

Roya Shams

In August 1987, in Tehran, a poignant moment unfolds between the narrator and Leila, marked by their first kiss, which evokes a deep emotional resonance akin to "heaven." The chapter begins with a light-hearted phone call from Ali and Gilgamesh, who, while at a campsite, are amusingly checking on their wives. Their playful banter and laughter contrast sharply with the more profound undercurrents of the narrator's connection with Leila. As Leila sifts through Ali's old rock records, she expresses her amusement at the music, showcasing a shared intimacy between the women.

The narrative shifts as Leila takes the phone from the narrator, engaging in a private call with Gilgamesh. During this exchange, she playfully gestures in a manner that hints at a depth of understanding between the two women. After hanging up, Leila's demeanor changes—her eyes brim with purpose as she selects a record on a vintage RCA turntable. This decision leads to a magnetic and charged atmosphere as they begin to dance to the evocative sounds of Mick Jagger's voice, capturing a profound yearning that resonates throughout the piece.

The narrator opens up about feelings of exhaustion and the struggle to be "good," to which Leila responds with empathy, recognizing the weight of their situation. As they dance, an emotional connection deepens, punctuated by the lyrics that resonate with their experiences. The song plays and then loops, while Leila's affectionate gestures—kisses on various parts of the narrator's body—bring them closer, dissolving barriers between them.

Ultimately, the rhythmic repetition of the music becomes a catalyst for a shared silence, which is amplified by the music that preceded it. This silence symbolizes a moment of total unity, enveloping them in a state of blissful intimacy, stripped of external concerns such as music, nationality, fear, and history. In this cocoon of connection, the narrator and Leila find solace in each other, marking a significant moment in their relationship amidst the backdrop of a tumultuous reality.