

THREE

In the third chapter, Parvana and her family grapple with the aftermath of their father's arrest. As the chapter opens, Mother carefully places her sleeping children, Ali and Maryam, on the floor before initiating a cleanup of their disheveled home. The physical strain of tidying up is palpable, particularly for Parvana, who feels the ache in her back and legs, and sees her Mother's slow movements, a reflection of their shared burden.

After restoring some semblance of order, the family prepares for bed, but Parvana is unable to sleep, haunted by the absence of her father. Memories of his comforting snore during nights of uncertainty follow her thoughts. Her imagination races with fear about his wellbeing in prison, a grim concept shaped by her aunts' stories of past incarcerations, as her mother would state that knowing someone in prison is a part of being Afghan.

As night drags on, Parvana's restlessness leads her to suggest lighting a lamp to guide her father's return. However, her pleas are met with resistance from her mother, who is worried about drawing attention. The family's situation is compounded by the Taliban's oppressive rules that prevent women from being in public without a male guardian or official permission.

The following morning, Mother announces her intention to rescue Father, treating the daunting task as casually as a trip to the market. Parvana is struck with a mix of trepidation and intrigue about visiting a prison. A note from Nooria gives Mother some semblance of official permission to be out, though doubt is cast on its effectiveness.

As they make their way through the streets of Kabul, Parvana keeps a tight grip on her mother's presence, knowing that losing sight of her in the sea of burqas would lead to panic. They brave the prison's intimidating atmosphere together, despite the increasing anxiety in Parvana, who wishes to embody the courage of her role model, Malali.

Upon arrival, Mother demands to see her husband, but the guards respond with hostility, dismissing her pleas and disrespecting her by tearing up Father's photograph. Violence erupts as the guards strike both Parvana and her mother, forcing them to retreat under the rising threat. Despite the chaos, they manage to help each other away from the prison grounds, their attempt to seek justice ending in hardship but reinforcing their bond as they face their bleak reality together.