

The Breadwinner

The Breadwinner by Deborah Ellis follows Parvana, a young girl living under Taliban rule in Afghanistan. Disguised as a boy to support her family, Parvana faces countless challenges while navigating life in a society that oppresses women and girls.

Openers

It appears that you've provided an HTML snippet rather than a book chapter. Please upload the actual text of the chapter you'd like summarized, and I'll be happy to assist you with your request.

Foreword

In the foreword of "The Breadwinner," author Deborah Ellis reflects on the long history of conflict in Afghanistan, spanning thirty-six years since the Soviet Union's invasion. This time includes the civil war that erupted after their departure, the rise of the Taliban, and the consequential events following September 11. Ellis expresses her concern regarding the impact of war, highlighting how decisions made by those in safety lead to devastating consequences for the innocent people of Afghanistan.

She emphasizes that wars are often fueled by individuals who profit from weapon manufacturing and who fail to seek peaceful resolutions, instead opting for violence. Through her experiences, Ellis portrays the stark realities of war: the destruction of families, loss of infrastructure, and the pervasive suffering of refugees who await basic necessities like food and shelter.

Amidst the chaos, Ellis identifies extraordinary individuals who embody hope and resilience. She recounts encounters with teachers, librarians, health workers, and everyday heroes who strive to nurture childhood, build communities, and offer care despite overwhelming obstacles. These acts of kindness serve as a powerful reminder of human decency in the face of adversity.

Ellis illustrates the tragic statistic that civilian casualties constitute ninety-five percent of war-related deaths, urging readers to recognize the humanity in those whom war affects. These individuals share our lives in fundamental ways, experiencing the same joys and struggles, such as pondering daily meals and caring for their loved ones.

Books become a vital tool for fostering empathy and understanding human connections, something Ellis strives to achieve in her writing. In the fifteenth anniversary edition of "The Breadwinner," she expresses deep gratitude towards readers who have embraced the journey of Parvana and her companions. She acknowledges the role of educators and caregivers in sharing the story and conveys heartfelt appreciation to the people of Afghanistan, emphasizing their right to peace.

Deborah Ellis' words resonate deeply as she invites readers to reflect on shared human experiences amidst the despair of war, reaffirming the enduring spirit of kindness and compassion.

Glossary

The chapter contains a glossary of terms relevant to the context of the book "Breadwinner." Each term is defined succinctly to aid in understanding the cultural and linguistic aspects presented in the narrative.

It begins with "burqa," described as a long, tent-like garment worn by women, which covers the entire body, leaving only a narrow mesh screen over the eyes for visibility. Following this is "chador," referencing the piece of cloth used by women and girls for covering hair and shoulders.

Next is "Dari," one of Afghanistan's two primary languages, noted alongside "Pashtu," the other main language. The glossary also contextualizes cultural practices, such as "Eid," the Muslim festival marking the end of Ramadan, where celebrations occur.

In terms of everyday items, "karachi" describes a hand-pushed cart used in markets, while "kebab" refers to pieces of meat grilled on skewers. The glossary includes safety references, such as "land mine," a hidden explosive device that detonates upon pressure.

Food items are also mentioned, with "nan," which is traditional Afghan bread available in various shapes. The term "pattu" identifies a gray or brown woolen shawl worn by Afghan men and boys, contributing to the understanding of local attire.

The description of clothing continues with "shalwar kameez," identifying a loose-fitting outfit comprising a long shirt and trousers worn by both genders. Differences are detailed between men's and women's attire, with men's designs being simpler and women's featuring elaborate embroidery.

The glossary also touches upon historical context, briefly discussing the "Soviets"—referring to the Soviet Union before its dissolution—and the "Taliban," a militant group controlling Kabul between 1996 and 2001.

Lastly, "toshak" is mentioned as a narrow mattress commonly used in Afghan homes instead of standard seating or beds, highlighting the living conditions and cultural practices prevalent in the region.

Overall, this glossary serves as a vital tool for readers to grasp the terms and cultural references found within the book, enriching their understanding of the narrative's setting and characters.

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.

TWO

In this chapter, titled "Two," the story centers on Parvana's challenging day as she navigates the responsibilities thrust upon her in a war-torn Afghanistan. The chapter opens with the family's usual routine; Parvana's mother and sister, Nooria, are cleaning while their father takes a rest after a long day. Parvana, tasked with fetching water, feels her resentment towards her family obligations. She recognizes the burden of having to make numerous trips to the water tap and is frustrated, particularly with Nooria, who does not have to contribute in the same way.

As she treks to the water tap, Parvana muses on her family dynamics, noting the limitations imposed on women by the Taliban. They have been forced to stay indoors, leading to a monotonous routine filled with cleaning and chores, which Parvana despises. Despite her anger, she manages to fill the tank with water, allowing her a moment of respite where she admires her sister Maryam's artistic talent, envisioning a brighter future as artists.

Their conversation shifts to household chores, where Parvana's discontent toward cleaning intensifies, especially upon seeing precious items being set aside for sale, including her treasured shalwar kameez. This conflict highlights the dire circumstances they are living under, as decisions about selling personal belongings are being made out of necessity.

Father, despite the family's struggles, attempts to instill a sense of pride and resilience, recounting tales of Afghan history and courageous figures. However, this moment of familial bonding is shattered when Taliban soldiers burst into their home. The atmosphere quickly turns from a light-hearted exchange to chaos as the family is thrust into fear. The soldiers aggressively confront Father about his education and opinions, culminating in a brutal scuffle where he is taken away against his will.

Parvana, feeling powerless, tries to defend her family, showing her growing courage but ultimately suffers under the soldiers' violence. After they leave, the family is left devastated, particularly mourning Father's absence. Parvana's real struggle begins here, marked by a poignant blend of familial love and an oppressive societal structure that threatens their existence. The chapter ends with a sense of helplessness, compelling the reader to empathize deeply with Parvana and her family in their plight.

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.

FOUR

Parvana and her mother returned home late from visiting the prison, with exhaustion consuming them. Parvana, weakened from the long journey, leaned on her mother for support, her body aching from head to toe. Upon removing her sandals, Parvana was horrified to see her blistered, bloody feet, and her mother's condition was even worse. It dawned on Parvana that her mother hadn't stepped outside since the Taliban seized control in Kabul a year and a half ago—she had chosen to remain inside, comforted by her husband's encouragement to stay home and write when she could have ventured out.

Their father had often insisted that Fatana, Parvana's mother, needed to observe the world to capture its essence in her writing. Despite his supportive nature, a truce had emerged during their conversations; he believed the educated should stay and help rebuild Afghanistan rather than flee. Parvana remained oblivious to her mother's suffering during their arduous trek.

When they finally reached home, instead of being active about her condition, her mother collapsed into tears on the toshak, ignoring Nooria's attempts to help. Parvana was then cared for by Maryam, who struggled to provide comfort as her sister faced the physical and emotional toll of their situation. With concern for their missing father, Parvana confided in her sister that they had received no news about him.

As night fell, Parvana dreamt of soldiers, their harshness while her mother seemed in distress. The next morning, Parvana realized her mother lay on the toshak, unresponsive to offers for food. The days dragged painfully, with Parvana and Nooria keeping the younger kids quiet while their mother continued to sleep. The atmosphere grew tense as their food supply dwindled, leading Parvana to confront her mother with the disheartening reality that they were out of food. Unable to awaken her, Nooria stopped her, asserting their mother was in a deep depression.

Frustration brewed among the sisters as the prospect of starvation loomed. Parvana hesitated, her feet still sore and tired, yet the burden of feeding the family weighed heavily. Ultimately, seeing the desperation in her siblings' faces, she decided to brave the outside world for food, symbolizing her shifting role within the

family as the responsibility to provide began to fall upon her shoulders.

FIVE

In this chapter, Parvana ventures into the marketplace without her father, feeling unsettled by his absence. Women aren't allowed in shops, and Parvana grapples with the restrictions imposed by the Taliban. She ultimately decides to buy bread from the baker, covering her face with her chador to maintain some anonymity. While waiting for her order, she reflects on how hungry she is, almost yearning to devour a whole loaf.

Parvana's moment of peace is shattered when a Talib confronts her aggressively, questioning her presence and attire. The soldier demands to know her male guardians and threatens punishment for her behavior. In an act of desperation, Parvana defends herself, yelling at him and running away as he raises his stick against her. During her hurried escape, she knocks over vegetables in her path, clutching the warm bread as she dashes through the streets, determined to evade the soldier.

She collides with a familiar woman, Mrs. Weera, who recognizes Parvana. The woman questions her hurried demeanor and reassures her, encouraging her to calm down. They walk together, with Mrs. Weera visiting Parvana's home for a long-overdue chat with her mother. Parvana reluctantly leads the way, feeling apprehensive about her mother's condition.

Upon their arrival, Nooria, Parvana's sister, initially only notices the bread. After Mrs. Weera identifies herself, relief washes over Nooria, who is relieved to have another adult in the household to help shoulder their burdens. Despite the chaos, Mrs. Weera steps in with authority, taking charge as she learns about the family's struggles, from their mother's illness to the lack of resources.

Mrs. Weera's energetic disposition contrasts with the family's somber mood and shows an unwavering resolve to support Parvana and her family. Despite the hardships, Parvana carries water from outside, fulfilling her responsibilities even as exhaustion sets in. She experiences a particularly tense moment when she tries to drink unboiled water, only to be scolded by Nooria. The chapter concludes with a sense of tentative hope as they share a meal and Mrs. Weera comes to stay for the night, suggesting they may need new strategies to cope with their circumstances .

SIX

In this chapter, the family devises a plan to disguise Parvana as a boy, to enable her to navigate the market and buy supplies while her father is away. Mother and Mrs. Weera present the idea enthusiastically. Nooria suggests Parvana will be their cousin from Jalalabad, which confuses Parvana. As the conversation unfolds, Parvana realizes the harsh reality that her friends and relatives have scattered, leaving her isolated. Mother plans for Parvana to wear her deceased brother Hossain's clothes, but Parvana protests her long hair, fearing she won't convincingly pass as a boy.

Nooria insists on cutting Parvana's hair, prompting resistance from Parvana, who deflects the blame onto Nooria. Ultimately, the family agrees that to survive, Parvana must embrace this disguise, realizing it's her choice alone. As they prepare to cut her hair, Parvana feels a mix of dread and resignation, yet also a sense of agency in making the decision herself. When the hair falls, she begins to feel transformed. After a quick cut, Mother urges her to change into Hossain's clothes, which feel unfamiliar yet liberating.

Once dressed, Parvana experiences a moment of identity confusion, especially when Nooria criticizes her appearance. However, with encouragement and a few essentials, she gains some confidence. As she steps

into the world donning her disguise, she initially fears exposure but soon finds comfort in being just another boy on the street. She successfully shops for tea and rice without attracting attention, which boosts her sense of accomplishment.

Upon returning home, she shares her success with her family, though Mother exhibits signs of distress seeing Parvana in Hossain's clothes. Nooria suggests that to maintain her disguise, Parvana should wear the boy's clothing at home too, which deepens the family's strained dynamics. The chapter concludes with a poignant moment where Mother calls out to Ali, referring to him as "my son," highlighting her emotional struggle with the changes their family is facing.

SEVEN

In the chapter titled "Seven," Parvana embarks on a new venture after breakfast, encouraged by her mother to take her father's writing supplies to the marketplace. The hope of earning money excites her, allowing her to escape the confines of housework. Parvana dons her boy disguise again, feeling liberated from her hair and chador while walking through the bustling market. She carries her father's shoulder bag containing his writing tools and an outfit she intends to sell, along with a blanket for sitting.

Positioned in a familiar spot that her father used, Parvana sets up her materials, recalling his strategy of building a customer base through familiarity. When questioned about her true identity, Mother has coached her well to say she is her father's nephew, Kaseem, claiming he's ill rather than imprisoned, as revealing his status could expose them. Despite her apprehensions about being a girl in a male-dominated environment, Parvana finds courage in her education, which surpasses that of many Afghans.

As she waits for customers, the first hour passes slowly without any success, creating a growing sense of anxiety. When a Taliban soldier approaches, she trembles in fear but ultimately manages to confirm her role as a letter reader. He requests her assistance in reading an old letter addressed to his deceased wife, Fatima Azima. Parvana reads it aloud, delivering heartfelt sentiments from the woman's aunt who expresses loving wishes for her future. The soldier, visibly moved, requests a reply but ultimately declines, leaving her with a payment.

Parvana reflects on her perception of the Taliban, surprised to encounter one who expresses sorrow. This encounter prompts her to ponder the complexity of human emotions, particularly among those she initially viewed with hostility.

As the day unfolds, she makes a sale of her shalwar kameez, showcasing her developing bargaining skills, despite the emotional weight of parting with her treasured garment. After a few hours, needing to relieve herself, she begins to clean up, feeling a strong longing for her father. Nevertheless, buoyed by her modest achievements, Parvana runs home, proud of the money she earned and her ability to navigate the marketplace on her own.

EIGHT

Mrs. Weera returns to the household and tells Parvana she'll be moving in, which energizes Mother and creates a new dynamic. Together, Mrs. Weera and Mother plan to start a magazine, assigning various tasks to the family members: Nooria will care for the younger children, while Parvana will work outside. Parvana shows them the money she has earned, which brings joy to her mother despite Nooria's sarcastic remark about their father earning more.

After lunch, Parvana accompanies Mrs. Weera, who, despite wearing a burqa, has a distinct way of walking that makes it easy for Parvana to keep up. They discuss the dangers posed by the Taliban, but Mrs. Weera expresses confidence in her abilities to fend for herself. Parvana learns that Mrs. Weera has lost many family members to the ongoing violence, her hardships evident but not accompanied by any desire for pity.

Eventually, they fetch Mrs. Weera's belongings, and Parvana helps load a karachi. Among the few belongings is a medal Mrs. Weera proudly displays, declaring it a symbol of her achievements in athletics. After a busy day, Parvana suggests taking her younger sister, Maryam, to fetch water. With some reluctance from their mother, they go out together. Maryam, unused to the outside world, finds joy in the simplest experiences, like splashing water on her face.

As days pass, a routine settles in. Parvana works at the market, earning enough for her family's sustenance, while attempting to keep Nooria engaged and involved. Parvana's proposal to escort her mother and Nooria outside to enjoy sunlight brings some resistance, but with Nooria agreeing, the siblings begin venturing out. They experience fresh air together, while grateful for moments spent in the sun.

Parvana continues to earn a modest income, and even though the family doesn't openly mourn their father, the children show faint signs of their sadness. One day, in an emotional moment, Parvana believes she sees her father in the market but realizes it's a stranger. Soon after, she finds mysterious items—a piece of cloth and a bracelet—that seem to come from the window of someone nearby, hinting at a connection yet to unfold. Finally, in a humorous twist of fate, Parvana discovers that a tea boy is actually a girl from her class, adding a new layer to her daily experiences.

This chapter captures a mixture of resilience and the gentle stirrings of hope amid ongoing struggles, as Parvana navigates her role in a changing family dynamic.

NINE

In this chapter, Parvana is surprised to encounter her old schoolmate, Shauzia, while working in the market. Initially hesitant, Shauzia asks Parvana what she's called, to which Parvana responds with "Kaseem." They share a brief conversation about their work, where Shauzia mentions needing to return to the tea shop before blending back into the crowd. Parvana reflects on their distant relationship in school and is struck by the realization that there are other girls in Kabul who share similar struggles.

As they walk together, Shauzia gifts Parvana some dried apricots, a rare delight for her. They exchange stories about their families; Shauzia's brother is missing in Iran, and her father has passed away, while Parvana reveals her father's arrest. Shauzia's grim statement about the fate of many who are arrested leaves Parvana upset, but she clings to hope that her father will return.

Their conversation shifts to business as Shauzia suggests they consider new ways of making money. Shauzia expresses her desire to sell items from a tray, allowing her to be mobile in the market, while Parvana dreams of continuing with her letter reading. They reminisce about school, finding solace in shared memories.

At Parvana's home, her family welcomes Shauzia warmly, despite her claims that her mother is ill and her family dynamic is tumultuous. Their discussion includes the possibility of creating a secret school for girls, spearheaded by Mrs. Weera. Shauzia's sharp wit and Mrs. Weera's determination inject some levity into the grim reality they face.

The chapter highlights the girls' ongoing struggle for survival, punctuated by consistent interaction and hopeful discussions about education, community support, and shared aspirations for a better future. Nonetheless, looming fears about the Taliban's oppressive regime remain ever-present, as demonstrated through Shauzia's reluctance about their new money-making scheme. The chapter concludes with Parvana feeling uneasy about the prospect presented by Shauzia, paving the way for further conflict and decisions.

ahead.

TEN

In the chapter titled "TEN," Parvana grapples with her decision to join Shauzia in a peculiar and unsettling task: digging up bones to sell. Despite Parvana's uncertainties about the morality of their actions, she accompanies Shauzia to a graveyard in Kabul, where destruction from bombs has left the ground vulnerable, exposing the bones of the dead.

The atmosphere is grim as they arrive at the graveyard, characterized by piles of rubble and the stench of decay. Nearby, Parvana learns about the bone broker, who buys the bones they dig up. As they begin their work, Parvana expresses her fear of encountering remains, but the necessity of earning money overshadows her concerns.

Together, they dig, unearthing bones—including skulls—which they humorously adorn with the title of "mascot." Their operation is interrupted by their need for bathroom breaks, during which Parvana's anxiety about land mines surfaces. Yet, she courageously ventures into the potential danger, relieved to return unharmed.

As they work tirelessly through the afternoon, sunlight breaks through the clouds, illuminating their unusual task. They reflect on the oddity of their situation, vowing to remember these days when they grow older. Their camaraderie strengthens as they make money akin to what Parvana earns in three days, but they decide to conceal the full extent of their earnings from their families, opting to stash away part of their profits.

Their day concludes with plans to return for more digging the next day. Yet, the physical act of digging up bones weighs heavily on Parvana's mind, as she tries to wash away the memories of their grim endeavor before returning home.

This chapter encapsulates the harsh realities faced by the children in the wake of war, repurposing death for survival, and highlights themes of friendship, resilience, and the loss of childhood innocence. Parvana's struggle symbolizes a deep conflict between necessity and morality in a world ravaged by conflict.

ELEVEN

In this chapter titled "ELEVEN," Parvana returns home, drenched and emotionally exhausted, prompting concerned questions from her family, especially her mother. After a moment of reassurance, Parvana reveals that she spent her day digging up graves. This shocking admission leads to a profound discussion about the state of their lives in Afghanistan, highlighting a grim reality where digging up ancestors' bones becomes a means of survival. Mother expresses deep sorrow over the situation, while Mrs. Weera acknowledges the practicality of their actions, noting that bones can be repurposed for various uses.

Nooria, Parvana's sister, surprises everyone by arguing for Parvana's right to continue this work, stating that the family desperately needs income beyond what Parvana earns from reading letters. Their mother initially resists but is eventually persuaded by Nooria and Mrs. Weera's reasoning about the exceptional circumstances they face. They reach a compromise, allowing Parvana to work as long as she reports her experiences for a magazine.

As Parvana delves into her new venture with Shauzia, they accumulate enough earnings to purchase trays for selling goods. They decide to sell lightweight items such as cigarettes and chewing gum. Parvana feels a sense of liberation from her previous grave-digging work and is learning to navigate the streets of Kabul

more confidently. One day, they spot a crowd heading to a sports stadium and seize the opportunity to potentially earn more from the attendees.

However, upon their arrival, they quickly realize the atmosphere is unsettling—no cheers, only an ominous silence. A group of Taliban soldiers instead transforms the event into a grotesque display of punishment for thieves, displaying severe brutality that horrifies Parvana and Shauzia. As they witness the horrific scene of severed hands, they remain hidden among the crowd, frightened but supported by kind strangers who help them escape the nightmare. The chapter concludes with Parvana grappling with the harsh realities of their world, symbolized by the young Talib man flaunting his gruesome trophies to the crowd, leaving a haunting impression on their day.

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.

THIRTEEN

In this chapter, Parvana and her sister Nooria discuss Nooria's upcoming wedding and potential move to Mazar-e-Sharif, where girls can still go to school and live more freely under the Taliban's regime. Parvana is initially incredulous about Nooria's intentions, as she believes Nooria hardly knows the groom, who is a neighbor from childhood. Nooria expresses her strong desire to escape Kabul's oppressive environment, explaining that she is eager to pursue her education, find work, and lead a meaningful life. She resents being confined to her current life, filled with care for younger siblings and futile school lessons.

The family discusses their plans for the wedding, during which they will travel to Mazar. Parvana is vehemently opposed to this plan, fearing for her father's well-being if they are not there when he potentially returns from prison. However, Mother reassures her, stating that Mrs. Weera will remain behind to watch over Parvana and inform her father of their whereabouts. Despite her protests and anger—exasperatedly stamped feet included—Parvana must ultimately stay behind, as Mother explains the practical reasons for this decision.

After a few days filled with conflict and anxious feelings, the family prepares to leave. Parvana feels conflicted about being left in Kabul: while she is relieved that she can stay in her home, she is upset about missing out on the family trip. In the weeks that follow, Parvana has mixed feelings of freedom and loneliness. She enjoys having more time to read and learn with Mrs. Weera's support but misses the family dynamic.

While selling items in the market, Parvana has an encounter with rain during which she seeks shelter in a bombed-out building. The chapter closes with Parvana falling asleep in the darkened space, only to awaken to hear a woman crying, leaving readers in suspense about the woman's identity and situation amidst the ongoing turmoil surrounding them.

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.

FIFTEEN

In this chapter of "The Breadwinner," Parvana experiences a profound emotional reunion with her father, who has returned home after being released from prison. She recognizes him despite his changed appearance—his white shalwar kameez now tattered and his face pale. Parvana's initial reaction is one of overwhelming joy, as she clings to him tightly. The men who brought her father home inform Mrs. Weera that he was found outside the prison, unable to move on his own, and thank them for their efforts.

Days pass as Parvana helps care for her father, whose health has deteriorated due to mistreatment in prison. Mrs. Weera's nurturing becomes essential, facilitating his gradual recovery. Parvana is relieved that her father can finally take notice of her new appearance and acknowledges her dual role as both daughter and son. She manages their modest livelihood by working and brings him food while also assisting Mrs. Weera.

Parvana's friend Homa learns some English at school and engages with Father, creating moments of laughter that contrast with the bleakness surrounding them. Parvana feels a flicker of hope for a reunified family. However, the underlying tension escalates as her friend Shauzia reveals her family's plans to marry her off, igniting Parvana's dread of losing another close companion.

The chapter highlights Parvana's determination to reconnect with her mother and siblings in Mazar, spurred by news of refugees. Discussing logistics with her father, they resolve to seek out their family, even if it means uncertain travel given her father's weakened condition. The narrative is steeped in melancholy and resilience, as Parvana takes on responsibilities while nurturing dreams of a brighter future.

In preparation for their journey, Parvana attempts to leave a piece of herself behind in the market to honor "the Window Woman"—a symbol of their shared humanity amidst despair. As she plants wildflowers, an elderly man assists her, emphasizing the value of beauty in their harsh reality.

As the chapter closes, unexpected farewells occur when Shauzia shares her plans to leave for Pakistan, and they dream of a reunion in Paris twenty years later. Parvana's mixed feelings—of hope and uncertainty—perfectly encapsulate her journey towards understanding her agency and the unknown that lies ahead. With her father by her side, she embarks on a new chapter of her life, ready to face the future.

Author's Note

****AUTHOR'S NOTE****

Afghanistan is a small country that serves as a bridge between Central Asia and South Asia, having faced invasions from historical powers like Alexander the Great, the Mongol Empire, the British, and the Soviet Union. The Soviet invasion began in 1979, igniting a decade of severe brutality as American-backed fighters opposed the Soviet-supported government. Despite much military support from the West, these resistance groups showed little interest in championing basic human rights for the Afghan population. The conflict was marked by fierce and prolonged fighting.

After the Soviets withdrew in 1989, Afghanistan plunged into civil war, with various armed factions vying for control. This turmoil made millions of Afghans refugees, forcing them into overcrowded and impoverished camps in neighboring countries like Pakistan, Iran, and Russia. The war left countless casualties—killed, maimed, or orphaned—and many Afghans were driven to psychological despair due to grief and terror.

In September 1996, the Taliban militia, previously supported by the US and Pakistan, seized control of Kabul. They implemented harsh laws against girls and women, shutting down girls' schools, barring women from the workforce, and enforcing strict dress codes. Societal controls were imposed, including the destruction of books, televisions, and prohibitions on music.

The situation escalated in the fall of 2001 when al-Qaeda, which trained in Afghanistan, attacked the Pentagon and World Trade Center. In retaliation, the United States led a coalition to bomb Afghanistan, displacing the Taliban and establishing a new government and constitution, which reinstated schools for both boys and girls and allowed women to return to work.

Despite these changes, Afghanistan remains troubled by ongoing violence. The Taliban has resumed fighting a successful guerrilla war, and the country has become infamous for opium production. Corruption within the government persists, and Afghans are increasingly uneasy with the continued presence of foreign forces. Women's rights struggles continue as threats against girls' schools and women activists increase.

Understanding this complex and beautiful yet tragic country and its resilient people is essential to learning from past mistakes made by outsiders that have contributed to its ongoing strife.

Also by Deborah Ellis

I'm ready to assist with your request. Please provide the chapter for me to read.