

FIFTEEN

In this chapter of "The Breadwinner," Parvana experiences a profound emotional reunion with her father, who has returned home after being released from prison. She recognizes him despite his changed appearance—his white shalwar kameez now tattered and his face pale. Parvana's initial reaction is one of overwhelming joy, as she clings to him tightly. The men who brought her father home inform Mrs. Weera that he was found outside the prison, unable to move on his own, and thank them for their efforts.

Days pass as Parvana helps care for her father, whose health has deteriorated due to mistreatment in prison. Mrs. Weera's nurturing becomes essential, facilitating his gradual recovery. Parvana is relieved that her father can finally take notice of her new appearance and acknowledges her dual role as both daughter and son. She manages their modest livelihood by working and brings him food while also assisting Mrs. Weera.

Parvana's friend Homa learns some English at school and engages with Father, creating moments of laughter that contrast with the bleakness surrounding them. Parvana feels a flicker of hope for a reunified family. However, the underlying tension escalates as her friend Shauzia reveals her family's plans to marry her off, igniting Parvana's dread of losing another close companion.

The chapter highlights Parvana's determination to reconnect with her mother and siblings in Mazar, spurred by news of refugees. Discussing logistics with her father, they resolve to seek out their family, even if it means uncertain travel given her father's weakened condition. The narrative is steeped in melancholy and resilience, as Parvana takes on responsibilities while nurturing dreams of a brighter future.

In preparation for their journey, Parvana attempts to leave a piece of herself behind in the market to honor "the Window Woman"—a symbol of their shared humanity amidst despair. As she plants wildflowers, an elderly man assists her, emphasizing the value of beauty in their harsh reality.

As the chapter closes, unexpected farewells occur when Shauzia shares her plans to leave for Pakistan, and they dream of a reunion in Paris twenty years later. Parvana's mixed feelings—of hope and uncertainty—perfectly encapsulate her journey towards understanding her agency and the unknown that lies ahead. With her father by her side, she embarks on a new chapter of her life, ready to face the future.