

TWELVE

In Chapter Twelve of "The Breadwinner," Parvana takes a brief respite from her challenging life, seeking solace at home after troubling events at the stadium. Feeling overwhelmed, she expresses her need for a break from the harsh realities surrounding her. The ambiance in her home is tinged with anxiety, especially as her mother and Mrs. Weera discuss the grim events occurring regularly at the stadium, highlighting the oppressive atmosphere they navigate.

While at home, Parvana engages in simple nurturing activities such as teaching her sister Maryam to count and learning mending techniques from Nooria. As she tries to adjust to her new life, she misses her father's stories but finds some enjoyment in Mrs. Weera's tales of sports, which offer a semblance of excitement in gloomy times. When bread runs out, Parvana takes the initiative to return to work in the market, recognizing her responsibilities towards her family.

In her market returns, she reunites with her friend Shauzia, who reveals her plan to escape their circumstances by saving money to flee to France. Shauzia shares her determination to remain in her boy guise until she can safely leave, fearing that if she grows too much, she will have to assume her female identity again, which would confine her to her home life.

Their conversation reveals deep-seated desires for freedom and a childhood unburdened by the harsh realities of war. Shauzia fantasizes about thriving in France, inspired by images of a vibrant life away from their oppressive environment. Parvana grapples with her conflicting feelings about leaving her family behind, understanding the risks but simultaneously yearning for a return to normalcy.

As they return to work, Parvana's dissatisfaction with life in Kabul becomes palpable. She observes the struggles of those around her, feeling fatigue in facing the daily hardships. Yet, she finds joy in small moments, like the arrival of summer fruit in the market and the initiation of a secret school for girls, where her sister Nooria teaches. Even so, the ongoing tumult in their lives remains forefront in her thoughts, culminating in the unexpected news of Nooria's impending marriage.