think of Allah but as soon as she closed her eyes she saw digestive biscuits dancing around laughing and smiling.

Jolly opened her eyes and saw the biscuit in her hand looking even more tempting than the ones she had just seen.

That mountain feeling was gone, a big hole had taken its place, the tiger's roar was deafening and her arms and legs were shaking like a jelly on a plate. The commotion was making her brain cells swirl!

Should she maybe just nibble a little bit of the biscuit, so the tiger would lie down quietly and relax her shaking body giving her some peace to make her decision?



What's in a little nibble? No one needs to know and Allah can't see me properly anyway because it's very dark under the bed, she lied to herself.

In a flash, her lips opened to greet the edge of the biscuit. Gently, her teeth decided to revolt and ignore her heart. Like soldiers, they charged into the biscuit taking a big bite, and as she swallowed, she realised she had already eaten half of the biscuit!

But oh! The pleasure... it was rippling through her body, her brain was swirling, her tiger was purring in velvety tones and she was floating on a delightful crumbly cloud of digestive biscuits!

Those bad, weak feelings were getting smaller and a happy, strong feeling was getting stronger and she felt like a mountain again.

Jolly liked that feeling, so without thinking she polished off the whole biscuit.



Once she had finished one biscuit, she was fully convinced that no one would ever know, and Allah is not able to see in the dark. The heavy feeling of hunger and weakness was too much for her to bear.

Why not quickly eat just one more biscuit? Her body was now in full control, her heart was completely helpless and her whispers of, 'should I? Or shouldn't I?' became quieter with each bite.

The tiger in her tummy was commanding its soldiers, her teeth! Jolly proceeded to eat the whole packet, and lay there feeling content and happy.



Relief

Alhamdulillah, her body had stopped shaking her tiger was snoozing happily and Jolly lay there in such a state of delight, that she forgot she was under the bed.

She heard voices that jolted her back to reality as she heard her family looking for her!

She crept out and joined them sheepishly.

No one knew she had broken her fast and she had no intention of telling them either.

It wasn't her fault, she had no choice, the tiger was going wild and she had to stop that feeling somehow.

Well, at least it was all over, the bad feelings had gone and she felt relieved.



A New Feeling

However, as everyone got ready for iftar, a new feeling began to surface, a feeling that she had never felt before.

This feeling was bigger than the mountain, wilder than a crazy tiger and a million times worse than all those feelings that made her break her fast under the bed.

By iftar time, she was completely engulfed by this new horrific feeling and she could barely breathe, it was suffocating! Everyone was smiling and pleased that she had fasted, making this feeling even worse!

The ice cream van came which usually made her happy hormones shoot up, but even the ice cream van was not enough to remove that alien feeling that was stuck to her like glue.



Jolly ate her ice cream solemnly with Lolly, it simply melted without the usual sweetness on her tongue. Did they forget to put sugar in the ice cream she thought? What was this feeling? It must have a name? It was paralyzing, it zapped everything that was usually good into bad.

It was like a filter of a murky colour that was spoiling everything it touched, everything felt murky, muddy and bad.

That night, as she got into bed, she looked at her mother and her heart, which was more in control now, tugged her encouraging her to tell her the truth.

Jolly was usually very expressive with her words, and unlike her rosy cheeked twin Lolly, she usually couldn't keep quiet for more than 5 minutes!

But THAT feeling had silenced her tongue,



Lost

In fact, she felt like a piece of wood being tossed around in the sea with no idea where she was going to end up. This ginormous feeling was more powerful than the roaring tiger that she had tamed earlier, and although her body was no longer trembling, her heart had begun to tremble and shiver.

Jolly's mother had been observing Jolly's behaviour silently. That silence coupled with Jolly's silence was like a bomb ticking away!

Jolly slept, saying nothing. The next day that dreaded feeling was stronger than ever and it followed her to school, then followed her home and never ever left her side. Jolly realized, that this joyless feeling could not be ignored, she must sit down and face it, otherwise this would be the worst Ramadan ever!



Looking Back

Whilst looking at the big beautiful pink roses in the front garden of 19 Sunny Bank Road, Jolly peeped inside her heart and asked her heart to help her. Together they retraced her feelings to the beginning.

It all began with not being allowed to fast. Why was I so upset ? She realized it was because she wanted to fit in with her friends at school, she also knew it was because she was missing out on the ice cream treats.

Allah gently guided her heart and she realised that if she was honest, she had not wanted to fast to please Allah at all.

Allah tells us to fast so we can become more pious and better Muslims, but Jolly was only doing it to have fun with her friends, to feel like a part of them and for the ice-cream too! Becoming a better Muslim and pleasing Allah had nothing to do with her intention to fast.

Suddenly Jolly felt ashamed and guilty, THAT was the name for those feelings that were killing her heart and soul.



Her heart also reminded her what her mother had said, that she was too weak to fast. It killed her to admit that her mother was right. It was easier to admit a mistake to Allah in your heart because no one but Allah knew, and He was The Most Merciful, that was easy!

But Jolly found it very difficult to admit that she was wrong and her mother was right. It was even harder because she had argued so zealously and had disobeyed her mother with her BIG decision to fast without eating suhoor.

This feeling of guilt and shame, was possibly the most horrendous feeling she had ever felt in her life.

Jolly acknowledged that she needed to make some changes, beginning with her heart. Fasting for Allah meant she could not fast for her own pleasures, her heart would need to wash her own feelings away and make sure they were clean and pure for Allah alone.

Her feelings and body had fought her heart and had won, next time she would not listen to her feelings alone, she would listen to her heart even if it was a faint whisper.



The Formula

It was complicated because her feelings were in her heart and her eeman was also in her heart, how would she know which one to listen to? Then she remembered that she had to take her feelings back to Allah (the Qur'aan) and His Messenger ﷺ (the Sunnah) and if her feelings were the same as what was in the Qur'aan and Sunnah she would listen, and if her feelings were different, that would mean it was really her desires –disguised as feelings – and she should ignore them.

It would not be easy, but now Jolly had a plan to help navigate her feelings. The system was perfect, but she would need to practice and would probably make stupendous mistakes, in true Jolly style.

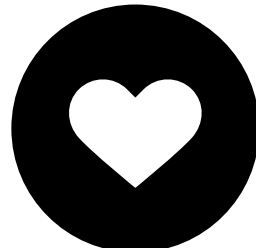
Also, she had to admit that her mother understood what her body needed better than she did. Allah had made Lolly's body different to hers, Jolly must stop comparing and accept their different strengths and weaknesses, they were twins but they had different tests.

Later that day, Jolly looked at her mother and felt more love and trust for her.

good



bad



She stopped comparing herself to other children, and although she was tempted to tell her mother that she had broken her fast, she was too ashamed to tell her. Jolly's mother actually knew but had also decided to remain silent, they both felt happier knowing that Allah had concealed her mistake.

Jolly knew Allah would make it possible for her to fast when He decided it was the right time, and she trusted Allah to do it at the best time. After all, Allah created time! He knew best.



Reflecting

Most importantly, Jolly realised that feeling guilty about disobeying Allah was more difficult than feeling angry about not fasting.

Anger was not a useful emotion, in fact ANGER wasn't even how she felt, it's how she *behaved* because she FELT hurt that she was being left out, and she *felt* embarrassed because everyone was stronger than her, and last but not least she *felt* frustrated because her mother was not allowing her to fast.

These three powerful feelings— hurt frustration and embarrassment had mixed together in her heart to make a lethal nuclear bomb! Resulting in a tsunami!

'No wonder anger is from the shaytan,' thought Jolly. Jolly had understood what had happened, but do you think it stopped her from getting angry?

No! Absolutely not! Oh well, at least she was learning, she now knew how important it was to focus on Allah and to be sincere to Him. She also realised that her heart had desires which were not positive feelings and needed to be checked with what Allah said in the Qur'aan and the Sunnah, before she acted on them.

Mixed Feelings

Part of Jolly hated that there were rules and she had to abide by them, and part of her knew that those rules kept her safe. Like a wall of protection, each brick was revelation from Allah and since Allah had made her, He knew which rules would protect her.

Ultimately the thought of Allah's rules being a beautiful wall that protected her from bad feelings and evil made her heart feel cosy and warm.

