

EIGHT

Mrs. Weera returns to the household and tells Parvana she'll be moving in, which energizes Mother and creates a new dynamic. Together, Mrs. Weera and Mother plan to start a magazine, assigning various tasks to the family members: Nooria will care for the younger children, while Parvana will work outside. Parvana shows them the money she has earned, which brings joy to her mother despite Nooria's sarcastic remark about their father earning more.

After lunch, Parvana accompanies Mrs. Weera, who, despite wearing a burqa, has a distinct way of walking that makes it easy for Parvana to keep up. They discuss the dangers posed by the Taliban, but Mrs. Weera expresses confidence in her abilities to fend for herself. Parvana learns that Mrs. Weera has lost many family members to the ongoing violence, her hardships evident but not accompanied by any desire for pity.

Eventually, they fetch Mrs. Weera's belongings, and Parvana helps load a karachi. Among the few belongings is a medal Mrs. Weera proudly displays, declaring it a symbol of her achievements in athletics. After a busy day, Parvana suggests taking her younger sister, Maryam, to fetch water. With some reluctance from their mother, they go out together. Maryam, unused to the outside world, finds joy in the simplest experiences, like splashing water on her face.

As days pass, a routine settles in. Parvana works at the market, earning enough for her family's sustenance, while attempting to keep Nooria engaged and involved. Parvana's proposal to escort her mother and Nooria outside to enjoy sunlight brings some resistance, but with Nooria agreeing, the siblings begin venturing out. They experience fresh air together, while grateful for moments spent in the sun.

Parvana continues to earn a modest income, and even though the family doesn't openly mourn their father, the children show faint signs of their sadness. One day, in an emotional moment, Parvana believes she sees her father in the market but realizes it's a stranger. Soon after, she finds mysterious items—a piece of cloth and a bracelet—that seem to come from the window of someone nearby, hinting at a connection yet to unfold. Finally, in a humorous twist of fate, Parvana discovers that a tea boy is actually a girl from her class, adding a new layer to her daily experiences.

This chapter captures a mixture of resilience and the gentle stirrings of hope amid ongoing struggles, as Parvana navigates her role in a changing family dynamic.