

# Chapter 12

Chapter 12: In this chapter, Parvana finds herself seeking a brief escape from her demanding and harsh reality. After the unsettling events at the stadium, she feels emotionally drained and looks for comfort within the walls of her home. Parvana expresses her need for a break, overwhelmed by the constant tension surrounding her. The atmosphere at home is thick with anxiety, especially when her mother and Mrs. Weera discuss the increasing violence and oppressive events happening at the stadium, a symbol of the cruelty that has infiltrated their lives. The weight of these ongoing struggles hangs heavily on them, underscoring the bleak existence they are forced to navigate each day. Despite these challenges, Parvana yearns for some peace and normalcy amidst the chaos.

At home, Parvana finds solace in small, nurturing tasks that help her reconnect with her family and her own sense of purpose. She teaches her younger sister, Maryam, to count, and learns basic mending skills from her older sister, Nooria. These simple, domestic activities provide a brief reprieve from the outside world, offering Parvana a chance to focus on her family's immediate needs. However, as time passes, she finds herself missing the stories her father used to tell, which had once brought comfort and a sense of connection to the world beyond their struggles. In the midst of this yearning, Parvana also finds a semblance of excitement in the stories Mrs. Weera shares, particularly those about sports, which provide a glimpse into a world of normalcy and enjoyment amidst the harshness of their lives. But as supplies run low, Parvana knows that she must return to the market to provide for her family, and her sense of responsibility drives her to continue working.

Returning to the market, Parvana has a chance encounter with her friend Shauzia, who reveals her plan to escape their circumstances. Shauzia shares her determination to save enough money to flee to France, hoping for a life of freedom far removed from

the oppressive atmosphere of Kabul. She confides in Parvana about her decision to continue dressing as a boy for the time being, fearing that if she grows too much, she will be forced to return to her female identity, which would confine her to the domestic life she is desperate to escape. This conversation opens a window into the dreams of both girls, filled with desires for freedom and a life outside the walls of Kabul.

Shauzia's vision of France as a land of opportunity is a sharp contrast to the harsh environment they currently endure. Parvana listens carefully, grappling with her own conflicting feelings about leaving her family behind. While she understands the risks of such a journey, she is also drawn to the idea of escaping the suffocating reality of war and returning to a life of normalcy. This inner conflict speaks to Parvana's deep desire for a better life, one that is free from the constant violence and fear they face.

As the girls continue their work in the market, Parvana's dissatisfaction with life in Kabul becomes increasingly evident. She observes the struggles of the people around her, feeling a growing fatigue from the constant hardships that seem endless. Yet, amid the bleakness, there are small moments of joy that offer brief relief, such as the arrival of summer fruit in the market, which brings a sense of freshness and life to the otherwise grim surroundings. These moments, though fleeting, remind Parvana of the world outside the war, where things could be different. She also feels a sense of accomplishment when Nooria begins teaching a secret school for girls, a small act of rebellion against the Taliban's restrictions. This act of defiance highlights the resilience of the community and Parvana's hope that change, no matter how small, is possible. Despite these glimpses of hope, the ongoing struggles they face remain at the forefront of Parvana's mind. The chapter concludes with the unexpected news of Nooria's impending marriage, a development that adds another layer of complexity to Parvana's already complicated emotions. The marriage, while offering Nooria a chance at a different life, also represents the sacrifices that Parvana and her family must make in their search for survival.