

ONE

In the chapter titled "ONE," we are introduced to Parvana, an eleven-year-old girl living in war-torn Kabul under Taliban rule. Despite the oppressive environment that forbids girls from leaving their homes or attending school, Parvana ventures outside to assist her father, who has been injured. She hides in her chador while accompanying him to the market, sitting quietly on a blanket and wishing to remain invisible amidst the harsh realities surrounding her.

Parvana reflects on her life before the Taliban's rise—her sister Nooria had been in high school, and their mother worked for a radio station. Now, their family is confined to a single room along with younger siblings, Maryam and Ali, struggling with the loss of freedom and the constant threat of violence that has defined Parvana's life. Struggling with fear yet demonstrating resilience, Parvana helps her father as he reads and writes letters for customers who cannot do so themselves.

In the marketplace, Parvana observes the daily life around her: men shopping, tea boys bustling about, and the chaos of the busy street. She dreams of freedom, wishing to run and explore rather than sit in discomfort. Parvana's education is emphasized; her parents, both educated, instilled the value of learning in her. She recalls her fascination with Afghan history and her father's stories about their rich past, overshadowed now by the Taliban's strict governance and ongoing conflict.

As the chapter progresses, we learn more about the family's history, their previously comfortable life before the war, and the loss of their home and belongings to continuous bombings. Parvana's father, once a teacher and a proud man, now struggles with his health and has been diminished by their circumstances. The chapter closes on a somber note as they return home through perilous streets, highlighting their struggle to maintain dignity amidst the chaos of their scarred city. The spirit of resilience emerges, underscoring the impact of war on children like Parvana, who long for a normal life filled with education, freedom, and joy.