

Chapter 10

Chapter 10: In this chapter, Parvana faces a deeply troubling decision when Shauzia persuades her to join in a grim task: digging up bones from a graveyard to sell. Parvana struggles with the morality of their actions but ultimately agrees, knowing that the dire circumstances they live in leave few options for survival. They travel to a graveyard in Kabul, where the devastation caused by bombs has left the earth exposed, revealing the bones of the deceased. Parvana's heart is heavy with doubt as she contemplates what they are doing, but the need for money to survive weighs more heavily on her mind than the troubling nature of their task. In this moment, Parvana must come to terms with the harsh reality of survival in a war-torn world, where desperate measures become necessary to endure.

Upon arriving at the graveyard, Parvana is struck by the somber surroundings: piles of rubble are scattered throughout the area, and the air is filled with the stench of decay. In this grim setting, she learns about a bone broker who purchases the remains they dig up, further highlighting the darkness of their situation. Although Parvana is horrified by the idea of uncovering human bones, the urgency of their financial need forces her to push aside her discomfort. As they begin their work, Parvana voices her fear of encountering remains, but the necessity of earning money to survive in such a hostile environment trumps her fears. This chapter highlights the desperation Parvana feels, and her moral conflict reflects the toll the war has taken on her sense of right and wrong, forcing her to make decisions she would never have imagined before the conflict.

While they work, the task becomes even more unsettling as they dig up bones, some of which include skulls. Despite the macabre nature of their task, Parvana and Shauzia attempt to lighten the mood by joking, referring to the skulls as "mascots." The levity in their humor is a way to cope with the horror of their situation. At one point, the girls

are interrupted by the need for bathroom breaks, and Parvana's anxiety about the potential danger of land mines surfaces. However, despite the fear of land mines hidden in the ground, she bravely steps into what she knows could be a hazardous area. She returns unharmed, and this brief moment of courage serves as a reminder of the constant danger they face in Kabul, where every step carries the risk of disaster. The chapter illustrates Parvana's growing resilience, despite the emotional and physical toll the war has taken on her and her peers.

As the day progresses, sunlight breaks through the clouds, casting a strange light on their unusual task, and Parvana reflects on how strange it is that they are engaged in such work. The sunlight offers a brief sense of hope, and the girls realize they will likely remember these moments for the rest of their lives. Their bond deepens as they earn a significant amount of money—more than Parvana could make in three days. Despite their success, the girls agree to hide the full extent of their earnings from their families, choosing to secretly stash away part of the money. This decision reflects the harsh realities of their world, where survival often requires secrecy and choices that might not be understood by those around them. The girls' ability to maintain some control over their earnings highlights their desire to assert some autonomy in a life marked by loss of freedom and personal agency.

By the end of the chapter, Parvana and Shauzia plan to return to the graveyard the following day to continue their work. Despite the financial gain, the physical act of digging up bones weighs heavily on Parvana's conscience. She struggles to shake off the emotional impact of their work as she heads home, trying to wash away the memories of what she has just done. The chapter poignantly highlights the loss of innocence that Parvana experiences as a child in a war-torn country, forced to engage in disturbing actions for the sake of survival. It is a powerful commentary on the impact of conflict on children, stripping them of their childhood and forcing them to confront the grim realities of their environment. Through Parvana's journey, the reader is reminded of the resilience required to navigate such extreme circumstances, where morality and survival often collide in complex and difficult ways.