

ELEVEN

In this chapter titled "ELEVEN," Parvana returns home, drenched and emotionally exhausted, prompting concerned questions from her family, especially her mother. After a moment of reassurance, Parvana reveals that she spent her day digging up graves. This shocking admission leads to a profound discussion about the state of their lives in Afghanistan, highlighting a grim reality where digging up ancestors' bones becomes a means of survival. Mother expresses deep sorrow over the situation, while Mrs. Weera acknowledges the practicality of their actions, noting that bones can be repurposed for various uses.

Nooria, Parvana's sister, surprises everyone by arguing for Parvana's right to continue this work, stating that the family desperately needs income beyond what Parvana earns from reading letters. Their mother initially resists but is eventually persuaded by Nooria and Mrs. Weera's reasoning about the exceptional circumstances they face. They reach a compromise, allowing Parvana to work as long as she reports her experiences for a magazine.

As Parvana delves into her new venture with Shauzia, they accumulate enough earnings to purchase trays for selling goods. They decide to sell lightweight items such as cigarettes and chewing gum. Parvana feels a sense of liberation from her previous grave-digging work and is learning to navigate the streets of Kabul more confidently. One day, they spot a crowd heading to a sports stadium and seize the opportunity to potentially earn more from the attendees.

However, upon their arrival, they quickly realize the atmosphere is unsettling—no cheers, only an ominous silence. A group of Taliban soldiers instead transforms the event into a grotesque display of punishment for thieves, displaying severe brutality that horrifies Parvana and Shauzia. As they witness the horrific scene of severed hands, they remain hidden among the crowd, frightened but supported by kind strangers who help them escape the nightmare. The chapter concludes with Parvana grappling with the harsh realities of their world, symbolized by the young Talib man flaunting his gruesome trophies to the crowd, leaving a haunting impression on their day.