

FOURTEEN

In Chapter Fourteen, Parvana finds herself drawn to a softly crying woman in a darkened area. She nervously calls out and after striking several matches, she locates the woman huddled against the wall. Parvana introduces herself, revealing that she's pretending to be a boy named Kaseem to earn money. The woman's silence and vulnerability prompt Parvana to invite her back to her home for safety, highlighting the danger the woman faces for being outside without a burqa.

While Parvana considers the woman's predicament, she forms a plan to borrow a burqa from Mrs. Weera to help her friend blend in and stay safe. Parvana offers the woman a bag of dried fruit and nuts to eat while they wait for nightfall, and together they strategize their escape into the darkness of Kabul. Parvana reflects on how much the city has changed since her parents spoke of its vibrant past before the Taliban's rule.

As they navigate the nearly deserted, perilous streets, Parvana stays alert to the dangers of the Taliban patrolling the area. They encounter a truck filled with soldiers, which heightens Parvana's anxiety. Eventually, they reach Parvana's street, where Mrs. Weera greets them warmly amidst her concern for the woman's lack of proper attire. Parvana explains the night's events, emphasizing the importance of protecting and supporting the new arrival, Homa.

After a day spent recuperating, Homa reveals her harrowing escape from Mazar-e-Sharif and the traumatic loss of her family at the hands of the Taliban. Her narrative leaves Parvana in a state of despair, visualizing her own loved ones in similar peril. Despite Mrs. Weera's attempts to instill hope, Parvana feels crushed and retreats into a state of sadness for two days.

During her lowest point, her friend Shauzia arrives, encouraging Parvana to re-engage with life. This motivates Parvana to step out again into the world, resuming her responsibilities and forming a bond with Homa. In a surprising turn, she returns home one afternoon to find her father alive, signaling a turning point in what feels like an unending nightmare .