

Chapter 6

Chapter 6: In this chapter, the family comes together to devise a plan to disguise Parvana as a boy so she can safely navigate the market and buy necessary supplies while her father remains absent. The idea is enthusiastically presented by both her mother and Mrs. Weera, though Parvana feels uneasy about the implications of such a transformation. Nooria suggests that Parvana pretend to be their cousin from Jalalabad, which initially confuses Parvana as she tries to understand the reasoning behind the plan. As the discussion progresses, Parvana is struck by the harsh reality that her friends and relatives have scattered, leaving her feeling increasingly isolated. In an attempt to create a convincing disguise, Mother decides that Parvana should wear the clothes of her deceased brother Hossain, though Parvana protests due to her long hair, fearing it will make her less believable as a boy.

Nooria, insistent on cutting Parvana's hair to complete the disguise, is met with resistance from Parvana, who tries to avoid responsibility by shifting the blame to her sister. Despite her protests, Parvana ultimately agrees, understanding that in order to survive in the increasingly hostile environment, she must accept the disguise. This realization marks a turning point for Parvana, as she understands that the choice is hers alone, even though it comes with deep emotional conflict. As the hair is cut, Parvana feels a combination of dread, uncertainty, and resignation, but also begins to sense a newfound sense of agency in making the decision herself. When the last strands fall, Parvana begins to feel a transformation take place, not just physically but mentally as well. Afterward, her mother urges her to change into Hossain's clothes, which feel unfamiliar and slightly awkward at first but also offer a sense of freedom, a small but significant change in her life.

Once dressed, Parvana experiences a moment of disorientation as she looks at herself in the mirror, no longer recognizing the reflection staring back at her. Nooria's criticism

of her appearance only deepens her sense of confusion, yet with a few encouraging words from her family, Parvana begins to feel more confident in her new disguise. As she steps out into the world for the first time, she is initially overwhelmed by the fear of being exposed. However, as she walks through the streets, Parvana finds comfort in blending in, realizing that she is just another boy among many on the bustling streets of Kabul. Successfully purchasing tea and rice without drawing attention to herself brings a sense of accomplishment, boosting her confidence in the decision she made. This small victory helps Parvana see that she can adapt to her new role, navigating the world in a way that keeps her safe and protected.

Upon returning home, Parvana eagerly shares her success with her family, proud of her accomplishment, but she soon notices that her mother reacts with visible distress when she sees Parvana dressed in Hossain's clothes. The sight of her daughter in the deceased son's clothes is a poignant reminder of the loss their family has endured. Nooria suggests that Parvana wear the boy's clothing at home as well, a proposal that only adds to the already strained dynamics within the family. The chapter ends with a heart-wrenching moment when Mother, in an emotional slip, calls out to Parvana as "Ali, my son," underscoring her inner turmoil and emotional struggle with the changes they are all going through. This moment of confusion highlights the emotional weight of the family's transformation, as they grapple with the loss of their former lives and adapt to the harsh new realities they must face together.