

H: ZALEEKHAH: By the River Thames, 2018

Zaleekhah arrives at her Uncle Malek's home in the elegant area of Chelsea, feeling an overwhelming sense of estrangement despite the familiarity of the surroundings. As she steps into the house, the sight of the well-maintained garden stirs nostalgia within her, yet also serves as a reminder of the emotional distance she feels from her family. She passes the doorman, Kareem, handing him a book titled *Nineveh and Its Remains*, a simple gesture that sets the tone for her visit. As she moves up the stairs, the closed door to her childhood bedroom stands in stark contrast to her current state of detachment. The house, once a symbol of familial closeness, now feels like a place she no longer belongs.

Inside Uncle Malek's study, Zaleekhah is confronted with a space brimming with luxury and warmth, but her emotional disconnect lingers. She pauses by the window and watches as her Uncle and Aunt, along with their granddaughter Lily, interact with a tenderness that she longs for but feels excluded from. The moment stirs a whirlwind of conflicting emotions, amplifying the distance she feels from her relatives. Zaleekhah's attention then shifts to a book she intends to leave on the coffee table, but as she opens an old drawer, her eyes fall upon a photograph that sends a jolt of alarm through her. The picture of a young girl, accompanied by unsettling details about her condition, ignites a sense of urgency, compelling Zaleekhah to take the photograph and leave the study abruptly. The act of removing the image underscores her growing anxiety, as she grapples with the implications of what she has discovered.

Downstairs, Kareem observes her swift departure, noting that Uncle Malek has been informed of her arrival and will be joining her shortly. Despite his reassurances, Zaleekhah insists on leaving, her desire to escape the house fueled by the tension

building inside her. Soon after, Uncle Malek arrives, his search for a girl at a tattoo shop indicating the gravity of the situation. Zaleekhah confronts him, and he reveals that Lily is critically ill, and her condition has left them desperate for an organ donor. His words hit hard, as the weight of the situation becomes apparent: time is running out, and the need for a match has reached a critical point. Uncle Malek's anxiety is palpable, making it clear that this is no ordinary family matter but one that involves the delicate balance of life and death.

Uncle Malek then shares that he has identified a potential donor among a group of Yazidi girls who are in dire circumstances. He paints a picture of a group that has been overlooked by society, suggesting that this arrangement could rescue the girl from a life of suffering and provide a solution to Lily's dire health crisis. However, Zaleekhah's sense of unease deepens as she realizes the darker truth behind her uncle's plan. The proposition is not one of rescue but of exploitation—organ harvesting masked as a paternalistic solution. She recoils at the thought of her uncle justifying such a morally questionable decision, and her shock is compounded by the realization that his rationale is built on the exploitation of vulnerable girls. This moment of reckoning forces Zaleekhah to confront not only her uncle's choices but also the ethical dilemma at the heart of their family dynamics.

The conversation escalates as Zaleekhah struggles with the ethics of Uncle Malek's plan, questioning the value of human life and the worth of a person when weighed against the desperation of a loved one. Uncle Malek attempts to rationalize his actions, but Zaleekhah remains steadfast in her condemnation, unable to accept the moral compromises he is willing to make. The argument exposes deep cracks in their familial bond, as Zaleekhah is forced to reckon with the darkness that now shadows her uncle's intentions. She is confronted with a painful truth: her family's values and her uncle's choices no longer align with the principles she holds dear. The chapter ends with Zaleekhah torn between her love for her family and her duty to stand against an immoral proposition that could haunt her for years to come.