

Chapter 3

Chapter 3: In this chapter, Parvana and her family are left to deal with the devastating consequences of their father's arrest. The chapter begins with Mother, who, despite her own exhaustion, carefully places her younger children, Ali and Maryam, onto the floor before starting the overwhelming task of cleaning up their home. Parvana, already drained from the emotional weight of the situation, feels the strain of the physical work as her back and legs ache from bending and lifting. She watches her mother's slow movements, which reflect the burden they both carry in the wake of their father's absence. The house, once a place of comfort, now feels like a chaotic reminder of their new harsh reality.

After they manage to restore a semblance of order, the family prepares for bed, but Parvana struggles to find peace. She is haunted by the absence of her father, her mind constantly replaying memories of him—especially the comforting sound of his snore during nights filled with uncertainty. As she lies awake, her imagination races with fearful thoughts about his condition in prison, a grim possibility shaped by the unsettling stories her aunts told about previous incarcerations. Her mother often mentioned that being connected to someone in prison was part of being Afghan, and this idea stays with Parvana, reminding her of the deep emotional toll their family is enduring. Sleep eludes her, and in the quiet of the night, her worries only grow more intense, further straining her already fragile sense of security.

Unable to bear the uncertainty, Parvana suggests lighting a lamp in the hopes of guiding her father's return, an idea that is met with resistance from her mother. Concerned about attracting attention, her mother dismisses the suggestion, aware that the Taliban's oppressive rules make it dangerous for women to be seen in public without a male guardian or official permission. The family's predicament is compounded by these strict restrictions, leaving them feeling trapped and powerless.

Parvana's desperation to find some way to bring her father home is tempered by the harsh realities of their situation, where every decision is weighed against the ever-present threat of punishment from the authorities. The tension in their home continues to rise, and the burden of their collective grief weighs heavily on them, especially as they navigate the oppressive world the Taliban has imposed on them.

The next morning, Parvana's mother announces her decision to attempt to rescue their father from prison. She treats the daunting task with a calmness that contrasts with the fear and anxiety Parvana feels, as if it were no different than going to the market. Parvana, both fearful and intrigued, is struck by the enormity of the task ahead, wondering what it will take to succeed. A note from Nooria provides their mother with some semblance of official permission to be out, though Parvana can't help but doubt the note's true effectiveness. The family prepares to face an unknown and intimidating journey, their hopes hanging on a fragile thread of possibility. Parvana's mind races as she contemplates the danger they will face, unsure whether their actions will lead to a chance at redemption or further despair.

As they make their way through the crowded streets of Kabul, Parvana clings to her mother, aware that losing sight of her in the sea of burqas would be disastrous. They both brave the intimidating atmosphere of the prison, a place that has become synonymous with fear and oppression. Parvana's anxiety grows with every step, but she also draws strength from the thought of Malali, a woman of great courage, hoping to embody the same bravery. The idea of being strong like Malali, a role model she admires, keeps Parvana moving forward, despite the overwhelming fear she feels. Together, they approach the prison with a sense of determination, though Parvana's internal struggle continues to simmer beneath the surface. This moment marks a pivotal point in her journey, where her courage and her family's bond will be tested in the face of overwhelming odds.

When they arrive at the prison, Mother demands to see her husband, but the guards respond with hostility, dismissing her pleas and disrespecting her in the cruelest way. They tear up her husband's photograph, a symbolic act that further exacerbates the

pain and frustration Parvana and her mother feel. Violence erupts when the guards strike both Parvana and her mother, pushing them to retreat in fear. The rising tension and hostility of the prison create an unbearable atmosphere, but despite the physical and emotional assault, they manage to help each other escape the dangerous situation. Although their attempt to seek justice ends in hardship, the ordeal strengthens the bond between Parvana and her mother, reaffirming their commitment to facing their bleak reality together. This chapter, filled with moments of pain and vulnerability, captures the depths of Parvana's struggle and the resilience of her family as they continue to fight for a sense of hope in a world that constantly seems to take it away.