

## Leila's Story

One Ramadan night, 20-year-old Leila was looking for food. She was hungry and was looking in the trash can outside of a restaurant that she wished she was eating in. She had clothes, but they were ripped up and holes in them. She didn't have a home to go to. She had no family because all her family were in another town or on a different side of town from her. She searched one can after another looking for food. On that same night, while still looking for food near that same restaurant, she was tired and gave up.

"I give up! I'm tired," Leila said sadly and devastated. "I guess I will go to bed hungry again."

A nice and friendly man named Jason saw Leila in her devastated state. He walked up to her, "What are you doing out here?" he asked with curiosity. "It is so cold."

Surprised by his question, Leila spoke honestly. "Well, I don't have a home. I am hungry and tired. I really don't have much."

With a look of concern, Jason asked politely, "Would you like some food? My family is serving plates of food at the Masjid tonight."

"Oh, thank you," Leila said without hesitation. She jumped up and down with excitement. It had been a while since she had a full stomach and a full meal.

As they walked to the Masjid that was not far from the restaurant, Jason explained to Leila that he understood what it meant to be hungry. He had been fasting for the month of Ramadan. He knew the difference between her hunger and his fast was that he could break his hunger with a meal. Whereas she did not know when or how her next meal would come. Many of her meals were from the trash can of the restaurant.

She arrived at the Masjid. There were men and women with plates and plates of food in sealed containers stacked on a table. She could choose to have chicken, fish, vegetables, and lamb. "Sooooo many choices," she thought. Leila chose the lamb plate. It had rice, mixed vegetables, salad, seasoned meat, bread, a slice of a pie called bean pie, and a bottle of water. Leila found a table in the courtyard under the stars to eat. She could hear a strange sound over the loudspeaker.

It was like singing, but it wasn't. One lady that remained behind said, "They are going to pray the fourth prayer of the day."

Leila listened as she ate. It was a language she did not know. She heard the group hum, "Aaaameen" and more harmonious chants that she could not quite understand. The woman named Waliyyah said, "They said, 'As-salaaamu-alaikum wa rahmahtullah which means peace and blessings of G'd upon you.'"

That is how they ended their prayer. Leila thought, 'wow, how peaceful'. The people came back out and got their food and gathered at the tables to eat their meals. They were calm, kind, and caring.

Leila finished her food and thanked Jason for his generosity. She felt good to finally eat. She felt warmed and welcomed by the people at this place that her new friend Jason called a masjid.

Before she left, some of the nice ladies showed Leila a rack of clothes and told her that she could choose any of the clothes she wanted. Leila wanted to cry. She had been wearing the ragged clothes for such a long time. When she saw the racks of clothes, Leila's eyes gleamed with joy. The garments were colorful, no rips, or holes in them. Again, sooo many choices. She chose a cotton, light blue dress with navy and red embroidery on the front. It had a long scarf that matched. Choosing that outfit made her feel special. The ladies showed her to the restroom where she was able to wash and change into the new garments.

Leila could feel something special from these strangers who also felt like friends. They told her that they would serve meals every night during Ramadan, and she was welcomed to come to dine with them. Leila was so moved by their kindness. She felt encouraged.

Their kindness helped her see her life changing