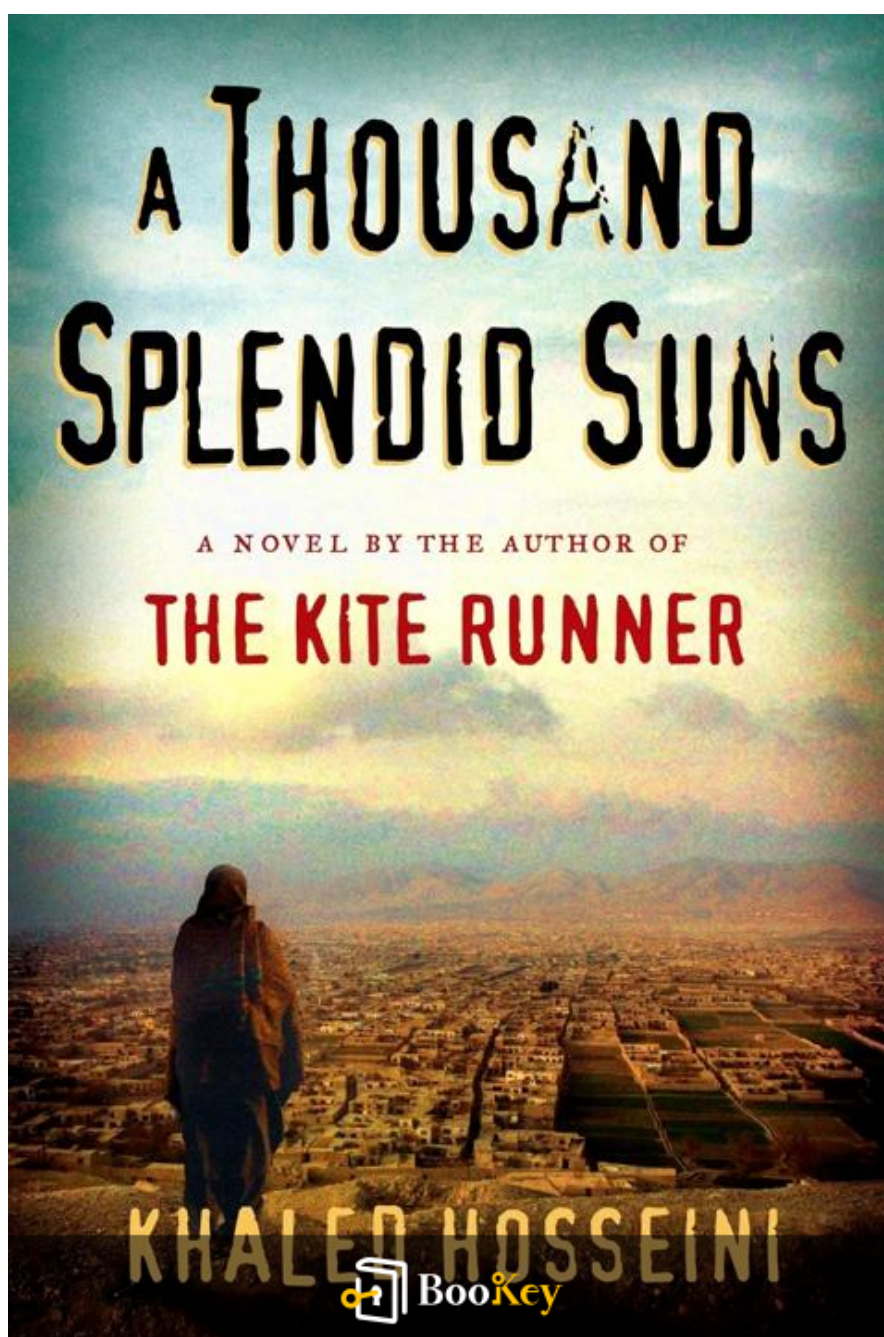


# A Thousand Splendid Suns PDF (Limited Copy)

Khaled Hosseini



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# **A Thousand Splendid Suns Summary**

Endurance and friendship amidst war's devastation.

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## About the book

*A Thousand Splendid Suns* by Khaled Hosseini is a powerful and evocative tale that delves deep into the lives of two Afghan women, Mariam and Laila, whose fates intertwine against the backdrop of decades of war, oppression, and the struggle for survival in a patriarchal society. This haunting narrative explores themes of friendship, resilience, and the indomitable spirit of women as they navigate the harsh realities of their circumstances, finding solace and strength in each other amidst the chaos of their lives. Through beautifully crafted prose, Hosseini not only sheds light on the personal and political turmoil of Afghanistan but also crafts a universal story of love, sacrifice, and hope that will resonate with readers long after the last page is turned.

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## About the author

Khaled Hosseini, an Afghan-American novelist, is renowned for his poignant storytelling and deep exploration of themes such as love, sacrifice, and the complexities of human relationships set against the backdrop of Afghanistan's tumultuous history. Born in Kabul in 1965, Hosseini's family fled to the United States in 1980 due to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and he later became a practicing physician before pursuing a career in writing. His debut novel, "The Kite Runner," gained international acclaim, leading him to become one of the most celebrated contemporary authors. In his second novel, "A Thousand Splendid Suns," Hosseini poignantly illustrates the struggles of women in Afghanistan, showcasing not just their suffering, but also their resilience and strength against adversity.

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## Chapter 1 Summary: 1.

In the opening chapter of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," we meet Mariam, a five-year-old girl who grapples with her identity and self-worth. The story begins on a Thursday, a day when she eagerly anticipates the visit of her father, Jalil, who comes to see her at their modest home, known as the kolba. However, her excitement turns bittersweet after an accidental mishap with her mother's cherished Chinese tea set results in a broken sugar bowl. Mariam's mother, Nana, reacts violently, calling Mariam a "harami," a term that means "bastard" in Dari. Though Mariam does not initially understand the word's meaning, she feels the hurt in Nana's tone and begins to internalize her mother's disdain.

Despite Nana's bitterness and resentment towards Jalil — who left them behind when Mariam was born and married other women — Mariam idolizes her father. Jalil treats her with affection, calling her his "little flower" and sharing enchanting stories of Herat's beauty and history. He fills her world with wonder, painting vivid images of the city and a legendary tree where a famous poet is buried. These moments make Mariam feel cherished, but they also highlight the painful contrast between his visits and her everyday life with Nana, who constantly discredits Jalil's character.

Nana, embittered by her own experiences as a single mother, warns Mariam about the harsh realities of being a woman in their society, asserting that



men often escape accountability while women bear the brunt of blame. This advice underscores a critical theme: the societal structures that oppress women and the stigma attached to illegitimacy. Mariam's journey is shaped by her desire for acceptance and love, juxtaposed with her mother's cynical perspective. As the chapter unfolds, Mariam is left to navigate her complex feelings of longing for her father while absorbing Nana's lessons of resilience in a world that often devalues her worth.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** The importance of self-worth and resilience in the face of adversity

**Critical Interpretation:** In the midst of struggles and societal rejection, you can find inspiration in Mariam's story as it emphasizes the importance of self-worth and resilience. Just like Mariam, who learns to navigate her feelings of inadequacy and longs for acceptance, you too can embrace your strengths and seek love within yourself, especially when faced with criticism. Understanding that your value is inherent, regardless of others' opinions, empowers you to rise above challenges, making you resilient in a world that sometimes seems intent on minimizing your existence.

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## Chapter 2 Summary: 2.

In Chapter 2 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," Mariam reflects on her life with her mother, Nana, in a small kolba (a type of dwelling) on the outskirts of Gul Daman, away from the main city of Herat. Nana often tells Mariam that she is like a "pokeroor" or a "mugwort"—meaning a weed that is cast aside—suggesting that Mariam is unwanted and insignificant, especially in the eyes of Jalil, Mariam's father, who has kept Nana as his mistress and fathered Mariam out of wedlock. Despite her mother's harsh words, Mariam believes her father does care for her. Nana refuses to live in Herat, where she would constantly face judgment for her situation and becomes resentful of Jalil for his life in the city with his legitimate wives.

The chapter also reveals the bittersweet history of Nana's life. She once had a suitor, a parakeet seller, and shares a nostalgic memory of a happy pre-wedding time—an occasion that was abruptly halted due to her fits, attributed to jinn or spiritual disturbances. This incident underscores the struggles Nana faces, leading her to live in isolation with Mariam.

Jalil eventually constructs the kolba for Nana and Mariam, where they come to live. While it has bare necessities, Nana sarcastically refers to it as a "rathole," hinting at her bitterness towards Jalil. Mariam grows up in this small space, witnessing her mother's volatile emotional state resulting from a lack of support and the circumstances of her birth. Nana describes the



harrowing experience of Mariam's birth, emphasizing the isolation and pain she endured while giving life to her daughter without any assistance. This narrative shapes Mariam's perception of her worth when she grows older; she grapples with the conflicting accounts of her birth provided by her mother and father.

In their interactions, Mariam seeks validation from both Jalil and Nana but often finds disappointment. As she matures, competitive memories of her father's dismissive attitude clash with the idealized version she wishes to believe, showing the complexity of their relationships. The chapter paints a vivid picture of Mariam's childhood marked by love, resentment, and the longing for acceptance, while also exploring broader themes of gender, social status, and the burdens of maternal legacy that will resonate throughout her life.



## Chapter 3: 3.

In Chapter 3 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," we delve into the early life of Mariam, focusing on her vivid memories and the complexities of her relationship with her mother, Nana. One of Mariam's most tangible recollections is the monthly delivery of rations, pushed by her half-brothers, Muhsin and Ramin. This wheeled cart, filled with essentials like rice and cooking oil, becomes a symbol of the disparities in Mariam's life, illustrating her family's struggles and her mother's bitterness. Nana demonstrates disdain toward the boys, believing they represent the privileges of their father, Jalil, reinforcing the dynamic of resentment and isolation that defines their existence.

Nana, a strong yet bitter figure, has a complicated relationship with her daughter. She instills both love and fear in Mariam, showing fierce protectiveness while harboring deep-seated anger toward the outside world. Mariam, caught between admiration for her mother and an instinctual longing for acceptance from her brothers, grapples with conflicting feelings. Despite Nana's attempts to bond over daily chores and lessons in cooking and sewing, there is an underlying current of sadness as Mariam witnesses

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## Chapter 4 Summary: 4.

In this chapter of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," we delve into Mariam's world, full of longing and affection for her father, Jalil. She eagerly anticipates his visits, feeling joy mixed with anxiety as Tuesday and Wednesday creep by, filled with worries that he might not come. When Thursday arrives, she watches the stream, her heart racing with excitement as she waits for his arrival. The bond between them is palpable; when Jalil arrives, Mariam's joy is infectious as he lifts her high into the air, leaving her to revel in the perfection of those moments.

Nana, Mariam's mother, seems to embody a complex mix of bitterness towards Jalil and an understanding of the importance of these visits. Despite her criticisms of him when he isn't around, she becomes more composed and respectful during his visits, revealing her own vulnerabilities. Their conversations often taunt Jalil's busyness and family life, with Nana asking about his multiple wives and children, yet she also hints at her own resentments towards him for abandoning Mariam and their life.

Jalil, in turn, embodies both a loving father and a man ensnared by his responsibilities. He opens Mariam's eyes to the wider world beyond their small village. He teaches her various skills, from fishing to drawing. Jalil's gifts, like the delicate pendant he gives her, symbolize his affection, even as they stir Nana's bitterness. Mariam dreams of living with Jalil in Herat,



fantasizing about domestic life with him—cooking, caring, and sharing the mundane moments that would make her feel like a true daughter.

As Jalil departs, Mariam is left in a state of longing. She imagines what life would be like in his home, held in the grip of daydreams about their time together, rooted in her desire to be truly acknowledged as his daughter. The chapter captures the innocence of Mariam's love and her yearning for a fuller life, embodying themes of familial love, the complexities of parent-child relationships, and the stark realities of social disparity. The contrast between Mariam's fleeting happiness and her enduring isolation paints a poignant picture of her existence.

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## Chapter 5 Summary: 5.

In Chapter 5 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," we dive into the world of Mariam as she approaches her fifteenth birthday, filled with longing and dreams. Seated in the shade with her father, Jalil, and her mother, Nana, Mariam declares her desire to watch a cartoon film at Jalil's cinema—an experience she imagines will be magical and filled with adventure, much like the stories Jalil has shared. However, her mother vehemently disapproves, labeling Mariam as ungrateful and warning her that Jalil will not welcome her as his daughter. Mariam's yearning for connection to her father battles against her mother's bitter resentments, revealing a deep rift in their relationship.

Determined and hopeful, Mariam insists that Jalil himself should take her to the cinema, longing for shared moments with her half-siblings. Jalil, though hesitant and aware of Nana's feelings, agrees, promising to meet her the next day. This promise uplifts Mariam, giving her a sense of belonging and anticipation. In stark contrast, Nana's reaction is filled with anger and despair. She confronts Mariam, accusing her of betrayal and insisting that her father does not truly care for her, which only deepens Mariam's internal conflict. Nana's words cut deep, insinuating that Mariam's aspirations are foolish.

As the day of the cinema visit arrives, Mariam dresses carefully, battling her



own insecurities and the dread of facing Nana. When she finally sets out, she encounters a vibrant city—Herat—where her fears about being judged dissolve amidst the bustling crowds. Mariam is awed by the beauty around her and feels a sense of freedom and normalcy that she has never experienced before. Her heart races with excitement as she navigates the lively streets, seeking out her father's home, fueled by hope for a loving reunion.

Upon arriving at Jalil's house, anticipation turns to confusion, as she discovers that he is not home. Despite the chauffeur's reassurances that Jalil would be back, Mariam resolves to wait, demonstrating her determination to bond with the father she yearns for. However, her night outside the house is filled with sorrow and shame, as she realizes the stark reality of her situation—her father's unavailability and her mother's warnings weigh heavily on her heart.

In the morning, after a restless night, Mariam is forcibly taken by the chauffeur back to her mother's home. As they walk the familiar path, Mariam is compelled to face her painful reality, and upon reaching their home, she is met with a crushing sight: Nana's lifeless body hanging from the willow tree. This tragic and shocking moment marks a profound turning point in Mariam's life, encapsulating themes of longing, betrayal, and the devastating impact of unfulfilled wishes and parental relationships.



The chapter is rich in emotional turmoil, encapsulating Mariam's transition from innocence to a harrowing confrontation with her mother's despair and her own sense of belonging. It captures the beauty of hope, the harshness of reality, and the complexities of familial love, setting the stage for Mariam's tumultuous journey ahead.

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## Chapter 6: 6.

In Chapter 6 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," we witness a significant shift in Mariam's life following the death of her mother, Nana, whose burial takes place in the cemetery at Gul Daman. As she stands beside Mullah Faizullah and villagers at the graveside, Mariam's emotions are raw. Upon returning to Jalil's home, she struggles with the realization of her mother's warning: "I'll die if you go. I'll just die." Their relationship, filled with mixed feelings, comes to the forefront as Jalil appears to care for Mariam but seems insincere in his affection.

Inside Jalil's house, Mariam feels out of place amid the lavish surroundings and life that contrasts sharply with her own humble kolba. Although Jalil tries to engage her with promises and comforts, Mariam senses the hollowness in his words. She grapples with feelings of worthlessness and isolation, haunted by her mother's pronouncements that she is "nothing."

Mariam's interactions with Jalil's daughters reveal her status as an outsider in this new existence. While she has long desired to be a part of Jalil's world, she is overwhelmed by a sense of belonging nowhere. The chapter highlights

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## Chapter 7 Summary: 7.

In Chapter 7 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," Mariam is summoned to meet her father, Jalil, and his wives at a long table adorned with marigolds and a pitcher of water. The atmosphere is tense, and Mariam feels a wave of discomfort as she sits before them. The wives, clad in flimsy black scarves, display a mixture of politeness and judgment, setting the stage for unsettling news.

Khadija, one of Jalil's wives, delivers the bombshell that Mariam has a suitor named Rasheed, a shoemaker from Kabul. The information hits Mariam like a blow, leaving her feeling dizzy and trapped. As the wives describe Rasheed—a man who has suffered loss and has a stable job—Mariam's heart sinks further. She is only fifteen and sees this arranged marriage as an unwelcome sentence stripping her of her agency. Despite her pleas for Jalil to intervene, he remains silent, seemingly indifferent to her plight.

The wives advocate for the marriage, emphasizing practicalities and societal norms, all while ignoring Mariam's lingering doubts and fears. They berate her with the notion that she is a burden and that this union is her only chance at happiness and stability. The reality of being uprooted from everything she knows and thrust into a new life with a stranger fills her with dread, especially when she envisions the domestic life expected of her.



Mariam feels betrayed and alone, knowing that her father has already consented to the marriage. When she desperately calls out for Jalil to defend her, he responds not with support, but with a lament that shifts the weight of the situation back onto her. Mariam's yearning for her father's protection quickly turns to despair as she realizes he too has turned his back on her.

The chapter concludes with Mariam returning to her room, the door locking behind her and leaving her physically and emotionally trapped, symbolizing the loss of her freedom and the first step toward an uncertain future. This chapter highlights themes of familial obligation, the erasure of personal dreams, and the burdens placed on women in a patriarchal society, setting a dark tone for what lies ahead in Mariam's life.



## Chapter 8 Summary: 8.

In Chapter 8 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," Mariam wakes up to a significant day in her life, dressed in a dark green dress and a hijab, ready for her marriage to Rasheed. The atmosphere is charged with anticipation as she enters a room set with a long table adorned with sweets, a Koran, and a mirror, where a mullah and two unfamiliar witnesses await. Her father, Jalil, appears nervous yet supportive, trying to encourage her with a smile.

As the ceremony begins, Mariam experiences a whirlwind of emotions. The mullah skips traditional steps hastily, emphasizing the urgency because Rasheed has bus tickets to Kabul. Mariam barely registers the ritual as she feels the weight of Rasheed's presence. He is described as large and imposing, further amplifying Mariam's anxiety. When asked if she accepts Rasheed as her husband, Mariam hesitates, and the pressure builds as the mullah insists on her response. Eventually, she acquiesces, shakily agreeing to the marriage.

Mariam glimpses her reflection in the mirror, feeling unattractive and unfamiliar with her own appearance. She notices Rasheed's rugged features for the first time, realizing the man she is marrying. As they exchange rings, Mariam feels both anxious and trapped, aware that her life is changing irrevocably. The mullah declares them husband and wife, marking a new chapter in Mariam's life.



After the ceremony, the scene shifts to the bus station, where Mariam shares a last painful moment with Jalil. He attempts to express his love, but Mariam confronts him about his shame and abandonment. Her emotions boil over as she declares she does not want to see him again. Their goodbye is heavy with regret, and as she boards the bus to Kabul, she resolutely avoids looking back, symbolizing her break from her past. Rasheed, sitting beside her, offers hollow comfort as the bus pulls away, leaving behind the familiar world she once knew.

This chapter vividly encapsulates themes of acceptance, the weight of familial expectations, and the struggle for identity. Mariam's journey into an uncertain future begins, colored by harsh realities and the complexity of human relationships.





## Chapter 9: 9.

In Chapter 9 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," Mariam arrives at Rasheed's home in Deh-Mazang, feeling a mix of apprehension and sorrow. The environment is new and unfamiliar, starkly contrasting with the warmth of her childhood in Herat. As Rasheed unlocks the gate, Mariam takes in the crowded street and the modest home that once had a blue facade. The house is a step up from her kolba with its two stories and various rooms, but it also feels empty and alien to her.

Inside, the house has a faint scent of cigarette smoke and lacks the personal touches that made her old life feel like home. Mariam, overwhelmed by her sudden uprooting and the loss of her mother, breaks down in tears, prompting a scolding response from Rasheed, who is impatient with her emotions. He attempts to distract her by describing the mountains outside the window, but his brusque demeanor drives home the reality that she is now in an environment dictated by Rasheed's rules.

Rasheed shows Mariam her new room, a small guest room with limited decor. Despite her feelings of fear and vulnerability, she is relieved to learn

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## Chapter 10 Summary: 10.

In Chapter 10 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," we find Mariam feeling isolated and disoriented in her new life with Rasheed. In the initial days of her marriage, she mostly remains in her room, wrestling with feelings of sadness and longing for her mother, Nana, and the life she left behind in the kolba. The simple activities of her new household remind her of her uprooted existence, and she feels like an intruder in her own home.

As the days pass, Mariam's anxiety grows, particularly as she anticipates Rasheed's expectations of her as a wife. He begins to assert his authority, pressing her to unpack her suitcase and take on domestic responsibilities. Mariam yields to his demands, reluctantly beginning to clean the house and prepare meals. The glimpse of women in her neighborhood brings back memories of her old life, yet it also intensifies her feelings of isolation and foreboding.

In a particularly significant moment, while waiting in line at the communal tandoor, Mariam is overwhelmed by the attention from the women around her, who bombard her with questions and comments about being Rasheed's wife. This experience heightens her anxiety and sense of inadequacy. Despite the warm welcome from a woman named Fariba, who tries to include Mariam, she ultimately feels frightened and trapped, leading her to flee in panic.



When Rasheed returns home that evening, he brings with him a sense of authority rather than tenderness. Despite her efforts to prepare a meal, the weight of his expectations presses down on her. However, Rasheed's initial compliment about her cooking provides a fleeting moment of pride before he shifts the conversation to more controlling topics, subtly reminding her of her place as a woman. He presents her with a burqa, emphasizing his perspective on modesty and women's roles, reinforcing his dominance over her. This exchange leaves Mariam feeling diminished and constrained, as she begins to recognize the depth of her subordinate position in their relationship.

Overall, this chapter captures Mariam's struggle with her identity in a new and oppressive environment and sets the stage for her ongoing battle against isolation and the harsh realities of her marriage. Themes of oppression, the search for identity, and the longing for connection are powerfully woven through Mariam's experiences, illuminating her emotional turmoil and foreshadowing the challenges she will continue to face.



## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** The importance of self-identity and resilience in oppressive circumstances

**Critical Interpretation:** Mariam's struggle for her own identity amidst the oppressive expectations of her new life serves as a powerful reminder for you to maintain your sense of self, even when faced with challenges. Her journey teaches you that resilience is key to navigating difficult situations and that true strength lies in recognizing your worth, regardless of external pressures. Embracing your individuality and standing firm against adversity can inspire you to reclaim your personal narrative and foster connections that nourish your spirit, no matter how daunting life may seem.





## Chapter 11 Summary: 11.

In this chapter, Mariam experiences her first day out with Rasheed in Kabul, marking a significant shift in her life. As she puts on a burqa for the first time, she initially struggles with its heaviness and her restricted vision, feeling both claustrophobic and exposed. However, with Rasheed's reassurance, she begins to find comfort in the burqa, which allows her to feel anonymous and shielded from judgment.

Their outing takes them to Shar-e-Nau Park, a lively area filled with children playing and families enjoying the day. They venture into a bustling kebab house where Mariam, who has never eaten in a restaurant before, grapples with her nerves but gradually finds solace in Rasheed's presence and the experience itself. This day is filled with new sights and sounds, particularly as Rasheed introduces her to various places and people in the city.

As they stroll through the vibrant streets, Mariam observes a different side of life in Kabul—modern women with makeup and stylish clothing, living independently and confidently. These women captivate her, highlighting her own feelings of inadequacy and ignorance. The contrast deepens her self-awareness, as she feels out of place compared to their apparent freedom.

Rasheed surprises Mariam with a beautiful maroon silk shawl, a genuine gesture of affection that stands in stark contrast to the gifts she received from





her father, which felt insincere. This gift marks a moment of connection between them, offering a glimmer of hope in her new life.

However, the chapter takes a darker turn as Rasheed's behavior shifts once they return home. That night, he enters her room and initiates an unsettling encounter. Mariam's initial discomfort evolves into fear as Rasheed forces himself upon her, shattering her sense of safety. The painful experience culminates in a sense of violation, as Rasheed insists there's no shame in what he's done, framing it within the confines of their marriage.

The chapter poignantly captures Mariam's transition from a naive girl experiencing the wonders of a new life to a woman facing the harsh realities of her marriage. It encapsulates themes of oppression, the complexity of love and power dynamics, and the stark contrasts between freedom and confinement, leaving Mariam bewildered and traumatized. The chapter ends with Mariam feeling lost in her pain, contrasting the brightness of the day to the darkness of her reality.



## Chapter 12: 12.

In Chapter 12 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," Khaled Hosseini immerses readers in the atmosphere of Ramadan and Eid in 1974 Kabul, marking a significant moment in Mariam's life as she experiences the joy and community that the festivities bring. For the first time, Mariam witnesses how the crescent moon signals a change in the city, bringing a serene hush as people observe the fasting period. After years of living with Rasheed, her husband, whose disdainful mood during the fast leaves her feeling uneasy, Mariam finds relief when Ramadan concludes.

Eid-ul-Fitr brings back memories of her childhood, highlighting Mariam's sense of isolation compared to the lively celebrations she imagines her birth family is enjoying back in Herat. Yet this year, she ventures out with Rasheed to experience the vibrant festivities firsthand. She encounters neighbors and witnesses families coming together in a bustling joy that she has rarely felt. However, her exhilaration is tinged with a deep sadness as she remembers her mother, Nana, wishing that she could share in this moment of happiness.

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## Chapter 13 Summary: 13.

In Chapter 13 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," we delve into Mariam's experience of pregnancy, which brings a mixture of joy and anxiety as well as the complex dynamics of her relationship with Rasheed. As she rides home from the doctor's appointment, Mariam perceives the world in vibrant colors, a stark contrast to the drabness of her surroundings, showcasing her blossoming happiness over her pregnancy. Rasheed, filled with anticipation, speculates about potential names for their child, firmly believing it will be a boy, which adds pressure on Mariam.

The chapter paints a delicate picture of domestic life as Rasheed busies himself in the yard, building a crib for the baby. Despite the happiness about the pregnancy, Mariam feels the weight of Rasheed's expectations, which complicates her joy. She is apprehensive yet excited about becoming a mother, reminiscing about the long journey they took together to get to Kabul, feeling grateful that after years of sorrow, this child could represent hope and love.

As the chapter progresses, we witness Mariam preparing for a celebratory dinner Rasheed hosts for his friends. While cleaning and cooking, she reflects on her past and on the significance of motherhood, feeling an overwhelming love for the life growing within her. She finds solace in this newfound identity, reciting a verse from the Koran and praying for her



fortune to last.

However, the narrative takes a sudden turn when Mariam visits a traditional women's bathhouse, where she experiences a shocking and traumatic event—a miscarriage, which she reacts to with confusion and despair. This moment highlights the fragility of her happiness and the harsh reality of being a woman in her world, where suffering is often endured in silence.

The chapter closes with a poignant sense of foreboding as Mariam observes the snow falling heavily again. Rasheed grapples with frustration at the answers he receives about their lost hopes if the pregnancy has ended. Meanwhile, Mariam reflects on her life, haunted by Nana's words regarding women's suffering, reminding us that every small sigh of despair accumulates in the tumultuous journey of womanhood. The contrast between the fleeting beauty of her pregnancy and the stark reality of loss captures the central themes of hope and the endurance of women through hardship.

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## Chapter 14 Summary: 14.

In Chapter 14 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," Mariam is engulfed by grief over the loss of her baby, an experience that brings her unexpected levels of sorrow for a child she never had the chance to hold. The feeling of loss dominates her thoughts, triggered by reminders like the unfinished crib and the baby's coat in Rasheed's closet. She is struck by how intensely she longs for this specific child while grappling with guilt and anger. Mariam struggles with thoughts of punishment for her past actions, specifically regarding her mother, Nana, and the mistakes that led her to this point—contemplating that perhaps her inability to keep the child is a form of divine retribution.

Mariam's emotions fluctuate between grief, anger, and guilt as she blames herself for the loss and feels jealousy toward women in her neighborhood who have healthy children. She criticizes Rasheed for his misplaced optimism regarding the baby's sex and his lack of support in her grief. Their relationship visibly deteriorates; Rasheed becomes withdrawn and irritable, no longer the supportive partner he once was. He brushes off Mariam's concerns and dismisses her plea for a burial for the child, highlighting his emotional distance and refusal to acknowledge her pain.

As winter fades and the first signs of spring appear, Mariam finds herself alone in her sorrow and increasingly desperate for a way to commemorate her loss. Despite Rasheed's rejection, she takes matters into her own hands



and performs a makeshift burial for the baby in their yard, hoping to find closure in the act. She recites prayers as she places the baby's coat in the ground, embodying her strong connection to her faith. This moment not only reflects Mariam's desperate need to honor the child she lost but also symbolizes her inner strength and resilience in the face of ongoing emotional turmoil.

The chapter effectively captures the themes of grief, maternal longing, and the complexities of Mariam's relationship with Rasheed. Mariam emerges as a deeply sympathetic character grappling with her loss, demonstrating vulnerability and an instinct for survival despite the emotional and physical challenges she faces in a harsh and unforgiving world.





## Chapter 15: 15.

In Chapter 15 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," the narrative unfolds against a backdrop of political upheaval in Afghanistan as Mariam turns nineteen. The chapter begins on April 17, 1978, with the news of Mir Akbar Khyber's murder sparking protests in Kabul. From her window, Mariam observes her neighbors excitedly discussing the events, bringing a moment of vibrancy to her otherwise somber life with Rasheed. Despite the lively atmosphere outside, Mariam feels isolated and fearful, as her husband dismisses her questions about the political situation and expresses disdain for her ignorance.

Over the years, Rasheed's contempt for Mariam has deepened. She struggles under the weight of his volatile temperament and the crushing disappointment of repeated miscarriages, which have rendered her feelings of worthlessness and fear of his wrath even more pronounced. The chapter vividly illustrates the oppressive environment of their marriage, where Mariam's attempts to please Rasheed only seem to exacerbate his discontent. She recalls a time when she used to enjoy cooking for him, but now each meal becomes a battleground of anxiety and dread on her part.

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## Chapter 16 Summary: 16.

In Chapter 16 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," Laila, a nine-year-old girl living in Kabul during spring 1987, wakes up with thoughts of her best friend Tariq, who is away visiting family for thirteen days. As she reflects on his absence, she struggles with the idea of time stretching without him, feeling the weight of longing and childhood innocence. Laila's home life is turbulent; her parents often argue, showcasing a strained relationship where her father, Babi, seems defeated by her mother's fierce temperament. As she rushes to get ready for school, she admires her beauty, which she inherited from her mother and great-grandmother, feeling both pride and the pressure of expectations.

On her way to school, Laila notices unusual figures; a car with men inside watching her neighborhood raises her curiosity and concern, indicating an undercurrent of danger in her life. School offers a brief escape from her home drama but introduces its challenges, especially with the strict teacher Khala Rangmaal, who promotes the Soviet regime while warning against discussing the realities of war. Laila finds it difficult to focus, largely motivated by Tariq's absence, but manages to answer questions correctly, showing her intelligence.

After school, Laila walks home with friends Giti and Hasina. Through casual gossip and light-hearted banter, Laila's friends discuss the fate of marriage



and suitors, contrasting Laila's fatherly encouragement of education over early marriage with Hasina's looming arranged marriage. This conversation illustrates the societal pressures faced by young girls in Afghanistan, highlighting themes of female empowerment versus traditional expectations.

As the chapter unfolds, Laila's sense of safety is suddenly shattered when she encounters a menacing figure with a gun just outside her home. This threat looms over her world, illustrating the harsh realities of life in war-torn Afghanistan and foreshadowing the complexities and dangers that will soon invade her life. The chapter showcases Laila's innocence amid the chaos, the weight of family dynamics, and the tensions in a country undergoing turmoil, leaving readers with a sense of foreboding for her future.

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## Chapter 17 Summary: 17.

In Chapter 17 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," we witness a painful episode for Laila involving a boy named Khadim, who bullies her at school. Armed with a bright green trigger water gun, he taunts her and sprays her hair, pushing Laila's emotions to a boiling point. Feeling humiliated, she retaliates with a harsh insult but ends up fleeing home, feeling disgusted and alone. Laila's anger intensifies as she reflects on her situation; she wishes Tariq had been there to protect her and feels abandoned by her mother, who hasn't been present in her life lately.

At home, Laila desperately tries to cleanse herself of the incident, scrubbing her hair and face until she's physically exhausted. As her frustration peaks, she thinks about her mother, who often isolates herself in her room. Laila recalls the good days when her mother was more engaged and joyful—days filled with laughter, storytelling, and family gatherings where they reminisced about her father, Babi. Yet, those happy memories are tinged with sadness, as Laila feels the loss of connection with her mother during her frequent bouts of depression.

In a poignant scene, Laila enters her mother's darkened room, filled with memorabilia of her brothers who have gone off to fight. Despite the clutter and sadness, Laila longs for an emotional bond with her mother. They navigate a tired, scripted conversation about Laila's day, highlighting the



widening emotional gap between them. Mammy shows signs of apathy, distracted by her own struggles, while Laila yearns for her mother's attention and support. The chapter encapsulates themes of bullying, abandonment, and the longing for familial love, revealing the complexities of Laila's childhood against the backdrop of a troubled world.

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## Chapter 18: 18.

In Chapter 18 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," the story revolves around Laila, who is deeply anxious about the disappearance of her friend Tariq. As days turn into weeks without any sign of him, she fills her time with small chores and socializing with friends, but the waiting becomes a tormenting experience. Laila's fears grow; she imagines the worst—things like his parents moving away or a tragic accident. However, one night, she catches a glimpse of a familiar light from Tariq's house, igniting hope and joy within her.

The next day, Laila visits Tariq, who has returned sporting a freshly shaved head, a sign of his uncle's sickness. Their interaction is warm and filled with playful teasing, symbolizing their deep connection and the comfort she feels in his home, which contrasts sharply with her own family's tension. Tariq's family is welcoming and lively, creating an atmosphere where Laila feels at ease. She enjoys their meals together, filled with laughter and affection, reinforcing the theme of family unity amidst the backdrop of war-torn Afghanistan.

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## Chapter 19 Summary: 19.

In Chapter 19 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," the turmoil of grief takes center stage as Laila's family grapples with devastating news. The chapter opens with a visitor at their door—an unnamed man who brings meant-to-be news from Panjshir. Laila's father, Babi, quickly ushers Laila away, indicating the seriousness of the situation. She watches from the stairs, apprehensively observing as her mother, Mammy, breaks down upon hearing the news. The revelation hits hard; both of Laila's brothers, Ahmad and Noor, have been killed, leading to chaos and heartache in their home.

As the day unfolds, preparations for the funeral, called the *fatah*, begin. Neighborhood women swarm in to manage the arrangements, while Mammy seems lost in her grief, almost detached from reality. Laila tries to support her mother, touching her hands and offering comfort, but feels out of place among the mourners' heavy atmosphere. She notices her father's own despair as he wanders aimlessly through the house, both parents deeply affected by their loss. A poignant moment occurs when Mammy softly tells Babi to keep his distance, highlighting the rift that grief can create even among loved ones.

At the funeral, Laila sits beside her mother, surrounded by mourners who share their condolences. The scene is filled with solemnity, laughter replaced by soft sobs and the recitation of Koranic verses from a cassette player.





Among the faces, Laila spots familiar figures—neighbors and family—but feels a disconnect from her brothers' deaths. To her, Ahmad and Noor have always been more like distant figures, steeped in memories that were never fully realized; they were stories, not immediate presences in her life. Thus, while she tries to honor their memory, it is the tangible presence of Tariq, her true companion and friend, that fills her thoughts. He represents the living bond she cherishes, beautifully illustrating the contrasting nature of grief—how it can be deeply felt for some while remaining abstract for others.

Through this chapter, Khaled Hosseini explores themes of loss, the impact of grief on family dynamics, and the struggle to connect emotionally with those we've lost. Laila is caught between mourning a family she hardly knew while clinging to the hope and love that Tariq embodies, emphasizing the complexity of human emotions in the face of tragedy.



## Chapter 20 Summary: 20.

In Chapter 20 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," we witness the profound impact of loss on Laila and her mother, Mammy, following the deaths of Laila's brothers, Ahmad and Noor. Mammy's health deteriorates as she suffers from various ailments, both physical and emotional, indicative of her deep grief. Despite visiting doctors who find no physical illness, Mammy spends most of her days in bed, clad in black and haunted by the absence of her sons. She fixates on her five daily prayers, fervently wishing for victory for the Mujahideen, showcasing her longing for a lost past and a hopeful future that feels increasingly out of reach.

As Mammy struggles, Laila steps into the role of caregiver, taking on household chores, cooking, and trying to coax her mother into some semblance of normalcy. Their bond deepens, yet Laila feels overshadowed by her brothers' memories, painfully aware that in Mammy's eyes, she has become an afterthought. Laila's aspirations and existence seem insignificant compared to the legacy of her brothers, as if she is merely a vessel carrying their stories rather than a protagonist in her own life.

The chapter also highlights meaningful moments between Laila and Mammy, as Mammy shares memories of her sons' dreams and ambitions, recalling Ahmad's leadership qualities and Noor's artistic aspirations. Each tale adds to Laila's internal struggle, feeling both the warmth of their past



and the suffocating weight of their absence. Laila wishes to share her own hopes and desires with her mother, yet fears that they will forever be eclipsed by her brothers' legends.

A poignant exchange occurs when Laila expresses concern for Mammy's well-being, hinting at darker thoughts of despair. Mammy acknowledges her own fleeting thoughts of hopelessness but reassures Laila that she wants to live to witness a liberated Afghanistan, a dream she wishes to fulfill for her sons. This exchange reveals the complex emotional landscape they inhabit—Laila's desire for connection and validation from her mother contrasts sharply with Mammy's obsession with her lost boys.

As the chapter concludes, Laila's mixed emotions surface—she feels a bittersweet relief that Mammy chooses to live on, but is painfully aware that she does not hold the same place in her mother's heart as her brothers do. The imagery of Laila's footprints washing away in the sand reflects her struggle for identity in the shadow of her family's grief. In this chapter, themes of loss, maternal bonds, and the struggle for self-worth are poignantly illustrated, encapsulating the weight of sorrow that paralyzes their lives.



## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** The struggle for self-worth amidst loss

**Critical Interpretation:** In the midst of overwhelming grief, as you witness Laila's pain of becoming an afterthought in her mother's heart, you are reminded of the vital importance of carving out your own identity and dreams. Just like Laila, who yearns for recognition yet feels overshadowed by the legacy of her brothers, you too may face moments when your aspirations feel diminished by the weight of external expectations or losses. This chapter inspires you to actively seek validation and cherish your own worth, not merely as a continuation of someone else's story, but as a vibrant protagonist in your own life, embracing your dreams no matter how overshadowed they may seem.



## Chapter 21: 21.

In Chapter 21 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," Laila embarks on a memorable day trip with her father, Babi, and her best friend, Tariq. The trio travels through war-torn Afghanistan in a taxi, passing Soviet convoys and witnessing the stark realities of the ongoing conflict. Laila notes the contrasting peace in Kabul compared to the devastation surrounding it, reflecting on the impacts of war on her country.

As they reach the ancient site of Shahr-e-Zohak, Babi shares its storied past with Laila and Tariq, emphasizing the resilience of Afghanistan despite centuries of invasion. This visit is part of Babi's effort to enrich Laila's education, revealing his deep care for her growth. The climax of the chapter is their arrival at the monumental Buddhas of Bamiyan, breathtaking statues carved into rock that embody centuries of history. Laila is captivated by their grandeur, which evokes a profound sense of connection to her heritage.

During their climb to the top of the Buddhas, Babi imparts more history, sharing stories of the area's Buddhist roots and its cultural significance. Atop the statues, they share a tender moment, with Babi reminiscing about Laila's

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## Chapter 22 Summary: 22.

In January 1989, just three months before Laila's eleventh birthday, she, her parents, and her friend Hasina gather to watch the final Soviet convoy leave Kabul. The atmosphere is charged, with spectators braving the wet, muddy snow to witness this significant moment in their country's tumultuous history. Laila's mother, Mammy, holds up a photo of Laila's deceased brothers, Ahmad and Noor, a somber symbol amid signs of celebration and discontent. Amidst the crowd, Tariq surprises Laila and Hasina with his comical outfit, a huge Russian fur hat, bringing a light-hearted moment to the grim event.

As they share a meal of boiled beans and cilantro chutney after the convoy, the tension of the ongoing war lingers in the conversations around them, particularly regarding the political puppetry of the Afghan leadership. On the bus ride home, Mammy is lost in her worries, whispering prayers while Babi engages in a spirited debate about the country's future.

Later, Laila and Tariq go to see a Soviet film at Cinema Park, where the awkward dubbing leads to uncontrollable laughter. They revel in the absurdity of the situation, laughing together and finding joy in their companionship. As they watch a wedding scene, a feeling of unease grows in Laila. She impulsively declares she will never get married, mirroring Tariq's rejection of the institution. Yet, there is a hint of vulnerability in her



words, revealing deeper feelings.

The film's romantic moment stirs something in them both, and Laila becomes acutely aware of Tariq's presence beside her. Their playful banter is interrupted by an unexpected tension, as they momentarily consider the idea of intimacy. When Tariq awkwardly shifts the focus back to humor, it momentarily relieves the pressure, and they leave the theater with a mix of laughter and unspoken connection. As they step out, Laila feels a sense of relief as the dimming light helps shield her from the intensity of their exchange.

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## Chapter 23 Summary: 23.

In Chapter 23 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," several years pass, highlighting shifting dynamics and tragic transformations among the characters. Tariq's father suffers from strokes, leaving him with impairments that impact his speech and movement. Meanwhile, Hasina is taken by her family to Lahore, forcing her into a marriage with a cousin, with hopes of a better life in Germany. Laila and Giti bid her farewell, sharing a poignant moment that underlines their close bond.

The political landscape of Afghanistan undergoes dramatic changes as the Soviet Union collapses. The Mujahideen, once Laila's mother Mammy's heroes, finally triumph over Najibullah's regime, leading to celebrations. Mammy emerges from her years of mourning, symbolizing hope and renewal as she prepares for a party, finally shedding her black attire. Her joy contrasts sharply with the underlying tensions as the Mujahideen factions jockey for power, foreshadowing upcoming chaos.

As Mammy throws a lively gathering, Laila experiences a surge of conflicted emotions regarding her feelings for Tariq, now a young man. Their playful exchanges are seasoned with a flirtation that hints at deeper romantic feelings. However, Mammy's unsolicited warnings about Laila's reputation add stress to their burgeoning relationship, reflecting cultural expectations around female propriety.



The party atmosphere is punctuated with lighthearted chaos; friends and neighbors mingle joyously while the men discuss political strategies for the newly declared Islamic State of Afghanistan. Yet, the harmony shatters when a heated argument breaks out, leading to a violent scuffle reflecting the growing tensions among the Mujahideen factions. Laila witnesses the brutal reality as Tariq joins the fray to protect a friend, spiraling the narrative into chaos.

The chapter closes on a tense note as political divisions escalate into violence, leading to a bombardment on Kabul. Laila's mother retreats into her old mourning habits, illustrating how quickly stability can dissolve into turmoil. The chapter captures the themes of friendship, love, and the fragility of hope within a country grappling with the ramifications of war and the complexities of human relationships.



## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** The fragility of hope and stability in life

**Critical Interpretation:** In the volatility of life, as observed in the shifting dynamics of Laila's world, you're reminded of how quickly stability can be shattered. Just like Mammy's bloom into joy from mourning, you recognize that hope can emerge amidst chaos. This chapter inspires you to nurture resilience and seize moments of happiness even when uncertainty looms. It encourages you to cherish relationships and find strength in community, showing that amidst struggles, warmth and laughter can coexist with strife, prompting you to seek light in dark times.

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## Chapter 24: 24.

In Chapter 24 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," Laila's life is increasingly overshadowed by the chaos and violence engulfing Kabul. The constant whistling of incoming rockets fills her with dread, creating a terrifying suspense as she waits for the inevitable explosions. These moments of anticipation are shared with her father, Babi, during their dinners, where the mental toll of living in such fear becomes palpable. Despite surviving each blast, Laila wrestles with the agony of wondering who among her neighbors has been harmed, particularly worrying for her friend Tariq.

As the violence escalates, Laila finds comfort in Tariq's presence. He introduces her to the harsh realities of their landscape, filled with warlords, gunfire, and shifting territories marked by danger. He carries a gun for protection, a decision that frightens Laila yet also emboldens their bond. While their discussions about the surrounding violence are chilling, moments of softness emerge as they share their first kisses. Beneath the pear tree, they find solace in each other amidst the ravages of war, capturing a fleeting sense of normalcy.

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## Chapter 25 Summary: 25.

In Chapter 25 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," Laila is plunged into a deep emotional turmoil as her childhood friend and love, Tariq, reveals that he is leaving Afghanistan due to the escalating violence and his father's deteriorating health. Seated together in her home on a sweltering August afternoon, Laila feels paralyzed by the news that Tariq plans to flee to Pakistan and possibly beyond, grappling with the fear of his departure amidst the backdrop of a rapidly emptying Kabul where friends and neighbors have already left.

Laila's sense of despair is palpable; she feels as if her life is unraveling like a frayed rope. The memory of her friends leaving haunts her, and the notion of Tariq abandoning her adds to her anguish. As she struggles with feelings of anger and betrayal, they share a passionate moment—a culmination of unexpressed feelings that leads to an intimate encounter on the living room floor. This moment is portrayed with a blend of fear and exhilaration, illustrating the depth of their bond amidst the chaos of their lives.

However, the bliss of this connection is soon overshadowed by the heavy reality of their circumstances. Tariq proposes marriage, and for a moment, Laila contemplates escaping her burdens to be with him. Yet, she feels tethered to her own responsibilities, especially towards her ailing father, Babi. Laila's internal conflict intensifies as she recognizes that while she



longs to be with Tariq, her sense of duty and loyalty to her family ultimately holds her back.

The chapter closes with Laila heartbreakingly insisting that Tariq leave without saying goodbye, a painful decision that underscores the tragic constraints of her life. As she closes the door on him, she is left with a haunting silence, resonating with loss and the weight of unfulfilled dreams, accompanied only by the distant sounds of gunfire and her own racing heart. This chapter highlights the themes of love, sacrifice, and the crushing reality of war, illustrating how the choices defined by personal obligation can tragically intersect with the desires of the heart.

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## Chapter 26 Summary: 26.

On one of the hottest days of the year in Kabul, Laila finds herself sweltering on the couch, caught between lingering memories of her lost love Tariq and the tumultuous reality of war outside. The oppressive heat mirrors the emotional turmoil inside her—she battles feelings of guilt over their recent intimacy, even as she cherishes the connection they shared. Memories begin to fade, and Laila grapples with the inevitability of moving on, even picturing one day when Tariq's presence won't be a constant ache.

Just as she wrestles with this inner conflict, Babi calls her excitedly from upstairs, announcing that Mammy has finally agreed to flee Kabul. The exhilaration overwhelms Laila as they prepare to leave the war-torn city for Pakistan, where she hopes to reunite with Tariq. Babi, Mammy, and Laila come together in Mammy's room, caught between the chaotic backdrop of gunfire outside and the rallying hope for a new future. Laila's heart races with the thought of finding Tariq, and amidst the destruction, she feels a flicker of joy.

As they begin packing their belongings to sell, the atmosphere shifts. Memories tied to the objects they gather weigh heavily on Laila, especially as she recalls her family's past — the loss of her brothers, Ahmad and Noor, looms large. Mammy is seemingly numb, going through the motions of discarding cherished items, while Babi expresses a mix of nostalgia and



sadness at leaving behind a city filled with his memories.

The familial bond begins to strengthen as they prepare for a new life, with Laila holding onto hope that one day they can return. However, the fragile sense of anticipation is shattered when an explosion strikes their home, throwing Laila into chaos. She experiences a harrowing moment of pure terror, flying through the air as her surroundings explode into destruction.

Unconsciousness follows, and Laila experiences fragmented visions—familiar faces, dark spaces, and a relentless, painful ringing in her ears. In moments of darkness and fragments of half-remembered dreams of solace with Tariq, she grapples with the reality of her injury and the stark uncertainty of her future.

Through this chapter, themes of love, loss, trauma, and resilience weave intricately together. While the war outside brutalizes Kabul and the hopes of its residents, Laila's internal journey reflects the complexities of human emotions—how joy can coexist with despair and how hope can flicker even in the darkest moments. As she navigates the duality of her memories with Tariq and the harsh realities of her current situation, Laila's story encapsulates the deeply human struggle to hold on to love and the fight to survive against all odds.



## Chapter 27: 27.

In this chapter of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," we delve into the aftermath of a devastating explosion that left a girl severely injured and traumatized. The narrative unfolds through Mariam's perspective as she cares for this girl, who remains unnamed for much of the chapter. Initially, the girl is in a fragile state, sleeping heavily from the medication Rasheed has provided. Her dreams are troubled, filled with cries and confusion, revealing her emotional torment from the recent calamity.

Mariam, bearing the weight of her own past, becomes a nurturing figure, attending to the girl's wounds both physically and emotionally. Although Rasheed is present and assists in her recovery, his motivations often seem self-serving, claiming it was lucky for the girl that he found her amidst the rubble. As Mariam tends to the girl's injuries, she watches closely as the girl oscillates between moments of clarity and profound sadness, often retching in grief over lost family.

Through various interactions, we see Rasheed's character emerge as complicated—sometimes somewhat caring, but with an underlying

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## Chapter 28 Summary: 28.

In this poignant chapter, Laila encounters Abdul Sharif, a thin, nervous businessman who shares news about her childhood friend, Tariq. The surroundings feel tense as Laila, listening intently, learns that Abdul has just recovered from a severe illness that nearly cost him his life. As he recounts his experiences, Laila grapples with anxiety over Tariq's fate, recalling their happier days together.

Abdul reveals that he met Tariq in a hospital after a tragic incident: Tariq was part of a lorry carrying refugees that got caught in crossfire, resulting in a devastating rocket attack. Abdul's description is harrowing, detailing how Tariq suffered severe injuries, losing his right leg and experiencing critical internal damage. Laila's heart races with worry as she hears about Tariq's condition, reflecting on the weight of the news. The thought of him being in a special unit and dealing with such pain sends her thoughts spiraling into memories and vivid daydreams, desperately attempting to evade the grim reality.

As the conversation deepens, Abdul shares that he often spoke with Tariq during their hospital stay. Despite the heavy drugs, the fragments of their conversations reveal the bond between Tariq and Laila, his fond memories reflecting the innocence and connection they once shared. Abdul's respect for Tariq becomes evident; he admired Tariq's spirit and determination, even



in his weakened state.

The narrative takes a devastating turn when Abdul mentions that one night, there was a commotion around Tariq's bed, and by morning, he was gone. Laila's composure shatters as she processes the grief of losing Tariq, the man who held a significant place in her heart. What began as a hope for reunification swiftly morphs into a weighty realization of loss.

Abdul, grappling with delivering such painful news, expresses deep sympathy. However, Laila is unable to fully absorb his compassion. Instead, she is transported back to the memories of her own family's tragedy—the grief of losing her siblings and the crippling sorrow she had witnessed her mother endure. This moment becomes a reckoning for Laila, who realizes the weight of her past and how aloof she had been toward her mother's suffering.

In the aftermath, Laila sits in silence, staring blankly, unable to react outwardly to the tumult of emotions within. Her mind reaches for a cherished memory—a place of peace where her family is together, where beauty and kindness matter, and where she felt safe. This yearning suggests a deep ache not only for what she has lost but also for the simplicity of happier times amid the ongoing chaos of her life. Abdul's visit, while filled with sorrow, sparks a profound understanding of love and loss in Laila's journey, marking a melancholy yet significant moment in her life.





## Chapter 29 Summary: 29.

In Chapter 29 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," we witness a tense and pivotal moment for Mariam and her oppressive husband, Rasheed. After a tragic event in which Laila, a young girl, has lost her parents, Rasheed feigns sympathy while discussing politics, displaying a disconcerting shift in his demeanor. He speaks as though he genuinely cares, but Mariam realizes that this behavior is merely a performance, a part of his courtship of Laila. Rasheed is no longer the silent, indifferent man he once was; instead, he is eager to charm both Mariam and Laila, which only stirs Mariam's contempt and feelings of helplessness.

As the chapter progresses, Mariam gathers the courage to confront Rasheed about his intentions regarding Laila. He calmly acknowledges his plans to marry the much younger girl, citing societal norms and the need to "legitimize" the living situation. Mariam feels defeated by Rasheed's dismissive attitude, and she confronts him about the injustice of his decision. Rasheed, in a patronizing manner, assures her that marrying Laila is a practical choice, framing it as a charitable act while trivializing Mariam's feelings and agency.

Rasheed's argument highlights the dire conditions for women in war-torn Afghanistan. He paints a grim picture of the outside world, portraying Laila as vulnerable and in need of protection, which he claims only he can



provide. Yet, his justifications reveal a chilling ignorance of true compassion—it's clear he is motivated by a desire for control rather than care.

At the end of the chapter, Mariam shares Rasheed's ultimatum with Laila, who, after some silence, agrees to marry Rasheed. This moment is devastating for Mariam, who recognizes that their fates are intertwining under the oppressive system enforced by Rasheed. The chapter captures themes of power, control, and the struggles of women, painting a vivid image of Mariam's turmoil as she grapples with her own sense of identity and autonomy in a world where men dictate the terms of existence.

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## Chapter 30: 30.

In Chapter 30 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," Laila finds herself trapped in a deep emotional struggle after marrying Rasheed. The day after their wedding, Rasheed proudly shows off his new look and a wedding ring he bought for Laila, which is a replacement for Mariam's old ring. Laila's response is one of discomfort and withdrawal; she doesn't want the ring, or Rasheed's affection, feeling that it is entirely wrong to accept something so tainted. The tension between them is palpable as she contemplates the stark reality of her situation.

As the chapter unfolds, Laila's thoughts drift to her past and her lost loved ones—Ahmad, Noor, Giti, and her father, Babi—each gone, leaving her isolated. Despite the grief, she discovers she is pregnant with Tariq's child, a bittersweet reminder of her former life. This changes everything for her; leaving for Pakistan or escaping her captivity is no longer an option. The prospect of becoming a mother stirs her instinct to protect her child, pushing aside any thoughts of dishonor or shame associated with her new life with Rasheed. She realizes that the only piece of her past she has left is this unborn child, urging her to fight for its life.

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## Chapter 31 Summary: 31.

In Chapter 31 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," the dynamics between Mariam and Laila, Rasheed's two wives, become increasingly complex and charged. During the day, their interactions are limited and awkward, marked by mutual avoidance and an unspoken tension that hangs heavy in the air. Rasheed, attempting to create a semblance of family unity, insists they must eat together, forcing Mariam and Laila into uncomfortable proximity. He dehumanizes Mariam by referring to her as a "harami" and contrasting her with Laila, whom he dubs a "Benz," emphasizing the hierarchy he has established between them.

Mariam, now thirty-three, is haunted by her past and the stigma of being labeled an illegitimate child, which Rasheed uses to assert control over her. He enforces strict rules on Laila, insisting she remain under his supervision, effectively making Mariam a spy. Rasheed's manipulative nature reveals itself as he belittles Mariam while elevating Laila, crafting a volatile household dynamic.

One day, Mariam and Laila have a tense encounter where Laila attempts to establish a rapport, but Mariam, feeling defensive and protective of her territory, makes it clear she won't take orders from Laila. Their discussion reveals both women's wounds—Laila's need for acceptance and Mariam's desire for autonomy and respect. Mariam lists the household responsibilities,



firmly insisting they maintain a distance from each other. This confrontation marks a turning point for Mariam; she asserts her independence for the first time, but it comes at the cost of Laila's emotions, leaving both women in a fragile state.

The chapter is rich in themes of power, identity, and survival. Mariam's fierce assertion of her will showcases her resilience in a patriarchal society, while Laila's vulnerability underlines the impact of Rasheed's oppressive influence. The tension between them exemplifies the complexities of sisterhood in hardship, as they must navigate their entangled lives under Rasheed's control while grappling with their own insecurities and desires for dignity.

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## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** The power of resilience and asserting one's identity

**Critical Interpretation:** In the stark confines of a patriarchal household, Mariam's bold assertion of her autonomy serves as a poignant reminder of the strength that lies within us all. Imagine standing in the midst of life's challenges, feeling overwhelmed by the forces trying to dictate your worth and identity. It is in these moments, much like Mariam's, that you can choose to rise above, to redefine yourself, and to assert your needs and desires. Embracing your resilience not only empowers you but also lays the groundwork for authentic connections with others. By honoring your own voice, you inspire not just yourself but also those around you to foster relationships built on respect and understanding, thereby transforming your life's narrative.

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## Chapter 32 Summary: 32.

In this evocative chapter from "A Thousand Splendid Suns," Laila reflects on a gathering from her past where women shared stories and mulberries in the garden, contrasting the warmth and camaraderie of those memories with her current life. She recalls a particularly tragic story about Rasheed's son, who drowned while his father was drunk; this tragic event is intertwined in her mind as she and Rasheed await the birth of their child. Rasheed's reaction to the pregnancy is ecstatic, yet it positions Laila in an uncomfortable alliance with Mariam, his first wife, who she feels a mix of sympathy and tension with.

The changing seasons mirror Laila's emotional state as winter sets in, bringing cold winds, snow, and a deep sense of isolation. Laila feels trapped in her life with Rasheed, and her memories of freedom, laughter, and love with Tariq tug at her heart, frequently throwing her into deep grief. She is reminded of the devastating reality of war and its impact on Kabul as Rasheed shares ominous news of ongoing conflicts. Despite feeling secure under Rasheed's roof, Laila's perception of safety is shadowed by the brutality of the world around her.

As winter progresses, Laila's daily routine revolves around domestic tasks, but the oppressive silence between her and Mariam creates a painful atmosphere in their shared home. Their relationship hits a breaking point in a





heated argument over a missing kitchen spoon, revealing their mutual resentment and grief. The fight culminates in harsh words and a realization of the loneliness both women share. However, in this tumultuous moment, Laila experiences a poignant connection to her pregnancy — the baby kicks for the first time, symbolizing both hope and the complexity of her circumstances.

Throughout this chapter, themes of womanhood, companionship, betrayal, and the impact of war are woven together, illustrating the characters' struggles against their oppressive realities while hinting at the familial ties that may yet bind them. The narrative captures the emotional turbulence of Laila's present and her yearning for the past, all while setting the stage for the transformations to come in their lives.





## Chapter 33: 33.

In Chapter 33 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," we see Mariam observing the strained dynamics in her home as Rasheed becomes increasingly concerned about the newborn baby, Aziza, who belongs to Laila, his young second wife. The chapter opens with a vivid scene of Rasheed fussing over Laila as she struggles with the challenges of motherhood. For Mariam, who has endured years of hardship and bitterness in her own marriage, witnessing Rasheed's attitude shifts creates a mix of emotions—jealousy, pity, and a reluctant admiration for Laila's resilience.

As time passes, Rasheed's frustrations escalate with the demands of a newborn. He expresses his annoyance verbally, mocking the baby's cries and undermining Laila's efforts to care for Aziza. Mariam, while initially reveling in her husband's disdain for Laila, finds herself unable to distance herself completely. She begins to feel sympathy for Laila as she watches her youthful enthusiasm and devotion to the baby extinguished by Rasheed's cruelty.

The chapter also delves into domestic tensions. Laila and Rasheed frequently

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## Chapter 34 Summary: 34.

In Chapter 34 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," Laila finds immense joy in her moments with her baby daughter, Aziza. As she lies beside her, Laila admires Aziza's features, recalling the father she's never met, Tariq, without ever uttering his name. This gentle bond is overshadowed by her strained relationship with Rasheed, her abusive husband, who probes her about her past with Tariq in a disturbing conversation. Laila carefully navigates this minefield, not revealing too much, while secretly stealing money from Rasheed to plan a possible escape for her and Aziza.

Two days later, Laila discovers a collection of baby clothes outside her door, a gesture that seems out of character for Rasheed. At dinner, he talks of the ongoing war, his casual brutality evident in their interactions. Later, in the kitchen, Laila engages with Mariam, sharing a moment of camaraderie as they prepare food together. Mariam, once seen as an adversary, reveals a vulnerable side, and Laila sees her as a fellow sufferer rather than an opponent. They bond over the clothes and memories of past pregnancies, and Laila defends her decision to stand up to Rasheed, realizing the shared struggles and silent grievances they both endure.

As they sit under the moonlight with tea and sweets, Laila and Mariam share a newfound connection, marked by a silent understanding that they are no longer enemies. This pivotal moment symbolizes a shift in their



relationship—turning two women confined by the same oppressive man into allies against their struggles. The chapter captures themes of motherhood, resilience, and the power of female solidarity, highlighting Laila's determination to reclaim her life and the hope that rises from their shared experiences.

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## Chapter 35 Summary: 35.

In Chapter 35 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," the bond between Mariam and Laila deepens as they navigate the harsh realities of their lives together in Kabul. In the safety of their shared domestic space, they engage in daily chores and share tender moments with Laila's daughter, Aziza, whom Mariam helps care for. Through these nurturing acts, Mariam discovers a newfound sense of companionship and love that she has never experienced before. Her heart is both uplifted and confused by the little girl's affection, leading her to reflect on her past and the isolation she has felt for so long.

As Kabul descends further into chaos with the shifting allegiances of warlord Dostum, the violence encroaches upon their lives. Amidst the backdrop of artillery fire and the fear of violence, Mariam distracts Aziza with playful games, crafting small joys from rice and drawings, while enduring the dark influence of Rasheed, whose temperament grows ever more unpredictable. He becomes increasingly paranoid, isolating the family and brandishing his gun, turning their home into a place of tension.

In a heartwarming scene, Laila braids Mariam's hair, creating a moment of peace and camaraderie. They share stories of their past, revealing the hardships they've faced and the sacrifices made. This exchange serves to deepen their bond, as both women find solace in each other's histories and struggles. Mariam realizes that despite the years of suffering, Laila and



Aziza have become essential parts of her life, igniting a yearning for a better future.

Mariam reflects on her life, contrasting her past filled with emotional barrenness with her present connection to Laila and Aziza. She starts to imagine the possibility of a brighter future, a life filled with the love and nurturing that had always evaded her. As she gazes out at the falling snow, the chapter captures her shift from resignation to hope, suggesting that, despite the harshness of their reality, the potential for a kinder life lies ahead. This transformative journey underscores the themes of love, resilience, and the longing for connection, showcasing the deep human need for companionship and the hope that blooms even in the darkest times.

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## Chapter 36: 36.

In Chapter 36 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," Laila is filled with a mixture of dread and hope as she prepares to escape with Mariam and her daughter, Aziza, from the oppressive environment created by her husband, Rasheed. The chapter opens on a spring morning in 1994, where Laila anxiously senses Rasheed's awareness of their plans. Despite her fears, she and Mariam venture out, cloaked in burqas, into a city marred by war and devastation. They witness the destruction left by fighting, quite a contrast to Laila's childhood memories of better times.

At the Lahore Gate bus station, they must find a male companion to pose as a family member to circumvent the strict laws against women's travel alone since the Mujahideen takeover. Laila's internal turmoil is palpable as she navigates this new, dangerous world, contrasting the freedoms women once enjoyed pre-war. They eventually meet Wakil, a kind-hearted man who agrees to help them get tickets to Peshawar, aligning with Laila's desperate hope of escaping their grim reality.

As they wait, there's a moment of lightness; Laila and Mariam share a

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## Chapter 37 Summary: 37.

In Chapter 37 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," set in September 1996, Mariam wakes to the sounds of jubilation that signify the arrival of the Taliban in Kabul. Laila, her friend and sister-in-spirit, is filled with excitement as they witness the crowds celebrating what they believe to be a new era of safety. The Taliban, a guerrilla group formed of young Pashtun men who had been raised in refugee camps during the Soviet war, had gained notoriety for overthrowing corrupt warlords and restoring order. Rasheed, Mariam's abusive husband, expresses his approval of the Taliban, seeing them as a hopeful force to bring about peace, although Mariam senses his disdain for both her and Laila.

As they venture out into the streets, the excitement among the citizens is palpable, with celebrations punctuated by the sounds of firecrackers and music. They see symbolic gestures of support for the Taliban, such as "Long live the Taliban!" painted on bedsheets. However, the initial euphoria quickly turns sinister when they witness a public execution of former leader Najibullah and his brother, with a Taliban soldier violently declaring their crimes against Islam, showcasing the ruthless nature of the new regime.

The following day, the Taliban establishes strict new laws, broadcast over loudspeakers and disseminated through flyers. Mariam learns of the oppressive edicts that target women specifically, mandating that they remain



indoors, wear a burqa, and forbidding them from working or receiving an education. The teeth of authoritarianism are evident as Mariam sees a stark resemblance between Rasheed's treatment of her and the Taliban's treatment of women.

As dinner unfolds, tensions rise between Laila and Rasheed regarding the Taliban's laws. Laila expresses disbelief that such draconian measures could be enforced in Kabul, a city known for its progressiveness. Rasheed, however, points out that such oppression isn't entirely new to Afghanistan, reinforcing his patriarchal views and demonstrating his sadistic approval of the oppressive state over women, suggesting that both he and the Taliban share a brutal mindset towards women's rights.

This chapter vividly illustrates the theme of oppression, particularly against women, as the arrival of the Taliban brings both a façade of hope for peace and an immediate, chilling reality of tyranny. Mariam and Laila's relationship, once filled with shared dreams, is now shadowed by the approaching storm of repression, further encapsulating their struggles as female characters in a patriarchal society.



## Critical Thinking

**Key Point:** The strength of female solidarity in the face of oppression

**Critical Interpretation:** Consider the bond between Mariam and Laila as they navigate the turbulent landscape created by the Taliban's rise. Their friendship, forged under dire circumstances, symbolizes the power that emerges when women support each other against societal oppression. This teaches you that, no matter how dark your surroundings may become, the strength derived from collaboration and mutual support can inspire resilience and courage. In your own life, you might find that fostering connections with others who share your struggles can empower you to confront challenges together, creating a formidable force against adversity.



## Chapter 38 Summary: 38.

In Chapter 38 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," Laila grapples with the oppressive atmosphere brought about by the Taliban in Kabul. She reflects on the loss of cultural heritage as men destroy ancient statues in the museum and the university is shut down, depriving students of education. The destruction extends to cinemas and music, erasing the joys and memories she shared with Tariq, her first love. The streets grow tense with fear as men are dragged away for failing to adhere to Taliban rules, and even simple pleasures are forcibly extinguished.

Amidst this turmoil, Laila's husband, Rasheed, seems unfazed by the Taliban's harsh regime. He grows a beard and goes to the mosque, viewing the Taliban's actions with a sense of strange amusement. He takes pleasure in recounting the brutal punishments he witnesses, insisting that such measures are justified, dismissing the woman's horror at the violence. Rasheed's behavior reveals a chilling perspective that justifies cruelty as a form of justice, further entrenching Laila in her growing disdain for him.

As Laila navigates her distress over Rasheed's callousness, she experiences a profound internal conflict regarding her unborn child, a daughter she would have with Rasheed. Laila finds herself on the floor with a metal spoke, contemplating an unspeakable act against her own unborn child. However, she cannot bring herself to harm the innocent life inside her; the realization



of her feelings toward the baby and the instinctual love she has for her makes her reluctant to follow through. Instead, she chooses compassion, understanding that the child is not responsible for the circumstances of her birth, and she refuses to contribute to the cycle of violence that has consumed her life.

This chapter highlights critical themes such as the destruction of culture under totalitarian rule, the complexities of love and motherhood in dire circumstances, and the struggle for personal agency amidst societal oppression. Laila's internal struggle serves as a poignant commentary on the harsh realities women face in wartime and the resilience they must cultivate to protect their children from the surrounding chaos.

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## Chapter 39: 39.

In Chapter 39 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," the dire circumstances surrounding women's healthcare in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan are brought to the forefront as Mariam, Laila, and Rasheed seek medical help at Malalai Hospital. They are met with the harsh reality that the hospital no longer treats women, forcing them to navigate the chaos at Rabia Balkhi Hospital, where the conditions are grim and the crowd fervent. Amidst the desperation, Mariam fiercely protects Laila, who is in labor, showcasing her growth and maternal instincts as she battles through the throng of women to get assistance.

The atmosphere in the hospital is suffocating and chaotic, reflecting the pervasive despair under the oppressive regime. Every woman there is vying for medical attention, and Mariam, who once felt the sting of her mother's sacrifices, now understands the depth of a mother's love and the lengths she will go for her child. This theme of sacrifice resonates deeply as Mariam grapples with her past choices regarding her mother, Nana, and finds a renewed determination to support Laila.

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## Chapter 40 Summary: 40.

In Chapter 40 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," we find Mariam and Laila working together to dig a hole behind the toolshed. The drought in Afghanistan has persisted for two years, causing dire circumstances as people struggle to find water. The ground they dig in is hard and unyielding, a reflection of the harshness of their environment. Mariam, now forty, has visibly aged with worn features and a few gray hairs, yet she finds solace in watching Laila's children, Zalmai and Aziza.

Zalmai, who has just turned two, is a plump and energetic boy, adored by Laila. He is playful and affectionate when alone with her, but his demeanor changes around his father, Rasheed, who encourages such behavior, often spoiling him. Rasheed has also lavished Zalmai with gifts that strain their already fragile finances, praising him for his mischief, which contrasts sharply with Laila's protective nature toward Aziza. Aziza, who is six, is intelligent and nurturing, taking on a motherly role with her younger brother and even learning verses from the Koran with Mariam.

As Rasheed introduces a television into their home, tension escalates. While he is excited about his new acquisition, Laila is appalled by his choice to prioritize the TV over their dire needs, such as getting a well for water. A heated argument ensues, revealing the growing power struggle within the household. Rasheed reveals his plan for Aziza to become a street beggar, a



notion Laila vehemently opposes, resulting in Rasheed slapping her. This moment of humiliation ignites something in Laila, prompting her to strike back at Rasheed—a significant act of defiance and the first time she has ever physically retaliated against anyone.

However, Rasheed's response is brutal; he retaliates with violence, grabbing her by the throat and lifting her off her feet. The chapter captures the suffocating atmosphere of their lives under Rasheed's oppressive authority, highlighting Laila's momentary surge of empowerment followed by a terrifying reality check.

Amidst this struggle, Mariam and Laila bury the TV in the hole they've dug, hoping to protect it from the Taliban's frequent raids that have been increasingly threatening their safety and freedom. They resolve to dig it up later, when conditions improve. The chapter ends on a haunting note as Laila dreams of Aziza being buried, a symbol of her fears and the oppressive reality they live in. This vivid imagery underscores the themes of survival, motherhood, oppression, and the longing for hope amidst despair.



## Chapter 41 Summary: 41.

In Chapter 41 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," set in the summer of 2000, Afghanistan is enduring its most severe drought yet, forcing many families to migrate to Kabul in search of water and resources. As desperation sinks in, life takes on an air of uncertainty and hardship. Mariam and Laila find solace in playful moments with their children amidst the chaos around them. They spend time reenacting scenes from the film "Titanic," showcasing a sense of normalcy and imaginative escape from their grim reality. The community becomes enamored with the film, leading to a surge of "Titanic" merchandise and an unexpected, whimsical term for their devastated surroundings - "Titanic City."

However, tragedy strikes as a massive fire engulfs shops in their neighborhood, leading to the sale of all their possessions, including cherished items belonging to Mariam, Laila, and the children. Rasheed's growing desperation and frustration transform into brutality. He becomes increasingly violent, subjecting Laila and Mariam to physical abuse amidst the household's rising tensions. The situation worsens as hunger prevails; food becomes scarce, and starvation looms. Laila, deeply worried about their children, expresses her fears that they might not survive.

In a moment of determination, Mariam decides to reach out to her estranged father, Jalil, for help. Despite her exhaustion, she accompanies Rasheed to



the Intercontinental Hotel, where he has some business. When she manages to make a phone call to inquire about Jalil's whereabouts, she faces disappointment and heartache upon learning that he has died years earlier. This realization overwhelms Mariam with a deep sense of loss and regret over their fractured relationship.

Rasheed's cruel reaction to her emotional state—mocking her for the futility of her efforts—highlights the stark contrast between Mariam's enduring hope and Rasheed's disdain. The chapter portrays intense themes of survival, familial bonds, and the lingering pain of unfulfilled relationships, all set against a backdrop of profound social disarray. Mariam's resilience shines through her sorrow, as she resolves to support Laila and the children no matter the challenges they face.





## Chapter 42: 42.

In Chapter 42 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," we find Laila in April 2001, just before her twenty-third birthday, grappling with the pain of separation from her daughter, Aziza. The backdrop is Afghanistan under Taliban rule, a turbulent time marked by violence and loss. Laila's memories of the statues of Bamiyan, destroyed by the Taliban, mirror her own life, which feels like it's crumbling to dust. As she prepares to leave Aziza at an orphanage, she is filled with dread and sorrow, knowing her daughter is being sent away under the pretenses of a school for children.

Accompanied by Mariam and her son Zalmai, Laila fights back tears as they approach the grim orphanage building. Aziza, naïve and hopeful, bombards Laila with questions about her new life, unaware of the truth that Laila struggles to confront. When they arrive, Laila puts on a brave face, telling Aziza she'll be there often, even as she feels her heart breaking. The orphanage director, Zaman, presents a facade of kindness, reassuring Laila that her daughter will be cared for, but Laila's guilt and shame weigh heavily on her as she leaves Aziza behind.

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## Chapter 43 Summary: 43.

In Chapter 43 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," we find Mariam in a familiar yet tense situation with Zalmai, Laila's son. Zalmai is restless and mischievous, bouncing a new basketball around Mariam's room, defiantly ignoring her requests to stop. His behavior highlights his boldness and a certain level of independence, perhaps indicating the ignorance of a child who feels very much at the center of their own world. A moment of vulnerability surfaces when he expresses fear about a man named Tariq, whom he finds suspicious. Mariam is caught in a dilemma, wanting to comfort him with the truth about Tariq's connection to Laila, yet feeling the tension that surrounds their complicated family dynamics.

The scene shifts as Zalmai becomes increasingly upset about a basketball he believes is lost, which triggers a tantrum, revealing his deep-seated anxiety and desire for reassurance. Just as Mariam is about to intervene, Laila comes upstairs to calm her son, showcasing her nurturing side as she comforts him, brushing away his tears and soothing his fears. This mother-son moment illustrates the strong bond Laila has with Zalmai, contrasting with Mariam's more distanced relationship with the child.

While waiting outside, Mariam reflects on her past, particularly recalling a man from years ago—Abdul Sharif—who she now realizes had been part of a deception involving Laila's knowledge of Tariq's fate. This revelation



strikes her hard with questions about betrayal and manipulation, illustrating the theme of trust and the complexities of their lives shaped by trauma and lies. Mariam grapples with emotions of anger and confusion, particularly regarding Rasheed's possible involvement in orchestrating Laila's grief. This chapter deepens the connections and tensions between the characters, setting the stage for exploring themes of motherhood, loyalty, and the impact of the past on their present lives.

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## Chapter 44 Summary: 44.

In Chapter 44 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," Laila and Tariq reunite after years of separation, laden with memories and the weight of their past experiences. Tariq recounts a humorous yet poignant story of a cousin punished by the Taliban for painting flamingos, revealing the absurdity of their oppressive regime. As they talk, Laila is struck by how much Tariq has changed; he is now a man shaped by hardship, showing signs of wear from his struggles, yet his essence remains recognizable to her.

Their conversation drifts to serious topics, including their families. Tariq reveals that both his parents have died, a blow that brings a sorrowful acknowledgment from Laila. Despite the years apart and the tragic changes in their lives, their bond rekindles as they share details of their current lives—Tariq living in Murree with a goat he affectionately named Alyona and Laila's life with her son Zalmai and abusive husband Rasheed. Laila's heart is torn between the warmth of Tariq's presence and the turmoil of her current reality.

As Tariq shares tales of the refugee camp where he lived, his resilience shines through despite the dark memories. He reflects on the pain and loss he witnessed, including the death of his father and his mother's illness, painting a vivid picture of their survival struggles. Laila admires Tariq's strength while grappling with guilt about her marriage, feeling the pressures



of the choices she made when she believed he was dead.

The chapter takes a darker turn when Rasheed discovers Tariq's visit, leading to a confrontation filled with anger and jealousy. Laila and Rasheed's relationship is fraught with tension, revealing Rasheed's oppressive nature. Tariq's visit stirs Laila's emotions, shrouding their rekindled connection with uncertainty and fear of Rasheed's reaction.

Despite the looming threat of her husband, Laila finds comfort in Tariq's affection and the memories of their past, creating a bittersweet atmosphere. Tariq expresses his longing for a life where they could have been together, complicating Laila's feelings as she reflects on the life she has built in Tariq's absence.

The chapter closes on a hopeful note, with the promise of tomorrow—a chance for Laila to introduce Tariq to their daughter, Aziza. As Tariq leaves, Laila feels a mix of sadness and eagerness, signaling the possibility of a new beginning amidst the chaos of her life. The themes of love, loss, and the struggle for freedom prevail, as both characters navigate their harsh realities and the emotional precipice of their reunion.



## Chapter 45: 45.

In Chapter 45 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," tension reaches a boiling point in the household of Rasheed, Mariam, and Laila. Through the innocent eyes of Zalmay, Rasheed learns that Laila has been speaking with a man, which raises his suspicions and prompts his ruthless behavior. Mariam observes as Rasheed's demeanor shifts from contemplative to menacing, and a palpable fear sets in for both women.

The scene quickly escalates when Rasheed, fueled by anger and jealousy, physically assaults Laila with a belt. Laila's attempts to defend herself only provoke him further, leading to a brutal confrontation where he throws her against the wall and delivers cruel blows. Mariam, initially paralyzed by fear, ultimately finds her strength and is propelled into action when she sees Laila suffering. As the violence heightens, Mariam's own memories of Rasheed's oppressive nature surface, highlighting her internal struggle and regrets about her submissive past.

In a moment of defiance and determination, Mariam grabs a shovel and intervenes as Rasheed attempts to strangle Laila. Her act of violence is not

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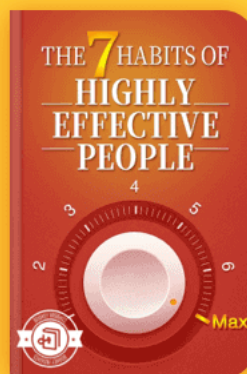
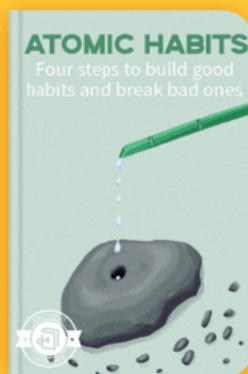
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## Chapter 46 Summary: 46.

In this poignant chapter of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," we find Laila in a moment of intense conflict, grappling with the aftermath of a violent encounter with her husband, Rasheed. She's dimly aware of Mariam, who bravely fights against Rasheed, trying to protect her. As Laila becomes more detached from her surroundings, she reflects on the ceiling of their home, recalling mundane tasks they had shared, emphasizing a sense of loss and transformation of their environment into a mocking reminder of their situation.

When Laila regains consciousness, she is confronted with the grim reality of Rasheed's lifeless body, foaming at the mouth, which catalyzes an intense emotional response from her. Laila and Mariam, despite their initial panic, show remarkable resilience as they address the practicality of the situation. Mariam, calm and collected, reassures Laila, emphasizing the necessity of moving Rasheed's body to prevent their young son, Zalmai, from witnessing the horror. This moment highlights Mariam's growth and strength, in stark contrast to Laila's initial fragility.

As they struggle to carry Rasheed's heavy body, Laila's emotional turmoil surfaces, mirroring her internal struggle to cope with recent events and her desire to protect her children from trauma. They manage to hide Rasheed in the toolshed, a place laden with memories of his oppressive presence.





Later, the two women find themselves wrapped in a fragile hope for a new life. Mariam proposes they escape to a place where they can forge a peaceful existence, free from the weight of their painful past. She paints a vivid picture of a simple life, filled with nature, family, and security. This dream momentarily lifts Laila's spirit, although she questions whether it is achievable.

As the chapter unfolds, Laila has a tender moment with her son Zalmai, who is unaware of the ordeal they have just faced. She promises to care for him and keep his spirits high by imbuing the moment with the traditions they shared with Rasheed. However, she finds herself entangled in guilt over the lies she has to tell him, reflecting the broader theme of motherhood and sacrifice.

The morning brings a sense of clarity and urgency. Mariam suggests that Laila take a bus to visit their daughter, Aziza, urging her to blend in and stay safe. Here, Mariam's selflessness shines as she prepares to face the consequences of their actions. She insists Laila take the lead in their future, fearing for her safety and the children's well-being should they face the repercussions of killing Rasheed.

Their conversation highlights the tension between hope and despair, and Mariam's decision to stay behind embodies self-sacrifice deeply rooted in



love. This moment is deeply heartbreaking, as Laila's pleas for Mariam to join her reflect the strength of their bond, as well as the tragic reality of their circumstances.

In a final act of maternal love, Mariam packs a lunch for Zalmai and urges Laila to convey her love to Aziza. As they move through the streets together, Laila grasps the weight of change upon them. The chapter closes with Laila and Zalmai leaving for their uncertain future, while Mariam, a figure of grace and sacrifice, remains behind, symbolizing the enduring bonds of friendship and sisterhood that transcend even the most tragic circumstances.



## Chapter 47 Summary: 47.

In Chapter 47 of "A Thousand Splendid Suns," we find Mariam in Walayat women's prison, a dreary place where she is held alongside several other women, all imprisoned for the wrongdoing of "running away from home." The stark conditions of the prison highlight the oppressive nature of the Taliban regime; the cells are bleak and unfurnished, with barbed windows that expose the women to the lewd glances and jokes of the male guards. Despite these hardships, Mariam becomes a figure of respect among the women due to her celebrity status for being a violent crime perpetrator, which draws admiration and compassion. Among them, a girl named Naghma befriends her, recounting her own tragic story of love and betrayal.

As Mariam reflects on her own past, the narrative shifts to recount her trial, marked by the infamous Taliban judges who exercise their authority harshly. Mariam's admission of guilt and her subsequent sentencing are devoid of justice, showcasing the deep-rooted gender inequalities and the brutal application of Sharia law under the Taliban. She feels an unexpected gentleness from a judge who struggles with the weight of the law versus the humanity of her actions, yet the verdict remains harsh and unyielding.

Mariam's final moments at the prison are filled with poignant connections to her past. She shares a heartfelt exchange with the other women and accepts a small token—a tangerine—from Naghma before her release. This gesture



solidifies the bond they forged amid their suffering. As she heads towards Ghazi Stadium for her execution, Mariam encounters a young Talib soldier, who empathizes with her fear, leading to a brief moment of vulnerability. When she arrives at the stadium, the tension in the air is palpable as thousands of eyes judge her fate.

In her last moments, instead of fear or regret, Mariam embraces peace. She acknowledges the love she has given and received throughout her life, particularly in her relationship with Laila and her surrogate children. As she prepares for execution, she reflects on her legacy; though her life began in hardship, she finds solace in knowing she has become a person of consequence. As she whispers final prayers, Mariam feels a sense of belonging that had eluded her for so long, marking her transformation from a marginalized figure into a symbol of resistance and sacrifice.

Her story intertwines with that of Laila and the broader context of societal change in Afghanistan, as themes of love, sacrifice, and the resilience of women emerge powerfully in this chapter, leaving readers with a sense of both loss and hope. The chapter encapsulates Mariam's journey from isolation to meaningful connection, ultimately illustrating the profound impact she has on those around her.



# Best Quotes from A Thousand Splendid Suns by Khaled Hosseini with Page Numbers

## Chapter 1 | Quotes from pages 3-10

1. You are a clumsy little harami.
2. It is the creators of the harami who are culpable, not the harami, whose only sin is being born.
3. That she, Mariam, was an illegitimate person who would never have legitimate claim to the things other people had, things such as love, family, home, acceptance.
4. Jalil said she was his little flower.
5. What rich lies!
6. He cast us out of his big fancy house like we were nothing to him.
7. Around Jalil, Mariam did not feel at all like a harami.
8. Sometimes, I wish my father had had the stomach to sharpen one of his knives and do the honorable thing.
9. Like a compass needle that points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman.
10. Learn this now and learn it well, my daughter: A man's accusing finger always finds a woman.

## Chapter 2 | Quotes from pages 11-18

1. "To Jalil and his wives, I was a pokeroot. A mugwort. You too. And you weren't even born yet."



2. "Unlike weeds, I had to be replanted, you see, given food and water."
3. "And, believe me, it was a relief to your father having me out of sight. It suited him just fine."
4. "He sounded like a warden bragging about the clean walls and shiny floors of his prison."
5. "Perhaps for the only time in her life, during those days leading up to her wedding, Nana had been genuinely happy."
6. "When the news reached Shindand, the parakeet seller's family called off the wedding. 'They got spooked' was how Nana put it."
7. "Jalil could have hired laborers to build the kolba. Nana said, but he didn't. 'His idea of penance.'"
8. "I lay all alone on the kolba's floor, a knife by my side, sweat drenching my body."
9. "I cut the cord between us myself. That's why I had a knife."
10. "Even in birth you were a good daughter."

### **Chapter 3 | Quotes from pages 19-28**

1. "God's words will never betray you, my girl."
2. "If the girl wants to learn, let her, my dear. Let the girl have an education."
3. "Only one skill. And it's this: iahamuL. Endure."
4. "It's our lot in life, Mariam. Women like us. We endure. It's all we have."
5. "You can summon them in your time of need, and they won't fail you."
6. "They'll laugh at you in school. They will. They'll call you harami!"
7. "It's like shining a spittoon."



8. "Look at me. Only one skill... Endure."

9. "There is nothing out there for her. Nothing but rejection and heartache."

10. "You're all I have. I won't lose you to them."

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## Chapter 4 | Quotes from pages 29-36

1. Mariam loved having visitors at the kolba.
2. Mariam would leap to her feet when she spotted him hopping stones across the stream, all smiles and hearty waves.
3. She liked that no matter the weather he always wore a suit on his visits.
4. Mariam would squeal. Suspended in the air, Mariam would see Jalil's upturned face below her.
5. But Mariam did not believe that Jalil would drop her.
6. Jalil was Mariam's link, her proof that there existed a world at large.
7. He was the one who told her that Afghanistan is no longer a monarchy.
8. 'Try it on, Mariam jo.' 'What do you think?' 'I think you look like a queen.'
9. She held her breath and, in her head, counted seconds.
10. One day soon, Mariam decided, she would tell Jalil these things.

## Chapter 5 | Quotes from pages 37-52

1. "I want you to take me to your cinema," Mariam said now. "I want to see the cartoon. I want to see the puppet boy."
2. "It's what I want," she said.
3. "A man's heart is a wretched, wretched thing, Mariam. It isn't like a mother's womb. It won't bleed, it won't stretch to make room for you."
4. "I'm the only one who loves you. I'm all you have in this world, Mariam, and when I'm gone you'll have nothing. You'll have nothing. You are nothing!"
5. "You are afraid that I might find the happiness you never had. And you don't want



me to be happy."

6. "Maybe they had landed on the walls of Jalil's home, on the front steps of his cinema."

7. "How daring he would find her. How brave!"

8. "She wished Mullah Faizullah could see her now. How daring he would find her. How brave!"

9. "For a while, Mariam stood by an oval-shaped pool in the center of a big park where pebble paths crisscrossed."

10. "She gave herself over to the new life that awaited her in this city, a life with a father, with sisters and brothers, a life in which she would love and be loved back, without reservation or agenda, without shame."

## **Chapter 6 | Quotes from pages 53-63**

1. "Blessed is He in Whose hand is the kingdom, and He Who has power over all things, Who created death and life that He may try you."

2. "Behind every trial and every sorrow that He makes us shoulder, God has a reason."

3. "I'm all you have in this world, Mariam, and when I'm gone you'll have nothing. You'll have nothing. You are nothing!"

4. "You could eat downstairs with the rest of us," he said, but without much conviction.

5. "But where do I belong? What am I going to do now?"

6. "You stop that. These thoughts are no good, Mariam jo. You hear me, child? No good. They will destroy you."

7. "Your mother, may Allah forgive her, was a troubled and unhappy woman... This was not your fault. It wasn't your fault, my girl."



8. "You see, I knew your mother before you were born, when she was a little girl, and tell you that she was unhappy then."

9. "What I mean to say is that this was not your fault. It wasn't your fault."

10. "No, nafahmidi, you don't understand. You medio come down. We have to talk to you. It's important."

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## Chapter 7 | Quotes from pages 64-71

1. "I don't want to," Mariam said.
2. "You can't spend the rest of your life here."
3. "Don't you want a family of your own?"
4. "Yes. A home, children of your own?"
5. "True that it would be preferable that you marry a local, a Tajik, but Rasheed is healthy, and interested in you. He has a home and a job. That's all that really matters, isn't it?"
6. "I'll live with Mullah Faizullah," she said. "He'll take me in. I know he will."
7. "He's so old and weak," Khadija said.
8. "You may not get another opportunity this good."
9. "As you are now to us."
10. "Say something," Mariam said.

## Chapter 8 | Quotes from pages 72-79

1. "Actually, she herself has to answer. And she should wait until I ask three times. The point is, he's seeking her, not the other way around."
2. "You are now husband and wife," the mullah said. "Tabreek. Congratulations."
3. "It ends here for you and me. Say your good-byes."
4. "I thought about you all the time. I used to pray that you'd live to be a hundred years old. I didn't know. I didn't know that you were ashamed of me."
5. "Don't come. I won't see you. Don't you come. I don't want to hear from you. Ever.Ever."



6. "There now, girl. There. There," he said.
7. "I used to worship you," she said.
8. "I can't bring myself to allow it."
9. "She signed her name-themeem, thereh, the 3^ and themeem again-conscious of all the eyes on her hand."
10. "In it, Mariam saw her own face first, the archless, unshapely eyebrows... and yet, oddly enough, the whole of these unmemorable parts made for a face that was not pretty but, somehow, not unpleasant to look at either."

## **Chapter 9 | Quotes from pages 80-86**

1. You can thank me then.
2. This is my room.
3. I hope you don't mind. I'm accustomed to sleeping alone.
4. It's good for you. Well, this is your home now.
5. You'll see.
6. You're shaking. Maybe I scare you. Do I scare you? Are you frightened of me?
7. That's one thing I can't stand, the sound of a woman crying.
8. I won't take that personally. This time.
9. That's the Asmai mountain directly in front of us — see?
10. I want to go home.







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## Chapter 10 | Quotes from pages 87-100

1. Mariam felt uprooted, displaced, like an intruder on someone else's life.
2. She missed the winter afternoons of reading with Mullah Faizullah, the clink of icicles falling on her roof.
3. Mariam was hyperventilating. Her ears buzzed, her pulse fluttered... she spotted Fariba.
4. What if he was disappointed or angry? What if he pushed his plate away in displeasure?
5. Careful, it's hot.
6. A flare of pride caught her off guard. She had done well - maybe better than good, even.
7. But they're here too, Mariam, in this very neighborhood, these soft men.
8. Where I come from, one wrong look, one improper word, and blood is spilled.
9. I want you to remember that. Do you understand?
10. This man's will felt to Mariam as imposing and immovable as the Safid-koh mountains looming over Gul Daman.

## Chapter 11 | Quotes from pages 101-109

1. You'll get used to it. With time, I bet you'll even like it.
2. Inside it, she was an observer, buffered from the scrutinizing eyes of strangers.
3. I know the owner.
4. It's beautiful.
5. There is no shame in this, Mariam.



6. It's what married people do.
7. Those women mystified Mariam.
8. They walked in high heels, and quickly, as if on perpetually urgent business.
9. This shawl... was a true gift.
10. Mariam watched the cars crawling up Chicken Street.

## **Chapter 12 | Quotes from pages 110-121**

1. For the first time in her life, Mariam saw how the sighting of the new crescent moon could transform an entire city, alter its rhythm and mood.
2. Her honor, her namoos, was something worth guarding to him. She felt prized by his protectiveness. Treasured and significant.
3. Mariam wished her mother were alive to see this. To see her, amid all of it. To see at last that contentment and beauty were not unattainable things.
4. Mariam sat on his bed, embarrassed and confused. She cupped her face with her hands and closed her eyes. She breathed and breathed until she felt calmer.
5. He too had had a hard life, a life marked by loss and sad turns of fate.
6. Mariam was relieved when Ramadan ended.
7. Mariam saw festive lanterns hanging from shop windows, heard music blaring from loudspeakers.
8. This year, for the first time, Mariam saw with her eyes the Eid of her childhood imaginings.
9. What Mariam felt now was sorrow for Rasheed.
10. Mariam tried the bottom drawer of the dresser.





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## Chapter 13 | Quotes from pages 122-129

1. It was as though a rainbow had melted into her eyes.
2. What was it about a season's first snowfall, Mariam wondered, that was so entrancing? Was it the chance to see something as yet unsoiled, untrodden?
3. How glorious it was to know that her love for it already dwarfed anything she had ever felt.
4. I'm going to be a mother,
5. All the loss, all the grief, all the loneliness and self-abasement of her life washed away.
6. This was why God had brought her here, all the way across the country. She knew this now.
7. Mariam lay down her prayer rug and did namaz.
8. You pay a doctor his fee, you want a better answer than 'God's will.'
9. Each snowflake was a sigh heaved by an aggrieved woman somewhere in the world.
10. How quietly we endure all that falls upon us.

## Chapter 14 | Quotes from pages 130-136

1. The grief kept surprising Mariam.
2. Mariam was dumbfounded that she could miss in such a crippling manner a being she had never even seen.
3. Some had seven or eight and didn't understand how fortunate they were, how blessed that their children had flourished in their wombs.
4. He was not a petty God.



5. Blessed is He in Whose hand is the kingdom, and He Who has power over all things.
6. I want to remember this baby.
7. It didn't seem right, not to mark this loss in some way that was permanent.
8. Give sustenance to me.
9. Mariam dreaded going outside.
10. ...it did no good, all this fault laying, all these harangues of accusations bouncing in her head.

## **Chapter 15 | Quotes from pages 137-147**

1. But after four years of marriage, Mariam saw clearly how much a woman could tolerate when she was afraid.
2. Mariam dreaded the sound of him coming home in the evening.
3. These were sounds that set her heart racing.
4. She could not give him his son back. In this most essential way, she had failed him.
5. She was a burden to him.
6. It wasn't easy tolerating him talking this way to her, to bear his scorn, his ridicule, his insults.
7. She felt her pulse quickening, her skin shrinking.
8. Mariam knelt to the ground and tried to pick up the grains of rice and put them back on the plate.
9. Now you know what your rice tastes like. Now you know what you've given me in this marriage.
10. He had become a shadow, a ghost that she lived with.





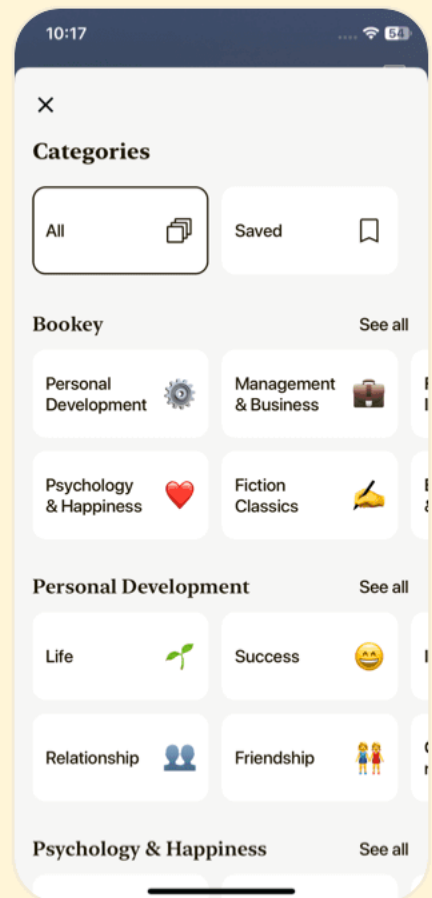
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## Chapter 16 | Quotes from pages 150-163

1. "... I know you're still young, but I want you to understand and learn this now, marriage can wait, education cannot."
2. "Because a society has no chance of success if its women are uneducated, Laila. No chance."
3. "... I know this about you. And I also know that when this war is over, Afghanistan is going to need you as much as its men, maybe even more."
4. "You're a very, very bright girl. Truly, you are. You can be anything you want, Laila."
5. "Mammy always told Laila that she had inherited her hair color... from her great-grandmother... Her beauty was the talk of the valley."
6. "Laila learned a fundamental truth about time: like the accordion on which Tariq's father sometimes played old Pashto songs, time stretched and contracted depending on Tariq's absence or presence."
7. "... you must report anyone who might know about these rebels. It's your duty. You must listen, then report."
8. "She said women and men were equal in every way and there was no reason women should cover if men didn't."
9. "So what is today?" he said now, smiling coyly. "Day five? Or is it six?"
10. "Thirteen days? It's not so long. You're making a face, Laila."

## Chapter 17 | Quotes from pages 164-175

1. "Sometimes Laila wondered why Mammy had even bothered having her. People, she



believed now, shouldn't be allowed to have new children if they'd already given away all their love to their old ones."

2. "I have a headache."

3. "You just don't know."

4. "You should have seen the face on him!"

5. "It wasn't fair."

6. "I should tell you that while you were dreaming, a boy shot piss out of a water gun on my hair."

7. "Your mother eats cock!"

8. "This would have never happened if Tariq had been with her, she thought as she put on a clean shirt and fresh trousers."

9. "It happens to everybody, Mammy."

10. "Strangest thing."

## **Chapter 18 | Quotes from pages 176-190**

1. Laila came to believe that of all the hardships a person had to face none was more punishing than the simple act of waiting.

2. It struck her again that Tariq's parents could easily pass for his grandparents.

3. But, to Laila, Tariq's mother never looked pitiable in it.

4. Laila liked how they started each meal with a bowl of fresh yogurt, how they squeezed sour oranges on everything... how they made small, harmless jokes at each other's expense.

5. It was the first time he'd shown her his stump.

6. Babi liked to say sarcastically. Then he would sigh, and say, Laila, my love, the only



enemy an Afghan cannot defeat is himself.

7. Laila loved everything about this house.

8. Her time with Tariq's family always felt natural to Laila, effortless, uncomplicated by differences in tribe or language.

9. When he looked up, Laila saw that his cheeks and brow had sunburned.

10. In Tariq's grimace, Laila learned that boys differed from girls in this regard.

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## Chapter 19 | Quotes from pages 191-196

1. It's under control. You go on now, girl, and do something else. Leave your mother be.
2. Keep him away from me.
3. Laila kneeled before her mother and took her hands.
4. I am so sorry, Laila.
5. But, in Laila's heart, her true brother was alive and well.
6. The magnitude of the disaster that had struck her family would register with Laila.
7. The possibilities denied. The hopes dashed.
8. But Mammy did not seem to notice.
9. Viewing her mother as the rarest and most fragile doll in the world.
10. Women who relished all things that had to do with death.

## Chapter 20 | Quotes from pages 197-202

1. Some days, I listen to that clock ticking in the hallway. Then I think of all the ticks, all the minutes, all the hours and days and weeks and months and years waiting for me. All of it without them.
2. I want to see my sons' dream come true. I want to see the day the Soviets go home disgraced, the day the Mujahideen come to Kabul in victory.
3. You're a good daughter.
4. And I haven't been much of a mother to you.
5. I wish there was something I could do.
6. It's true. I know it and I'm sorry for it, my love.
7. I thought about it the night we got the news.



8. I won't lie to you, I've thought about it since too. But, no.
9. They'll see it through my eyes.
10. My heart is like a pallid beach where Laila's footprints would forever wash away beneath the waves of sorrow.

## **Chapter 21 | Quotes from pages 203-215**

1. But we're like those walls up there. Battered, and nothing pretty to look at, but still standing.
2. Some things I can teach you. Some you learn from books. But there are things that, well, you just have to see and feel.
3. I may not... With your mother, both her joy and sadness are extreme. She can't hide either. She never could.
4. But I'm glad I have you. Every day, I thank God for you. Every single day.
5. You see, some things I can teach you. Some you learn from books. But there are things that, well, you just have to see and feel.
6. It's so quiet... It's what I always remember about being up here.
7. I would find work, and, in a few years, when we had enough saved up, we'd open a little Afghan restaurant.
8. We're like those walls up there. Battered, and nothing pretty to look at, but still standing.
9. It was autumn, and Laila could make out people in bright tunics on the roofs of mud brick dwellings laying out the harvest to dry.
10. It's what I always remember about being up here: the silence. The peace of it.





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## Chapter 22 | Quotes from pages 216-221

1. "Weddings are stupid. All the fuss. All the money spent. For what? For clothes you'll never wear again."
2. "If I ever do get married, they'll have to make room for three on the wedding stage. Me, the bride, and the guy holding the gun to my head."
3. "I'm never getting married." "Me neither," said Laila, but not before a moment of nervous hesitation.
4. "Laila felt strangely conspicuous all at once. She became intensely aware of her heart thumping, of the blood thudding in her ears..."
5. "She sensed that Tariq was observing her—one eye on the kiss, the other on her—as she was observing him."
6. "Just when one became fatigued, the other would snort, and off they would go on another round."
7. "Tariq burst out cackling. And, soon, they both were in the grips of a hopeless attack of laughter."
8. "Laila was glad to see Tariq like this, like his old self again."
9. "Mammy was hoisting a photo of Ahmad and Noor high over her head."
10. "They stood in muddy snow and watched the line of tanks, armored trucks, and jeeps as light snow flew across the glare of the passing headlights."

## Chapter 23 | Quotes from pages 222-240

1. When she was agitated, which happened frequently, the slurring got worse.
2. Giti was inconsolable.



3. In Kabul, Najibullah changed tactics and tried to portray himself as a devout Muslim.
- 'Too little and far too late,' said Babi.
4. Mammy's heroes, Ahmad's and Noor's brothers-in-war, had won.
5. This brought to fruition all those years of waiting.
6. Her voice was shrill with merriment.
7. A party is in order.
8. But now. Now. I notice you're wearing a bra, Laila.
9. There is no one like your brothers.
10. But this was a big day, an important day, for all of them.

## **Chapter 24 | Quotes from pages 241-250**

1. It wasn't so much the whistling itself, but the seconds between the start of it and impact.
2. The not knowing. The waiting. Like a defendant about to hear the verdict.
3. But the flip side of being spared was the agony of wondering who hadn't.
4. It was a harmless thing to sit here beneath a tree and kiss Tariq.
5. In the midst of all this killing and looting, it was a small thing. An easily forgivable indulgence.
6. Babi tried again to convince Mammy to leave Kabul.
7. 'All these people know is war,' said Babi.
8. In his element, amid his books, Babi looked taller to Laila.
9. When he was teaching, Babi was transformed.
10. This was the first time that someone whom Laila had known, been close to, loved, had died.





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## Chapter 25 | Quotes from pages 251-258

1. "In the coming days and weeks, Laila would scramble frantically to commit it all to memory, what happened next... to salvage from perishing, to preserve."
2. "The bleak isolation awaiting her, the murderous loneliness, it didn't have to be."
3. "I want to marry you, Laila."
4. "For the first time since they were on the floor, she raised her eyes to meet his."
5. "How long had she waited to hear those words from him? How many times had she dreamed them uttered? There they were, spoken at last, and the irony crushed her."
6. "It's my father I can't leave. I'm all he has left."
7. "Tariq knew this. He knew she could not wipe away the obligations of her life any more than he could his."
8. "She listened to his uneven footsteps until they faded, until all was quiet, save for the gunfire cracking in the hills and her own heart thudding in her belly."
9. "But Laila was thinking of Mammy, as obstinate and uncompromising as the Mujahideen, the air around her choked with rancor and despair."
10. "Laila was struck blind."

## Chapter 26 | Quotes from pages 259-271

1. "There would come a day, in fact, years later, when Laila would no longer bewail his loss."
2. "Every once in a long while, when Laila was a grown woman, something trivial would set off a memory of that afternoon together."
3. "But then it would pass. The moment would pass. Leave her deflated, feeling nothing



but a vague restlessness."

4. "All the same, Laila had an urge to run through those streets. She could barely contain her own happiness."

5. "There's nothing left for us here," Babi said. "Our sons are gone, but we still have Laila. We still have each other, Fariba. We can make a new life."

6. "It's strange to think that I'll be sleeping beneath another city's skies soon."

7. "We'll come back. When this war is over. We'll come back to Kabul, inshallah. You'll see."

8. "With each trip, she knew that she was that much closer to seeing Tariq again, and, with each trip, her legs became more sprightly, her arms more tireless."

9. "It was like ripping off a Band-Aid in one stroke."

10. "She could see cars parked behind a low fence of chipped white paint beneath a row of windswept palm trees."

## **Chapter 27 | Quotes from pages 274-280**

1. "But I wouldn't let him. I was so eager. I should have been the one inside the house when it happened."

2. "What wisdom did Mariam have to offer? What encouragement?"

3. "These thoughts are no good, Mariam jo. They will destroy you. It wasn't your fault. It wasn't your fault."

4. "The girl was extraordinarily lucky, Mariam thought, to escape with relatively minor injuries..."



5. "Mariam remembered the day they'd buried Nana and how little comfort she had found..."
6. "As it turned out, Mariam didn't have to say anything."
7. "When she wasn't agitated, the girl was a sullen pair of eyes staring from under the blanket..."
8. "It was Rasheed who found the girl, who dug her out from beneath the rubble."
9. "How long is she staying?" she asked Rasheed. "Until she's better. Look at her. She's in no shape to go."
10. "Sometimes she spoke gibberish, cried out, called out names Mariam did not recognize."





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## Chapter 28 | Quotes from pages 281-291

1. Stubborn ass needs a stubborn driver.
2. God give her a long life.
3. He said you were-how did he put it-his earliest memory.
4. I could tell he cared a great deal about you.
5. He said he was glad you weren't there. He said he didn't want you seeing him like that.
6. He fought valiantly.
7. In the end, I think he would have wanted you to know.
8. She let her mind fly on until it found the place, the good and safe place.
9. Where she could dip her feet in the stream and dream good dreams beneath the watchful gaze of gods of ancient, sun-bleached rock.
10. Sometimes he talked too. It was hard for him to.

## Chapter 29 | Quotes from pages 292-299

1. Better the CIA had armed Commander Massoud.
2. What does jihad have to do with killing women and children?
3. What do you think, Laila jan?
4. I don't want this.
5. It's not your decision. It's hers and mine.
6. I'm too old for you to do this to me.
7. The roads out there are unforgiving, Mariam, believe me.
8. People living under scraps of cardboard. TB, dysentery, famine, crime.



9. A beauty like her ought to bring in a small fortune, don't you think?
10. Haven't you noticed all the widows sleeping on the streets?

### **Chapter 30 | Quotes from pages 300-305**

1. A part of Tariq still alive inside her, sprouting tiny arms, growing translucent hands.
2. Even though the baby inside her was no bigger than a mulberry, Laila already saw the sacrifices a mother had to make.
3. Virtue was only the first.
4. How could she jeopardize the only thing she had left of him, of her old life?
5. But, miraculously, something of her former life remained.
6. She could hear Mariam downstairs, the hissing of her iron.
7. Laila would remember the muted ceremony in bits and fragments.
8. She was shaking even before his fingers worked her shirt buttons.
9. Through chattering teeth, she asked him to turn out the lights.
10. I think I love you.





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## Chapter 31 | Quotes from pages 306-314

1. I won't be your servant.
2. I won't be thrown out. I won't have you cast me out.
3. I have no use for your company. I don't want it.
4. You may be the palacemalika and me adehati, but I won't take orders from you.
5. I will still cook and wash the dishes. You will do the laundry and the sweeping.
6. What I want is to be alone. You will leave me be, and I will return the favor.
7. This is my reward for everything I've endured.
8. One mustn't speak ill of the dead much less the, shaheed.
9. The point is, I am your husband now, and it falls on me to guard not only your honor but ours.
10. If a person hasn't got much to say she might as well be stingy with words.

## Chapter 32 | Quotes from pages 315-325

1. This is why the Holy Koran forbids sharab. Because it always falls on the sober to pay for the sins of the drunk.
2. She reminded herself that Mariam was the only innocent party in this arrangement.
3. Laila's thighs, swollen as they were, carried her up the stairs.
4. But thinking of Tariq was treacherous... a deep, paralyzing grief would come rising up Laila's chest.
5. She felt lost then, casting about, like a shipwreck survivor, no shore in sight, only miles and miles of water.
6. She wouldn't be recognized this way if she ran into an old acquaintance of hers.



7. His voice ringing high and proud.
8. It filled her with fear when he spoke like this.
9. But the truth was, part of her had liked it, had liked how it felt to scream at Mariam.
10. The baby had just kicked for the first time.

### **Chapter 33 | Quotes from pages 326-338**

1. "She had fits of laughter when the baby passed gas. The tiniest changes in the baby enchanted her, and everything it did was declared spectacular."
2. "Mariam found it exhausting to watch the girl's lolloping enthusiasm—and had to admit, if only privately, to a degree of admiration."
3. "The girl's mere presence used to overwhelm him. Everything she said used to please him, intrigue him, make him look up from his plate and nod with approval."
4. "Every week, without fail, the girl heated a black metal brazier over a flame, tossed a pinch of wild rue seeds in it, and wafted the espandi smoke in her baby's direction to ward off evil."
5. "He had to yank his arm free of her grip."
6. "The baby squeaked, as she flexed her plump legs at the hips and kicked air."
7. "Mariam listened to him complain about the baby—always the baby—the insistent crying, the smells..."
8. "You should not get so attached," Rasheed said one night.
9. "When she heard their door close, Mariam climbed back into bed, buried her head beneath the pillow, and waited for the shaking to stop."
10. "Mariam had her first real close-up look at the baby, the tuft of dark hair, the



thick-lashed hazel eyes, the pink cheeks, and lips the color of ripe pomegranate."

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## Chapter 34 | Quotes from pages 339-347

1. Oh, your father was handsome, Aziza. He was perfect. Perfect, like you are.
2. He was like a brother to me.
3. I couldn't let him, I wasn't raised in a household where people did things like that.
4. This is your household now. You ought to get used to it.
5. He'll turn on you too, you know,
6. I know it's chilly outside, but what do you say we sinners have us a cup of chai in the yard?
7. The Chinese say it's better to be deprived of food for three days than tea for one.
8. In this fleeting, wordless exchange with Mariam, Laila knew that they were not enemies any longer.
9. It was either your daughter or the moths.
10. If she stayed, would this be her own face, Laila wondered, twenty years from now?

## Chapter 35 | Quotes from pages 348-356

1. Mariam had never before been wanted like this. Love had never been declared to her so guilelessly, so unreservedly.
2. Mariam had found in this little creature the first true connection in her life of false, failed connections.
3. What have I got to give you?
4. Her heart took flight.
5. But somehow, over these last months, Laila and Aziza...had become extensions of her.



6. Without them, the life Mariam had tolerated for so long suddenly seemed intolerable.
7. The years had not been kind to Mariam. But perhaps, she thought, there were kinder years waiting still.
8. A new life, a life in which she would find the blessings that Nana had said aharami like her would never see.
9. But it is God Who has planted them, Mariam jo. And it is His will that you tend to them.
10. And it is His will, my girl.

### **Chapter 36 | Quotes from pages 357-378**

1. "You won't have to."
2. "The Koran says Allah is the East and the West, therefore wherever you turn there is Allah's purpose."
3. "Thank you, brother. This is sawab, a good deed. God will remember."
4. "I don't think I could do this alone."
5. "What a man does in his home is his business."
6. "If you send us back, there is no saying what he will do to us."
7. "It's a matter of qanoon, hamshira, a matter of law."
8. "What does it matter to you to let a mere two women go? What's the harm in releasing us? We are not criminals."
9. "It's not your fault, Mariam. It's mine. It's all my fault. Everything is my fault."
10. "But she bit her tongue."





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## Chapter 37 | Quotes from pages 379-388

1. They may have no past.
2. At least the Taliban are pure and incorruptible.
3. Let them come, I, for one, will shower them with rose petals.
4. People won't get shot anymore going out for milk.
5. It's not proper for women to wander aimlessly about the streets.
6. You will stay inside your homes at all times.
7. If you go outside, you must be accompanied by a mahram, a male relative.
8. You will not show your face.
9. They can't make half the population stay home and do nothing.
10. What the Taliban did to Najibullah looked serious to me.

## Chapter 38 | Quotes from pages 389-395

1. It would have crippled him.
2. Isn't dying once enough?
3. What good are all your smarts to you now?
4. That's a big word. I've always disliked that about you.
5. What a terrible thing it was, Laila thought now, for a mother to fear that she could not summon love for her own child.
6. Sometimes in war innocent life had to be taken. Her war was against Rasheed. The baby was blameless.
7. But in the morning, and for several mornings after that, the queasiness in her gut persisted.



8. It's an interesting eye color she has, Aziza. Don't you think? It's neither yours nor mine.
9. Every word Rasheed had uttered, every last one, was true.
10. Laila had seen enough killing of innocents caught in the cross fire of enemies.

### **Chapter 39 | Quotes from pages 396-405**

1. What about Ali Abaci Hospital?
2. My wife's having a baby!
3. What are we supposed to do?
4. There is nothing there.
5. I'll get you seen, Laila jo. I promise.
6. It's almost eight-thirty now, so you'll probably get arrested for breaking curfew.
7. But how will she stand it?
8. Cut me open and give me my baby.
9. They want us to operate in burqa.
10. Take heart, little sister.





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## Chapter 40 | Quotes from pages 406-418

1. It should do.
2. They're the only true possession I've ever had.
3. It's only for a while.
4. This is Zalmi's TV.
5. I won't let you turn my daughter into a street beggar!
6. The collective hardships of their lives... simply dropped away, vaporized like Zalmi's palms from the TV screen.
7. It seemed worthwhile, if absurdly so, to have endured all they'd endured for this one crowning moment, for this act of defiance.
8. Laila's fear had proved baseless, that she loved Zalmi with the marrow of her bones.
9. Rasheed's patience with Zalmi was a well that ran deep and never dried.
10. But Laila walked away feeling stung.

## Chapter 41 | Quotes from pages 419-432

1. "But there is no Jack. Jack is not coming back. Jack is dead."
2. "They are not," Mariam said. "I won't let them. It's going to be all right, Laila jo. I know what to do."
3. "I wish I hadn't destroyed his letter."
4. "What would have been the harm to let him in, sit with him, let him say what he'd come to say?"
5. "How ordinary his faults seemed now, how forgivable, when compared to Rasheed's malice..."





6. "A man's deep voice spoke in her ear and informed her that she'd reached the mayor's office in Herat."
7. "It's a question of life and death I am calling about."
8. "I pictured Jalil smiling, reaching into his pocket."
9. "I think you look like a queen."
10. "She was struck by bouts of dizziness, and twice she had to stop, wait for it to pass."

## **Chapter 42 | Quotes from pages 433-454**

1. "If President Bush doesn't help us, these terrorists will damage the U.S. and Europe very soon."
2. "What kind of mother abandons her own child?"
3. "It isn't your fault. Do you hear me? Not you. It's those savages... who are to blame."
4. "Allah is good and kind, and Allah provides, and, as long He provides, I will see to it that Aziza is fed and clothed."
5. "If it kills me, I'll come and see you."
6. "I smell her sleep smell. Do you? Do you smell it?"
7. "Don't let her see you cry."
8. "Sometimes, the shifting of rocks is powerful and scary down there, but all we feel on the surface is a slight tremor. Only a slight tremor."
9. "We get mothers like you all the time... who can't feed their children because the Taliban won't let them go out and make a living."
10. "Even in these ordinary gestures, Laila noted a laborious quality to his movements."





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## Chapter 43 | Quotes from pages 455-458

1. "Where is it? I want it! I want it!" his voice rising and becoming more shrill with each word.
2. "I just know it's lost, and this was a fake one, where had his real ball gone?"
3. "From atop the staircase, all she could see of Tariq were his long legs, the real one and the artificial one, in khaki pants, stretched out on the uncarpeted living-room floor."
4. "Mariam waited outside the room."
5. "He had eyed Tariq with suspicion."
6. "It was then that she realized why the doorman at the Continental had looked familiar..."
7. "But Mariam remembered now, from nine years before, remembered him sitting downstairs, patting his brow with a handkerchief and asking for water."
8. "Even when his parent was trying to console him, he just knew that something was lost to him forever."
9. "Mariam was going to explain, say something about him and Laila growing up together, but Zalmi cut her off..."
10. "All manner of questions raced through her mind..."

## Chapter 44 | Quotes from pages 459-477

1. He painted those trousers with watercolor. When the Taliban are gone, he'll just wash them off.
2. Here was a place where a man can get on.
3. It was a place not only worlds removed from the wretchedness he'd known but one



that made even the notion of hardship and sorrow somehow obscene, unimaginable.

4. I wish I'd taken you with me.

5. I should have tried harder. I should have married you when I had the chance. Everything would have been different, then.

6. If you want me to leave, if you want me to go back to Pakistan, say the word, Laila.

7. It's good to see you, Laila.

8. I know you're a married woman and a mother now. And here I am, after all these years, after all that's happened, showing up at your doorstep.

9. I wished I hadn't, but I did. And then I felt so alone and scared.

10. This is... I don't know. I have to think.

## **Chapter 45 | Quotes from pages 478-485**

1. Now!

2. But just as he was bearing down on her, Mariam saw Laila behind him pick something up from the ground.

3. He'd taken so much from her in twenty-seven years of marriage. She would not watch him take Laila too.

4. Some jobs, that thump said, were meant to be done with bare hands.

5. Maybe he saw some trace of all the self-denial, all the sacrifice, all the sheer exertion it had taken her to live with him for all these years.

6. It occurred to her that this was the first time that she was deciding the course of her own life.

7. Mariam steadied her feet and tightened her grip around the shovel's handle.



8. Mariam swung.

9. The blow knocked him off Laila.

10. And, with that, Mariam brought down the shovel. This time, she gave it everything she had.

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## Chapter 46 | Quotes from pages 486-499

1. What was done was done.
2. There is a way, and I just have to find it.
3. We would leave this house, and this unforgiving city.
4. Somewhere with trees.
5. They would make new lives for themselves—peaceful, solitary lives.
6. They would be deserving of all the happiness and simple prosperity they would find.
7. I want it to be just like you said, Mariam.
8. Think like a mother, Laila jo. Think like a mother.
9. It's all right, Laila jo. This is all right.
10. Believe me that I'm so very sorry for all your pain and sadness.

## Chapter 47 | Quotes from pages 500-567

1. Like a compass needle that points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman.
2. It was not so bad, Mariam thought, that she should die this way. Not so bad.
3. He has created the heavens and the earth with the truth; He makes the night cover the day and makes the day overtake the night, and He has made the sun and the moon subservient.
4. This was a legitimate end to a life of illegitimate beginnings.
5. You're the best friend I ever had,
6. I have a picture of my father... but he told me he was crying like a child the morning the communists took him.





7. Earlier that morning, she had been afraid... but Mariam's legs did not buckle.
8. But as she walked the final twenty paces, she could not help but wish for more of it.
9. Something that, in the end, will be her undoing and Laila's salvation.
10. I have something to give you.

# A Thousand Splendid Suns Discussion Questions

## Chapter 1 | 1. | Q&A

### 1.Question:

**What does the term 'harami' mean, and how does it affect Mariam's understanding of her identity?**

The term 'harami' means 'bastard' in Persian, which signifies that Mariam is illegitimate, born out of wedlock. Initially, Mariam does not fully understand its implications; however, as she grows older, she realizes that being labeled a 'harami' implies she is unwanted and lacks legitimacy. This term weighs heavily on her self-identity, making her feel unworthy of love, family, and a proper place in society. It makes her perceive herself as flawed and tarnished compared to those who are 'legitimate.'

### 2.Question:

**How does Mariam's relationship with her mother, Nana, shape her view of her father, Jalil?**

Mariam's relationship with Nana is complex and deeply influential. Nana harbors bitterness and resentment towards Jalil for abandoning them, reinforcing the negative connotations associated with being a 'harami.' Her harsh words and cynical views create a dichotomy in Mariam's perspective: while Jalil shows her affection during his visits, Nana's contempt for him instills a sense of guilt and confusion in Mariam. Despite this, she cherishes her father's visits, as they provide fleeting moments of love and affection that contrast starkly with Nana's bitterness.

### 3.Question:

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Describe the impact of Jalil's wealth and lifestyle on Mariam's experiences and feelings. How does this serve to reinforce the differences in their social standing? Jalil's wealth presents a significant contrast to Mariam's humble life in the kolba with Nana. He owns multiple businesses, a cinema, and has a lavish lifestyle filled with material comfort that Mariam can only dream of. This disparity heightens her sense of inadequacy and longing for a different life. While she feels proud to learn about Jalil's world, the reality of her circumstances constantly reminds her that she is an outcast in his life, as she is not part of his legitimate family. This creates a conflicted emotional landscape in Mariam, oscillating between admiration for her father and frustration at her exclusion from his world.

#### **4.Question:**

**What role does the theme of gender play in Mariam's early life, particularly in her interactions with her mother and father?**

Gender plays a crucial role in Mariam's life and experiences. Nana's observations and experiences illustrate the limitations placed on women, highlighting how they are often blamed for their circumstances. Nana's assertion that a man's accusing finger always finds a woman underscores the patriarchal society in which they live. Jalil's abandonment of Nana and Mariam speaks to his failure to uphold responsibility towards them, illustrating the societal pressure on men to uphold their honor at the expense of women. This awareness instills in Mariam a sense of helplessness and vulnerability, echoing Nana's warnings about the disadvantages of being a



woman.

### 5.Question:

**What contradictions exist in Mariam's feelings toward Jalil, and how does this foreshadow her larger journey in the novel?**

Mariam experiences a profound contradiction in her feelings toward Jalil. While he embodies love and enchantment during their visits, she is also aware that he has forsaken her and her mother, making her feel like a burden. Her longing for his acceptance and affection juxtaposes Nana's dismissive and resentful rhetoric about him. This internal conflict foreshadows Mariam's larger journey, as her yearning for a paternal bond and her struggle with her identity as a 'harami' will shape her decisions and relationships throughout the novel. It hints at her eventual quest for acceptance and self-worth amidst societal rejection.

## Chapter 2 | 2. | Q&A

### 1.Question:

**What metaphor does Nana use to describe Mariam's status in relation to Jalil and his family?**

Nana compares Mariam to a 'pokeroor' and a 'mugwort,' suggesting that Mariam is seen as a weed or something undesirable by Jalil and his wives. This indicates Mariam's perceived lack of value within Jalil's family, reinforcing Nana's feelings of bitterness and resentment towards Jalil.

### 2.Question:

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How does Nana view her situation and relationship with Jalil?

Nana expresses strong discontent with her life and her relationship with Jalil. She refuses to live in Herat, feeling that it would only allow her to witness Jalil's life with his other wives. Nana takes pride in her decision to live outside of societal judgment, asserting that it suits Jalil that she is out of sight, implying the emotional distance and neglect in their relationship.

### 3.Question:

**What is the setting described for Mariam's early years and what significance does it carry?**

Mariam's early years are set in a clearing on the outskirts of Gul Daman, marked by natural beauty such as poplars, cottonwoods, and wildflowers. This serene setting contrasts with Nana's bitterness, representing a complex duality in Mariam's life: the beauty of nature surrounding her and the emotional turmoil stemming from her family dynamics.

### 4.Question:

**How do Mariam's perceptions of her birth differ between her mother and Jalil?**

Mariam's perceptions of her birth evolve as she grows older. Initially, she believes Nana's painful account of giving birth alone, cutting the umbilical cord with a knife, which evokes feelings of guilt and empathy. However, as she matures, she leans towards Jalil's version, which portrays a more sanitized and affectionate narrative of her birth, reflecting her desire for connection with her father.

### 5.Question:

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What event altered Nana's life before Mariam was born, and how did it impact her relationship with Mariam?

Nana recounts a moment from her past where she was to marry a young suitor, but the wedding was called off after she experienced a fit, believed to be caused by a 'jinn.' This event solidified her status as an outcast, setting the tone for her motherhood and leading to a life filled with resentment. Despite this, her bond with Mariam is complicated, as she projects her feelings of abandonment and bitterness onto her daughter, creating a cycle of pain in their relationship.

### **Chapter 3 | 3. | Q&A**

#### **1.Question:**

**What is the significance of the wheelbarrow in Mariam's early memories?**

The wheelbarrow serves as a symbol of Mariam's childhood experiences and her complex feelings towards her family, especially her half-brothers and mother, Nana. It represents the physical labor and hardship associated with their lifestyle while also highlighting the regular (monthly) delivery of food and supplies, which reflects their reliance on others for sustenance. The interactions Mariam witnesses during Ration Day reveal her conflicting emotions: sympathy for her brothers as they labor but also resentment towards their privilege compared to her own situation. The wheelbarrow thus acts as a motif for the social divides within her family and contributes to Mariam's growing consciousness of her place in the family hierarchy.

#### **2.Question:**



How does Mariam's relationship with Nana influence her perception of the world?

Mariam's relationship with Nana is complex and deeply influential in shaping her worldview. Nana's perspective is one marked by bitterness and resignation regarding their social status and her disdain for the outside world. Through Nana's teachings, Mariam learns about endurance and the harsh realities of being a woman in their society. Nana's negative remarks about education and social interactions create a sense of fear and limitation in Mariam, making her doubt her worth and capabilities. Despite Nana's love for her, the restrictive messages imparted onto Mariam instill feelings of guilt and confusion regarding her desires, such as her wish for an education, indicating that Nana's influence traps Mariam in a cycle of low self-esteem and a lack of ambition.

### 3.Question:

**What role does Mullah Faizullah play in Mariam's life, and how does it contrast with Nana's influence?**

Mullah Faizullah plays the role of a mentor and a nurturing figure in Mariam's life, contrasting starkly with Nana's restrictive influence. He encourages her curiosity and thirst for knowledge, fostering a sense of identity and self-worth that Nana tries to suppress. His teachings about the Koran and his gentle, patient demeanor provide Mariam with a safe space where she feels valued and understood. He represents the possibility of growth and learning, symbolizing hope in contrast to Nana's fatalistic views about women's roles in society. This contrasting dynamic emphasizes





Mariam's internal conflict, as she longs for education but feels chained by her mother's beliefs about what women should endure.

#### 4.Question:

**What are the main themes explored in Mariam's interactions with her family and her environment?**

Several themes emerge from Mariam's interactions: the struggle for identity, the nature of familial relationships, and the societal limitations imposed on women. The theme of identity is highlighted through Mariam's yearning for acceptance and understanding, both from her family and society. The interactions with her half-brothers and the contrast between her and their life situations emphasize feelings of isolation and inferiority. Additionally, the dynamics within her family bring forth themes of loyalty, love, and resentment—particularly in how Nana's views reflect generational pain and disappointment. Lastly, the environment showcases societal constraints placed on women, particularly through Nana's harsh lessons about endurance, suggesting a broader commentary on the restrictions women face within a patriarchal society.

#### 5.Question:

**How do the characters of Nana and Mullah Faizullah represent differing perspectives on education and women's roles?**

Nana represents a perspective steeped in cynicism and realism regarding women's roles, insisting that education is futile for girls like Mariam. She believes that life will only bring suffering and that a woman's primary skill



is endurance, which reflects her own life experiences of hardship and societal rejection. On the other hand, Mullah Faizullah embodies a more progressive outlook, valuing education and personal growth. He wishes to foster Mariam's potential by advocating for her right to learn and dream beyond her current circumstances. Their contrasting views create a palpable tension in Mariam's life, as she grapples with her desire for knowledge and the limitations imposed on her by her mother's ideology.

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## Chapter 4 | 4. | Q&A

### 1.Question:

**How does Mariam feel about her visits with Jalil, and what does she do leading up to those visits?**

Mariam eagerly anticipates her visits with Jalil, feeling a mix of joy and anxiety. As Thursday approaches, she experiences sleepless nights worrying that something might prevent him from coming. On Wednesdays, she paces outside, distracted and restless, and on Thursdays, she anxiously watches for him, feeling dread if he is late. When she finally sees him, her excitement is overwhelming, leading her to run to him for a warm embrace.

### 2.Question:

**Describe Nana's behavior during Jalil's visits and how it contrasts with her usual demeanor.**

During Jalil's visits, Nana behaves in a subdued and mannerly fashion, which starkly contrasts with her usual bitterness and harshness towards him. She dresses nicely, washes her hair, and refrains from coarse language, appearing polite and respectful in Jalil's presence. This change highlights her desire to maintain a facade in front of Jalil, despite her resentment and anger towards him for abandoning Mariam.

### 3.Question:

**What activities do Mariam and Jalil enjoy during his visits, and what do they reveal about their relationship?**

Mariam and Jalil bond through activities such as fishing, where he teaches her how to



cast her line and gut the fish. They also engage in drawing, singing rhymes, and he shares knowledge from the outside world, including current events. These activities reveal a nurturing and affectionate relationship, with Jalil actively participating in Mariam's upbringing and providing her a glimpse into a larger world. Mariam's joy and thrill during these moments further emphasize her deep longing for his presence and approval.

#### **4.Question:**

**How does Mariam perceive her father, Jalil, during these visits?**

Mariam sees Jalil as a figure of adoration and security. She views him with admiration, noting his appearance and demeanor, such as his wide smile and well-dressed appearance. She trusts him completely, believing he will always catch her safely when he tosses her into the air. Additionally, she fantasizes about living with him and expresses a strong desire for a closer, daily relationship, which adds depth to her emotional connection with him.

#### **5.Question:**

**What role does Jalil play in Mariam's understanding of the world outside her kolba?,**

Jalil serves as a crucial link for Mariam to the outside world. He brings stories of places and events beyond their small village, such as the political changes in Afghanistan and other societal issues. Through his gifts and conversations, he introduces her to ideas and cultures that she would otherwise remain unaware of, igniting her imagination. This not only satisfies her curiosity but also deepens her emotional attachment to him, as



he represents both a father figure and an escape from her isolated life.

## **Chapter 5 | 5. | Q&A**

### **1.Question:**

**What birthday wish does Mariam express to Jalil in Chapter 5, and how does Nana respond to it?**

In Chapter 5, Mariam expresses her wish to Jalil for her birthday to take her to see an American cartoon film that he had described to her. However, Nana responds negatively to this request, asserting that it's not a good idea and expressing anger and frustration towards Mariam for wanting to abandon her. Nana's reaction reveals her insecurities and concerns about losing Mariam to Jalil, which she believes would be futile.

### **2.Question:**

**What does Mariam's insistence on visiting Jalil's cinema reveal about her character and her relationship with her parents?**

Mariam's insistence on visiting Jalil's cinema demonstrates her deep longing for connection, acceptance, and a sense of belonging. This desire stems from her feelings of isolation living with Nana, who often belittles her and reminds her of her illegitimacy. Mariam's determination to have Jalil take her to the cinema also underscores her innocent hope for a father-daughter relationship and her yearning to be acknowledged as part of a family.

### **3.Question:**

**How does the setting play a role in Mariam's emotional journey in this chapter?**



The setting is integral to Mariam's emotional journey in Chapter 5. The kolba represents her confinement and a stifling life with Nana, while the vibrant scenes in Herat symbolize hope and freedom. When Mariam finally makes the decision to leave the kolba and explore the city, it marks a significant step towards autonomy and self-discovery. The beauty of Herat and the bustling life she encounters highlight the stark contrast to her life in the kolba, reinforcing her desire for a different existence.

#### **4.Question:**

**What does Nana's reaction to Mariam's wish tell us about her character and her past?**

Nana's reaction to Mariam's wish reveals her own profound sense of despair and bitterness regarding her past choices, especially concerning Jalil. She feels betrayed and threatened by Mariam's desire to connect with her father, reflecting her insecurities and fears of abandonment. Her harsh words, including telling Mariam she will have nothing if she leaves, stem from her deep-seated belief that she alone is capable of loving Mariam, which shows the emotional scars she carries from her own experiences of rejection and loneliness.

#### **5.Question:**

**Describe the climactic moment when Mariam arrives at Jalil's house and her subsequent experience. What does this signify for her character development?**

The climactic moment occurs when Mariam arrives at Jalil's house and is met with confusion and disappointment. Despite her excitement and hope,





she finds that Jalil is not there, and her efforts seem futile as she is ultimately turned away. This experience signifies a pivotal point in Mariam's character development; it forces her to confront the harsh truth of her reality—that her father may not be the supportive figure she imagined. Her feelings of shame and disillusionment as she waits outside signal a loss of innocence and the beginning of a painful realization about her worth and the complexities of familial relationships.

## **Chapter 6 | 6. | Q&A**

### **1.Question:**

**What was the setting and emotional tone of Nana's burial in Chapter 6?**

Nana's burial takes place in a cemetery in Gul Daman, where Mariam stands beside Bibi jo and other women as Mullah Faizullah recites prayers. The emotional tone is somber and filled with sorrow. Mariam feels a profound sense of loss and grief, crying for the first time that day, indicating her deep emotional pain and the impact of Nana's death. The atmosphere is heavy with mourning, and Mariam's desire for comfort is met by Mullah Faizullah, who offers wisdom from the Koran, though Mariam struggles to find solace in it.

### **2.Question:**

**How does Mariam's perception of Jalil change during her visit to his house after Nana's death?**

As Mariam arrives at Jalil's house, she experiences a shift in perception. Initially excited to stay with him, she begins to see him through her mother's critical lens. This



shift reveals her awareness of Jalil's insincerity and lack of genuine warmth, which contrasts sharply with her earlier romantic ideals of him. She feels alien and out of place in his home, realizing that despite his show of affection, she does not truly belong in his world of wealth and social standing.

### 3.Question:

**What role does Mullah Faizullah play in Mariam's coping process after Nana's death?**

Mullah Faizullah plays a crucial role as a source of comfort and guidance for Mariam after Nana's death. He encourages her to cry and express her emotions without shame, providing a compassionate presence during her grief. He also shares teachings from the Koran that emphasize faith and divine purpose in suffering. Despite his intentions, Mariam struggles to find comfort in his words and feels guilt over her mother's choices, revealing the complexity of her emotions as she processes her loss.

### 4.Question:

**Describe the symbolism of the gramophone introduced by Niloufar during Mariam's stay. What does it represent?**

The gramophone symbolizes both connection and disconnection in Mariam's new life. It represents a world filled with joy and the possibility of new relationships, as Niloufar shares music and seeks to engage with Mariam. However, it also highlights Mariam's sense of isolation; she is unable to relate to the joys of childhood that Niloufar embodies. The music played from the gramophone contrasts with Mariam's internal turmoil and grief,



serving as a reminder of her lost childhood and the gaps between her and her newly acquired family.

### **5.Question:**

**What themes are explored in Mariam's reflections about belonging and identity throughout the chapter?**

Throughout Chapter 6, themes of belonging and identity are profoundly explored through Mariam's experiences and thoughts. After Nana's death, Mariam grapples with feelings of displacement and worthlessness, particularly within Jalil's household where she feels she does not fit in, despite being part of the family. Her reflections on not belonging to Jalil's world prompt her to question her own identity and worth, fueled by memories of her mother's painful declarations about her worthlessness. This internal struggle emphasizes the themes of familial connection, societal acceptance, and the search for one's place in an uncertain world.





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## Chapter 7 | 7. | Q&A

### 1.Question:

**What was the atmosphere during Mariam's meeting with Jalil and his wives?**

The atmosphere was tense and uncomfortable for Mariam. As she sat across from Jalil and his wives at the long table, she observed their forced politeness and artificially cheerful demeanor. Jalil's wives wore flimsy black scarves, which Mariam interpreted as a disrespectful nod to her mother, Nana, who had a strong influence on her life. The small talk about the warm weather and the vase of marigolds felt trivial compared to the heaviness of the situation Mariam was about to face, indicating that there was a significant or serious discussion looming.

### 2.Question:

**What news did Mariam receive during this meeting, and how did she react?**

Mariam was informed that she had a suitor named Rasheed, a shoemaker from Kabul. As they elaborated on his qualities—his successful business, health, and ability to provide for her—Mariam's stomach dropped, and she felt an overwhelming sense of dread. She reacted with disbelief and fear, questioning them through her numb lips, essentially saying she did not want to marry him. Her pleas for Jalil to intervene went unheard, and she felt trapped by the expectations and decisions being made for her.

### 3.Question:

**What implications did the discussion of marriage have for Mariam's sense of self-worth and identity?**

The discussion of Mariam's marriage highlighted her precarious position as Jalil's



illegitimate daughter and the stigma associated with her birth. It became evident that Jalil's wives viewed the marriage as an opportunity to rid themselves of the 'shame' associated with Mariam. The mention that different standards of marrying age applied to her, compared to her legitimate half-sisters, reflected societal views that devalued Mariam's worth. She recognized that she was being sent away to erase a mistake from her father's life, which deeply impacted her self-worth and contributed to her feelings of rejection and abandonment.

#### 4.Question:

**What does Jalil's behavior in this chapter reveal about his character?**

Jalil's behavior throughout the meeting reveals his inner turmoil and refusal to take responsibility for Mariam's well-being. He slouched in his chair, avoiding eye contact with her, which showed his reluctance to assert himself against the decision being made regarding her marriage. His inability to stand up for Mariam, even when she pleaded for his support, signifies his weakness and perhaps his desire to avoid confrontation, ultimately leaving Mariam feeling isolated and helpless. His response to her pleas—groaning and blaming her for making it difficult for him—reflects a lack of paternal protection and complicity in the oppressive societal norms.

#### 5.Question:

**How does Mariam's perspective on her future change as the meeting progresses?**

Initially, Mariam clings to the hope that she might remain with Mullah Faizullah, where she feels safe and familiar. However, her perspective shifts



drastically as she realizes that the meeting is not a mere discussion but an arrangement that is already decided. As she envisions her life in Kabul with Rasheed, the thought of cleaning, cooking, and submitting to a man she does not know fills her with dread. The realization that she has no control over her life choices culminates in a profound sense of despair, and she is forced to confront the stark reality of being treated as a bargaining chip in her father's and society's eyes.

## **Chapter 8 | 8. | Q&A**

### **1.Question:**

**What does Mariam wear for her wedding ceremony, and what items are placed on the table during the ceremony?**

Mariam is dressed in a long-sleeved, dark green dress over white cotton trousers, accompanied by a green hijab and matching sandals provided by Afsoon. During the wedding ceremony, the table is adorned with several significant items: a bowl of sugar-coated almond candy, a Koran, a green veil, and a mirror. These items symbolize aspects of the marriage contract and the ceremony itself.

### **2.Question:**

**How does Mariam feel during her marriage ceremony, particularly when she first sees Rasheed?**

Mariam experiences a mix of fear and apprehension as she prepares to marry Rasheed. She describes feeling her heart racing when she senses his presence before seeing him fully. When Rasheed officially sits beside her, his overwhelming size and presence





contribute to her anxiety. As she glimpses his reflection in the mirror, she processes her feelings, recognizing that she is now married to this man whom she has not chosen, heightening her unease.

### 3.Question:

**What does the mullah say about the nature of the marriage, and how does Mariam respond when asked if she accepts Rasheed as her husband?**

The mullah explains that the marriage to Rasheed will not follow all traditional steps in order to expedite the ceremony, as they have a bus to catch. When the mullah directly asks Mariam if she accepts Rasheed as her husband, she remains silent at first, indicating her reluctance and fright. After being prompted multiple times, with Jalil whispering supportively to her, she finally replies 'Yes' shakily, showing her lack of true willingness but a sense of compelled consent.

### 4.Question:

**What does Mariam reflect on when she looks into the mirror during the ceremony?**

When Mariam gazes into the mirror passed beneath her veil, she critically examines her face, noting her unremarkable features—archless eyebrows, flat hair, and close-set eyes. She feels that her overall appearance is neither pretty nor unpleasant, but she highlights her perceived flaws. This self-assessment is also accompanied by her first sight of Rasheed through the mirror, from which she collects that he has a rugged and imposing look.



This moment signifies her acceptance of a reality she feels trapped in, as it marks the beginning of her new life.

### **5.Question:**

**Describe the conversation between Mariam and Jalil before she leaves for Kabul. What emotions are conveyed in their exchange?**

In their exchange, Mariam expresses deep hurt and betrayal when she tells Jalil that she used to worship him and waited for hours for his visits. Jalil, uncomfortable, attempts to deflect the conversation toward practical matters like her meal. However, Mariam presses on, vocally confronting her feelings of abandonment and shame, asserting that he was ashamed of her. She passionately declares that their relationship ends with her departure to avoid further emotional pain. Jalil shows signs of guilt and sadness, struggling to answer her accusations. The emotional weight of their conversation displays Mariam's heartache at losing not just Jalil but her childhood dreams for a father-daughter relationship, thus creating a poignant farewell filled with sorrow and unresolved tension.

## **Chapter 9 | 9. | Q&A**

### **1.Question:**

**How does Mariam feel when she arrives at Rasheed's house compared to her old life with Jalil?**

Mariam feels a profound sense of loss and suffocation upon arriving at Rasheed's house. The stark contrast between the small, familiar kolba she shared with her mother,



Nana, and Rasheed's larger but unfamiliar home leaves her feeling disoriented and anxious. She reflects on her old life with nostalgia, longing for her mother and the familiarity of her previous environment, which creates a sense of deep sadness and displacement. She misses the simplicity and the limited space of her past home, feeling overwhelmed by the larger and more isolating space of Rasheed's home.

## **2.Question:**

**What elements of Rasheed's household provide insight into his character?**

Rasheed's household is depicted as unkempt and sparsely furnished, indicating his lack of concern for aesthetics and possibly hinting at his pragmatic, unsentimental nature. The living room has a noticeably patched couch and bare walls, which reflects his lower socio-economic status and an indifferent approach to living conditions. Furthermore, his reaction to Mariam's tears — scolding her for crying and showing impatience — suggests that he has a rigid, traditional view of gender roles and emotions, expecting women to be strong and composed.

## **3.Question:**

**What significance do the tuberose flowers on the windowsill have in this chapter?**

The tuberose flowers on the windowsill serve as a symbol of beauty and a fleeting moment of kindness in an otherwise difficult transition for Mariam. Rasheed's gesture of placing the flowers there before their marriage indicates a desire to make a good impression and suggests a complexity to his



character — he is capable of small acts of consideration. However, Mariam's response to the flowers also highlights her emotional state; she feels gratitude and is touched by the flowers, but they cannot alleviate her feelings of loss and sorrow. This duality illustrates the conflicting emotions Mariam experiences in her new environment.

#### **4.Question:**

**How does Rasheed's behavior reflect traditional societal expectations of men in his culture?**

Rasheed's behavior distinctly reflects traditional societal expectations of men in Afghan culture, particularly regarding masculinity and authority. His impatience with Mariam's emotions and his directive tone when he tells her to stop crying exemplify the expectation that men are to be emotionally stoic and in control. Additionally, by taking Mariam to his home and positioning himself as the authority figure (even discussing the dynamics of their sleeping arrangements), he embodies the patriarchal norm, where a husband is seen as the decision-maker and provider, enforcing the roles of dominance and submission within the marriage.

#### **5.Question:**

**What does the description of the house and its surroundings reveal about the setting of the story?**

The description of Rasheed's house and its surroundings reveals a vivid picture of life in Kabul during a time of turmoil and hardship. The narrow, unpaved roads, the presence of garbage, and the poorly maintained yard



point to the socio-economic challenges faced by many families in the city. The contrast between this setting and Mariam's past life in the kolba emphasizes the shift in her circumstances and the difficulties associated with urban living compared to rural simplicity. The glimpses of the Asmai and Ali Abad mountains add a layer of geographical context, highlighting the natural beauty that coexists with the struggles of daily life.

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## Chapter 10 | 10. | Q&A

### 1.Question:

**What is Mariam's state of mind during the first few days after her marriage to Rasheed?**

In the first few days of her marriage to Rasheed, Mariam feels adrift and forlorn. She hardly leaves her room, waking up only to the sound of the azan but subsequently crawling back into bed. Her emotional state is one of anxiety and homesickness, as she reflects on her past life with her mother, Nana, and the simple joys they shared in the kolba. The stark difference between her previous life and her new circumstances leaves her feeling uprooted and displaced, as she struggles to adapt to her new reality.

### 2.Question:

**How does Mariam perceive her new home and her responsibilities as Rasheed's wife?**

Mariam views her new home with a sense of confusion and dislocation. She enters the kitchen and handles the tools and utensils, but they remind her of her loss rather than feeling like instruments of domestic life that she should embrace. This sense of being an intruder in her own life is compounded by her internal struggle to understand her role as a wife. When Rasheed insists that she must start behaving like a wife, Mariam experiences anxiety and fear, particularly regarding the physical aspects of their marriage, which she is unprepared for.

### 3.Question:

**Describe the incident at the tandoor and how it affects Mariam. What emotions**





does she experience?

At the tandoor, Mariam is approached by a group of women who bombard her with questions and comments about being Rasheed's new wife. This swarm of attention causes her to hyperventilate, making her feel overwhelmed and frightened. She recoils from the women's curiosity, feeling exposed and ashamed, particularly because of her background as a harami (illegitimate child). As she pushes her way through the crowd in panic, she experiences feelings of isolation, anxiety, and a deep sense of failure when she loses her way and realizes that she cannot find her new home. Eventually, she breaks down emotionally, which marks a pivotal moment of vulnerability for her.

#### 4.Question:

**How does Rasheed respond to Mariam's attempts to manage their home and what expectations does he set for her?**

Rasheed's response to Mariam's management of the household is one of expectation and authority. He expresses dissatisfaction with her not unpacking her suitcase and insists that she must start behaving like a proper wife, signaling that he has specific expectations of Mariam's role in their marriage. When he finally acknowledges the meal Mariam prepares for him, he offers a mild critique suggesting it was undersalted but also complimenting it as 'good,' which elicits a sense of pride in Mariam. However, the overall tone of his expectations remains domineering, highlighted by his instructions regarding her modesty and conduct as a wife.

#### 5.Question:

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What symbolic items are presented in this chapter, and what do they represent regarding Mariam's life and status?

In this chapter, the brown paper bag containing the blue burqa serves as a significant symbolic item. The burqa represents the societal constraints and expectations placed upon women in Mariam's culture, emphasizing the rigid standards of modesty and ownership. Rasheed's insistence on Mariam wearing it underlines his desire to exert control over her and his interpretation of honor and virtue. Additionally, Mariam's suitcase symbolizes her past life and lost identity as it remains unpacked, representing her struggle to find her place in Rasheed's household while also being a continual reminder of her former life and the sense of belonging she has lost.

## **Chapter 11 | 11. | Q&A**

### **1.Question:**

**How does Mariam feel about wearing the burqa for the first time?**

Mariam feels uncomfortable and restricted in the burqa. She finds the padded headpiece to be tight and heavy, which contributes to her anxiety as she practices walking in it and frequently stumbles on the hem. The loss of peripheral vision is unsettling for her, and she dislikes how the fabric presses against her mouth, making her feel suffocated.

### **2.Question:**

**What are Mariam's initial thoughts during her outing with Rasheed in Kabul?**

Initially, Mariam is apprehensive about being in public, especially in a crowded



restaurant where she struggles with lifting her burqa to eat. However, Rasheed's presence provides some comfort, and she gradually finds the burqa to be a protective barrier that allows her to observe the world without revealing her past.

### **3.Question:**

**How does Mariam's perception of Kabul and its women change during the outing with Rasheed?**

As they explore Kabul, Mariam is struck by the contrast between the women she sees in this wealthier area and the women from her neighborhood. The modern Afghan women appear confident and liberated; they wear makeup, fashionable clothing, and engage freely with men. This stark difference highlights Mariam's feelings of lowliness and ignorance, making her acutely aware of her own plainness and lack of ambition.

### **4.Question:**

**What is significant about the gift Rasheed gives to Mariam?**

Rasheed gives Mariam a dark maroon silk shawl that is beautifully embroidered, which she perceives as a genuine gift. Unlike the insincere tokens of her father Jalil's past gifts, the shawl represents Rasheed's affection and care, making Mariam feel valued and cherished for the first time. This signifies a shift in her relationship with Rasheed, as it is a tender gesture amidst the complexities of their marriage.

### **5.Question:**

**Describe the traumatic experience Mariam has with Rasheed that night.**



How does it reflect the power dynamics in their relationship?

That night, Rasheed violates Mariam sexually, despite her clear discomfort and resistance. He rationalizes his actions by stating that there is no shame in what married couples do, reflecting a disturbing normalization of such behavior within their marriage. This experience is traumatic for Mariam, who feels powerless and compelled to endure the pain. Rasheed's actions represent the oppressive power dynamics in their relationship, as he exerts control over her body without regard for her feelings or consent.

## **Chapter 12 | 12. | Q&A**

### **1.Question:**

**What transformation did Mariam notice in Kabul during Ramadan?**

Mariam observed that the sighting of the new crescent moon heralding Ramadan brought a significant change in the atmosphere of Kabul. The city's vibrancy diminished, a general hush fell over it, and daily activities slowed dramatically. Shops closed early, and the usual hustle and bustle gave way to a quietude, signifying the start of fasting for the month. This transformation allowed Mariam to experience a deep sense of sameness with her surroundings and an awareness of the communal practices happening around her.

### **2.Question:**

**How did Rasheed's attitude during Ramadan affect Mariam?**

Rasheed's attitude during Ramadan had a negative impact on Mariam. Although he did observe the fast on a few occasions, when he did not, his irritability and sour mood



were quite pronounced. For instance, when she was a few minutes late with dinner, he chose to eat bread instead of the meal she prepared, which filled the atmosphere with tension, highlighting the emotional strain their relationship was under during this time. Mariam felt relieved when Ramadan ended, indicating that Rasheed's behavior during this period contributed to her distress.

### 3.Question:

#### **What were Mariam's feelings about Eid-ul-Fitr celebrations?**

Initially, Mariam felt a sense of loneliness and dread regarding Eid-ul-Fitr, viewing it as a time that emphasized her isolation from familial warmth and joy. While she longed for the merriment she thought should accompany the celebration, she felt forlorn, contrasting her imagined joyful times during Eid to her own experiences of it being laced with sadness. However, this year was different as she partook in the festivities with Rasheed, and for the first time, she witnessed the lively and joyful scenes of families celebrating, which brought her both happiness and nostalgia for the mother she lost.

### 4.Question:

#### **What discovery does Mariam make while cleaning Rasheed's room?**

While cleaning Rasheed's room, Mariam inadvertently trespasses into his private space, where she discovers a gun and magazines filled with explicit images of women. The presence of the gun disturbs her, as it represents violence and a potential threat, while the magazines provoke feelings of confusion and disgust at Rasheed's hidden desires. This discovery forces Mariam to reflect on the nature of their relationship and Rasheed's character,



leading her to grapple with feelings of inadequacy and jealousy, particularly when she sees a photo of Rasheed's deceased wife.

### 5.Question:

**How does Mariam's perspective on Rasheed change by the end of the chapter?**

By the end of Chapter 12, Mariam's perspective on Rasheed shifts to one of compassion. Initially grappling with anger and disappointment, especially regarding his implicit treatment of women and the hidden aspects of his life, she begins to understand that he too has experienced deep loss, notably the death of his son. Her sorrow for his past and shared experiences of hardship develops a sense of kinship between them. This empathetic realization leads her to believe that they could potentially become good companions, despite the challenges in their marriage.







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## Chapter 13 | 13. | Q&A

### 1.Question:

**What transformation does Mariam experience during the bus ride in Chapter 13, and what does it signify?**

During the bus ride home from the doctor, Mariam experiences a vivid transformation as she sees bright colors everywhere, contrasting with the drab environment of the city. This vision symbolizes her newfound hope and the joy of her pregnancy. The bright colors represent the blossoming of her desires and dreams about motherhood, marking a pivotal shift in her emotional state following the news of her pregnancy.

### 2.Question:

**How does Rasheed's attitude towards the unborn child reflect traditional gender expectations?**

Rasheed expresses a strong desire for a boy, demonstrating traditional gender expectations prevalent in Afghan culture. He already discusses potential names for a boy and what it means to raise a boy, while assuring Mariam that if the baby is a girl, she can choose the name. This reflects the societal preference for male offspring and underscores Rasheed's protective and controlling attitude towards Mariam and their future family.

### 3.Question:

**What internal conflict does Mariam face regarding her pregnancy and Rasheed's expectations?**

Mariam feels a mix of happiness about her pregnancy and unease due to Rasheed's



strong expectations for a boy. Although she is excited about becoming a mother and the love she feels for her child, she struggles with the weight of Rasheed's hope. This conflict reveals her fear of disappointing him if the baby is not what he wants, showcasing the pressures she feels in her role as a wife and the implications of her gender in their relationship.

#### **4.Question:**

**Describe the significance of the hamam scene in the chapter. What does it symbolize for Mariam?**

The hamam scene is significant as it marks a moment of vulnerability and innocence for Mariam. While she is initially enjoying the experience of the bathhouse, the sudden onset of blood during her pregnancy signifies the fragility of her situation. This moment can be seen as symbolic of her fears surrounding motherhood and the unpredictability of her life. It foreshadows possible challenges she may face, reinforcing the theme of suffering and endurance that permeates her journey.

#### **5.Question:**

**Analyze the role of snow in Chapter 13. What does it represent for Mariam?**

Snow serves as a powerful symbol in Chapter 13, representing both beauty and the challenges of Mariam's life. Initially, the first snow evokes joy and wonder for Mariam, symbolizing new beginnings and the purity of her pregnancy. However, as the chapter progresses and snow continues to fall, it also reflects the isolation and hardships that Mariam endures. The imagery



of snow connects to Nana's words about women's suffering, reinforcing the idea that, although Mariam yearns for happiness, she is reminded of the underlying struggles that accompany her existence as a woman in a patriarchal society.

## **Chapter 14 | 14. | Q&A**

### **1.Question:**

**What emotions does Mariam experience following her loss, as described in the chapter?**

Mariam experiences profound grief that surprises her, triggered by reminders of the baby such as the unfinished crib and the baby's clothes. She feels an intense sense of longing and loss for a child she never got to hold, expressing feelings of missing the baby deeply despite it not being born yet. Mariam's grief is complex; at times, it escalates to self-blame, where she finds herself grappling with guilt and resentment towards herself and even towards God for not granting her this blessing. Additionally, there are moments when she feels anger not only at herself but also at Rasheed, for his premature celebration and expectations about the baby.

### **2.Question:**

**How does Mariam's relationship with Rasheed change throughout this chapter?**

In this chapter, Mariam's relationship with Rasheed undergoes noticeable tension following the loss of the baby. Rasheed becomes increasingly withdrawn and irritable, failing to communicate with her as he previously did. He sulks in silence, blaming her for minor household issues, and remains emotionally distant, impacting their dynamic.



Their interactions become strained, with Rasheed responding sharply to Mariam's concerns about his feelings. This shift indicates a fracture in their relationship, highlighting a lack of support and understanding between them in the wake of their shared loss.

### **3.Question:**

**What does Mariam want to do to commemorate her lost baby, and how does Rasheed respond?**

Mariam desires to have a proper burial for her lost baby, believing that marking this loss in a permanent way will help her heal. She wants to conduct a few prayers and create a place of remembrance for the baby. However, Rasheed dismisses her idea, considering it idiotic and refusing to participate, as he has already buried one son and does not want to go through that pain again. His refusal reflects not only his emotional struggles with the loss but also his lack of empathy towards Mariam's need to find closure through a burial.

### **4.Question:**

**What internal conflicts does Mariam face regarding her feelings of guilt and blame?**

Mariam grapples with various internal conflicts related to guilt and blame throughout the chapter. She feels that her failure to carry the baby to term is a punishment for her past actions, especially related to her mother, Nana. This leads her to question her worthiness of motherhood and whether she deserves to have children at all. Simultaneously, she oscillates between



blaming Rasheed for his expectations and faith surrounding the pregnancy and blaming herself for perceived missteps during the pregnancy.

Ultimately, Mariam is torn between her desires for motherhood and the pain of grief and guilt, resulting in a turbulent emotional landscape.

### **5.Question:**

**What does the act of burying the baby's suede coat signify for Mariam?**

The act of burying the baby's suede coat holds deep symbolic significance for Mariam. It represents her need to honor and remember the child she lost, to give it a semblance of recognition and permanence despite the lack of a physical presence. By performing this act, Mariam seeks closure and a way to cope with her grief. The prayer she whispers as she buries the coat reveals her spiritual yearning for sustenance and support from Allah, reflecting her desire not only to mourn the loss but also to find strength to move forward in her life.

## **Chapter 15 | 15. | Q&A**

### **1.Question:**

**What significant political event takes place in Chapter 15, and what is its importance to the story?**

In Chapter 15, Mariam learns about the murder of a prominent communist, Mir Akbar Khyber, and the subsequent large-scale demonstration in Kabul, which culminates in a revolution resulting in the overthrow of President Daoud Khan's government. This political upheaval is crucial as it brings changes to Afghanistan and sets the stage for



the social and personal turmoil that Mariam will experience. The introduction of a communist regime foreshadows further instability and impacts all characters, especially the women's lives.

## **2.Question:**

**How does the relationship between Mariam and Rasheed evolve throughout the chapter?**

Throughout Chapter 15, Mariam's relationship with Rasheed deteriorates significantly. Rasheed's disdain and mistreatment of Mariam are palpable as he ridicules her for her ignorance and belittles her efforts. Over the years, as Mariam has endured disappointment after disappointment regarding pregnancy and Rasheed's expectations, his emotional distance grows. This chapter portrays the oppressive dynamics in their marriage, highlighting Mariam's fear and Rasheed's escalating cruelty, culminating in a violent act where he punishes her by forcing her to chew on pebbles.

## **3.Question:**

**What is the symbolism of the political changes in Kabul compared to Mariam's personal life?**

The political changes in Kabul symbolize hope and a call for revolution against oppression, paralleling Mariam's personal struggle against the oppression in her marriage. While the city is undergoing a transformation with the promise of a new regime, Mariam's life remains stagnant and filled with suffering. The chapter juxtaposes the external turmoil of a nation seeking freedom with Mariam's internal battle for personal autonomy and



respect, which remains elusive amidst Rasheed's violent control.

#### 4.Question:

**Describe the effects of Rasheed's treatment on Mariam's mental health in this chapter. How does it manifest?**

Rasheed's treatment of Mariam profoundly affects her mental health, leading to deep-seated anxiety and self-doubt. She experiences heightened anxiety when preparing meals, fearing his criticism, which indicates her constant state of tension and worry in the household. Mariam's dread of Rasheed's return home and the anticipation of his anger show how his abuse has taken a toll on her sense of self-worth and safety. Her reaction to their interactions illustrates her internalized fear and helplessness, and culminates in physical violence when Rasheed punishes her, further damaging her psyche.

#### 5.Question:

**What does Mariam's experience at the end of the chapter reveal about her character and her circumstances?**

At the end of the chapter, Mariam's experience of being forced to chew pebbles represents a complete degradation of her dignity and personhood. This brutal act of punishment reveals her entrapment in a cycle of abuse and highlights her vulnerability in a patriarchal society that offers her no protection. Mariam's silent suffering and reluctance to resist Rasheed's authority indicate a complex portrayal of endurance and resignation to her circumstances, illustrating her strength in survival yet also her deep loneliness and despair.







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## Chapter 16 | 16. | Q&A

### 1.Question:

**How does Laila feel about Tariq's absence in Chapter 16, and what role does it play in the narrative?**

Laila is deeply affected by Tariq's absence, feeling both anxious and nostalgic as she counts the days until she will see him again. Her anticipation and longing for Tariq highlight the innocence of childhood love and friendship, serving as a contrast to the turmoil and conflict surrounding her family life and the war in Afghanistan. This sets the emotional tone of the chapter while also illustrating how time can feel prolonged when missing someone dear.

### 2.Question:

**What are the dynamics of Laila's family as depicted in this chapter?**

Laila's family dynamics are fraught with tension, particularly between her parents, Fariba (Mammy) and Hakim (Babi). Mammy is portrayed as fierce and aggressive, often engaging in verbal battles with Babi, who appears passive and defeated in their arguments. This disparity reveals the strain their relationship is under, exacerbated by the ongoing war and their personal losses. It also affects Laila, who finds herself caught in the middle of their conflicts, reflecting on how such a hostile environment impacts her childhood.

### 3.Question:

**What does Laila's relationship with her father, Babi, signify?**

Laila's relationship with Babi is characterized by warmth and admiration. Babi is



portrayed as a loving, albeit ineffectual patriarch, who prioritizes education and the well-being of his daughter. He encourages Laila's pursuit of knowledge, emphasizing that her education is paramount and more important than early marriage. This relationship signifies the hope for a better future and the importance of female empowerment, contrasting the traditional expectations of women in Afghan society.

#### 4.Question:

**Describe the classroom environment and the teaching approach of Khala Rangmaal as presented in this chapter. What are some key ideas she promotes?**

Khala Rangmaal's classroom environment is described as rigid and propagandistic, where she imposes the Soviet ideology on her students, promoting the idea that the Soviet Union is benevolent and Afghanistan is progressing under its influence. She encourages students to report on anyone who may be dissenting against the government, instilling a sense of loyalty to the state over familial ties. Her harsh methods, including physical reprimands, underline the fear and control that characterize the educational approach during this period, reflecting the overarching political narrative in Afghanistan.

#### 5.Question:

**What significant events transpire at the conclusion of the chapter, and what implications do they carry for Laila?**

At the end of the chapter, Laila encounters a menacing situation when a stranger with a gun addresses her, feeding into the narrative of violence and



fear that permeates her life in Kabul. This encounter foreshadows a shift in her childhood innocence and highlights the pervasive threat of the ongoing conflict. It sets the tone for upcoming challenges in Laila's life, showing her vulnerability amidst the chaos and serving as a catalyst for future developments in the story.

## **Chapter 17 | 17. | Q&A**

### **1.Question:**

**Who is Khadim and what does he do to Laila in this chapter?**

Khadim is an eleven-year-old boy who is described as thick, tall, and possessing a severe underbite. He has a reputation for being mean, often harassing Laila when she is alone at school. In this chapter, he bullies Laila by using a water gun painted in bright colors to spray her with water, which she initially perceives as humiliating. As he sprays her, Khadim makes derogatory remarks and taunts her, showcasing his intention to provoke and embarrass her in front of other boys.

### **2.Question:**

**What is Laila's emotional response to Khadim's bullying?**

Laila's emotional response is one of disgust and shame. After being sprayed with water, she feels the need to clean herself thoroughly, repeatedly soaping and rinsing her hair in a desperate attempt to scrub away the perceived humiliation. This incident triggers deeper feelings of anger and resentment towards her mother for not showing up as promised, leading her to question her own worth and the fairness of her family's dynamics. Laila reflects on her mother's lack of affection and expresses a sense of



abandonment, feeling neglected and alone.

### 3.Question:

**What do the interactions between Laila and her mother in this chapter reveal about their relationship?**

The interactions between Laila and her mother, Mammy, highlight a strained and emotionally distant relationship. Laila recalls happier times when her mother was more engaged, but now Mammy's emotional struggles lead her to often withdraw and be preoccupied with her own problems. Laila's efforts to connect with Mammy, like sharing her school experiences, are met with a lack of enthusiasm, showing that Mammy is disengaged. Despite Laila's attempts to get closer and share her feelings, Mammy rarely reciprocates with the warmth or affection that Laila longs for, indicating a significant emotional gap between them.

### 4.Question:

**How does Laila's memory of her family life juxtapose with her current situation?**

Laila's memories of her family life contrast sharply with her current feelings of isolation and neglect. In her recollections, especially on Mammy's good days, there are moments of joy, laughter, and affection shared with both her parents. She remembers playful times spent with Mammy as well as cherished family interactions that now feel lost in the present. In stark comparison, her current reality is filled with disappointment and a longing for that lost warmth as she deals with her mother's emotional struggles and





the bullying at school, which further emphasizes her loneliness.

### **5.Question:**

**What thematic elements can be identified in this chapter, based on Laila's experiences and reflections?**

This chapter explores several thematic elements, including the impact of bullying, the complexity of familial relationships, and the experience of female identity within a challenging environment. Bullying, represented by Khadim's actions, illustrates the difficulties faced by adolescents and the struggles for acceptance and dignity. The strained relationship between Laila and her mother reflects themes of neglect and emotional unavailability, shedding light on the psychological effects of a parent's mental health on a child's development. Additionally, the nostalgia for a loving, supportive family life versus the harsh realities of the present underlines the theme of longing for connection and belonging in a difficult socio-political landscape.

## **Chapter 18 | 18. | Q&A**

### **1.Question:**

**What emotional state does Laila find herself in during the weeks of waiting for Tariq?**

Laila experiences a profound sense of anxiety and despair during the weeks of waiting for Tariq's return. She fills her time with tasks around the house, such as repairing the screen door and organizing her father's books, but these activities do little to alleviate her mental turmoil. She is caught in a 'net of terrible thoughts,' fearing that Tariq would



never come back due to various possibilities, such as his parents moving away permanently or him suffering from a landmine accident, a traumatic event that had already impacted his life before. This emotional strain illustrates the psychological weight of uncertainty and longing, emphasizing that the act of waiting can sometimes be the most punishing hardship a person endures.

## **2.Question:**

### **How does Tariq's return affect Laila's mood and perspective?**

Tariq's return brings an overwhelming sense of relief and joy to Laila. Upon seeing a 'tiny flashing light' that signifies his arrival, she is filled with giddy excitement, which showcases her deep affection for him. The next day, when she visits Tariq's home, their interaction is warm and filled with a sense of normalcy and comfort. Laila's joy is palpable as she enjoys the mundane aspects of his family life, such as the meals they share and the warm banter between his parents. This pleasant reunion serves to rejuvenate her spirits, contrasting sharply with the prior weeks of worrying and waiting, and highlights the deep emotional connection they share.

## **3.Question:**

### **What role does the setting of Tariq's home play in Laila's experience and feelings about family?**

Tariq's home represents a sanctuary for Laila, contrasting starkly with her own family's household. She appreciates every detail, from the comforting clutter of his family's life to the warmth and love evident in their interactions. The atmosphere is inviting and familial; meals are shared with





laughter and communal bonding, reflecting a sense of togetherness that Laila finds lacking at her own home. This setting allows Laila to experience what a nurturing family dynamic feels like, enhancing her sense of belonging and happiness. It serves not only as a respite from her own troubled household but also reinforces her desire for a similar environment, highlighting the emotional void she feels within her own family.

#### **4.Question:**

**Describe the significance of the camaraderie and banter between Laila and Tariq during their time together. How does it reflect their relationship?**

The banter and camaraderie between Laila and Tariq during their time together reflect a deep-rooted friendship that blends playfulness with affection. Their dialogue is laced with teasing and lighthearted challenges, indicative of their long history and comfort with one another. When they engage in card games or riddles, it showcases their ability to connect over simple pleasures, highlighting the joy they find in each other's company. This playful dynamic illustrates the seamlessness of their relationship and the ease with which they engage, a stark contrast to the complexities of Laila's interactions with her parents. Moreover, the light teasing over who is better at games serves to reinforce their bond, as it allows them to express their personalities and emotional states in a safe environment. It emphasizes how friendship can be a source of strength and support, particularly in times of distress.

#### **5.Question:**

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What actions does Tariq take upon hearing about Khadim's behavior towards Laila, and what does this reveal about his character?

Upon learning about Khadim's behavior towards Laila, Tariq acts decisively and protectively. His immediate response is to confront Khadim, demonstrating his willingness to stand up for Laila, which reveals his strong sense of loyalty and courage. Tariq's readiness to confront Khadim, despite knowing that he might face a group of boys, indicates his deep-seated respect for Laila and his protective instincts towards her. This incident underscores Tariq's character as someone who does not shy away from conflict when it involves defending someone he cares about, showcasing the themes of friendship, masculinity, and the complexities of adolescence in a turbulent environment. His actions reflect a profound commitment to Laila that transcends typical teenage behavior.

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## Chapter 19 | 19. | Q&A

### 1.Question:

**What kind of news does the stranger bring when he visits Laila's family?**

The stranger brings devastating news from Panjshir regarding Laila's two brothers, Ahmad and Noor. This news leads to a profound emotional reaction from both of Laila's parents—her father, Babi, becomes visibly pale and distressed, while her mother, Mammy, is overwhelmed with grief, screaming and tearing at her hair.

### 2.Question:

**How does Mammy cope with the news about her sons during the day of the fatiha?**

On the day of the fatiha, Mammy is largely in a state of shock and despair. She sits on the couch throughout the morning, her face bloated and her fingers busy with a handkerchief, showing signs of her emotional turmoil. The presence of women who come to console her does not seem to penetrate her grief; she appears to be oblivious to their attempts to care for her, indicating her deep sorrow and emotional numbing.

### 3.Question:

**What role does Laila play in the preparations for the fatiha?**

Laila feels a sense of helplessness as she is shooed away by the women taking charge of Mammy's care. Despite her desire to comfort her mother, she is assigned menial tasks such as washing glasses and stacking plates. This reflects both her youthful longing to be involved in comforting and her struggle against the rituals of mourning that appear to sideline her emotional needs.

### 4.Question:



How does Laila feel about the loss of her brothers compared to her feelings for Tariq?

Laila's feelings about the loss of her brothers Ahmad and Noor are complex and somewhat detached. While she dutifully participates in the mourning process, she does not experience genuine sorrow for them as she never had a close relationship with them; they feel more like distant figures from her past. In contrast, Tariq is portrayed as a vivid and real presence in her life, and her deep emotional connection to him makes the pain of losing him feel much more substantial compared to her brothers.

### 5.Question:

**What do we learn about the contrasts between expectations of mourning and Laila's actual emotional experience?**

The chapter highlights a significant contrast between societal expectations of mourning and Laila's actual emotional state. Although there is a ritualistic display of mourning with the presence of relatives, women comforting Mammy, and the solemnity of the fatiha, Laila finds it difficult to genuinely engage with the grief over Ahmad and Noor. This disconnection emphasizes her struggle with the cultural norms surrounding death, as she finds it more challenging to mourn people she didn't have significant memories with, juxtaposing her relationship with Tariq, who embodies her true emotional ties.

## Chapter 20 | 20. | Q&A

### 1.Question:

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What ailments does Mammy experience, and how do they affect her daily life?

Mammy suffers from various ailments, including chest pains, headaches, joint aches, night sweats, and paralyzing ear pain. These health issues leave her bedridden for most days, limiting her mobility and ability to care for herself or her home. As a result, she wears black, indicative of her mourning for her sons, and often appears disheveled and melancholic. The emotional toll of her grief further exacerbates her physical ailments, leading her to linger aimlessly around the house, often gravitating towards Laila's room in search of connection with her deceased children.

### 2.Question:

**Discuss the dynamic between Laila and Mammy as seen in this chapter.**

In this chapter, the dynamic between Laila and Mammy is characterized by a reversal of roles due to Mammy's emotional and physical decline. Laila takes on the responsibilities of the household, performing chores and caring for her mother to the best of her ability. She longs for Mammy to acknowledge her presence and identity, feeling overshadowed by the memories of her brothers, Ahmad and Noor. Laila's attempts to connect with Mammy through physical comfort and conversations reveal her deep desire for connection and validation, but she often feels like she is competing against the ghosts of her brothers, who dominate Mammy's thoughts and affection.

### 3.Question:

**What do Mammy's prayers signify, and how do they reflect her state of**



mind?

Mammy's commitment to her five daily Namaz prayers, particularly the prayers for victory for the Mujahideen, serves as a ritualistic anchor in her tumultuous emotional landscape. These prayers indicate her longing for a return to stability and justice in Afghanistan, as well as her connections to her deceased sons, who were involved in the conflict. However, the fact that she undertakes these prayers with her head bowed and hands before her face suggests a deep sorrow and a feeling of helplessness - her fervent prayers contrast sharply with her despair, showcasing her internal struggle between hope for the future and the overwhelming grief she cannot escape.

#### 4.Question:

**How does Laila perceive her relationship with her deceased brothers, and how does this affect her self-worth?**

Laila acknowledges her brothers' extraordinary potential and legacy, feeling suffocated by their memories that overshadow her own existence. Despite being alive, she feels as though she has been relegated to a mere footnote in the story of her family, a visitor in the museum curated by Mammy that celebrates the lives of Ahmad and Noor. This perception of herself devalues her sense of identity and self-worth, inducing feelings of inadequacy. She wishes for recognition from her mother and struggles with the painful realization that her brother's deaths have irrevocably altered Mammy's affections, making Laila feel inadequate in comparison.

#### 5.Question:

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What is the significance of the moment when Mammy expresses her thoughts about suicidal ideation?

The moment when Mammy candidly acknowledges thoughts of suicide after the death of her sons is significant as it unveils the depths of her despair and reflects the mental health struggles that arise from profound grief. This moment is crucial as it lays bare Mammy's vulnerability and loss of hope, revealing a willingness to confront her pain while simultaneously expressing a desire to live for the sake of her sons' dreams for the future of Afghanistan. This acknowledgment of such deep sorrow also creates a pivotal moment for Laila, who feels reassured by Mammy's desire to live yet also hurt that her own role is not viewed as a source of motivation for her mother. It highlights the complexities in their relationship, where love and grief intermingle.

## **Chapter 21 | 21. | Q&A**

### **1.Question:**

**What historical significance do the Buddhas of Bamiyan hold in the chapter, and how do they relate to Afghanistan's past?**

In Chapter 21, the Buddhas of Bamiyan serve as a potent symbol of Afghanistan's rich cultural heritage and history, illustrating the conquests and invasions that have shaped the country. The character Babi explains that these colossal statues were built nearly two thousand years ago during a time when Bamiyan was a thriving center for Buddhism. He mentions how Genghis Khan's grandson attempted to conquer the city, only to be killed, leading to Genghis Khan himself destroying it. This narrative underscores the theme of resilience in the face of repeated invasions, as the driver



points out that Afghanistan has faced endless waves of invaders—from the Macedonians to the Soviets. As they marvel at the surviving Buddhas, Laila and Tari experience not just a moment of awe but an emotional connection to their country's tumultuous history.

## **2.Question:**

**How does the trip to see the Buddhas impact Laila's relationship with her father, Babi?**

The trip to view the Buddhas profoundly strengthens the bond between Laila and her father, Babi. As they navigate the ancient site, Babi shares his memories and emotions connected to Laila's deceased brothers and her mother. This candid moment allows Laila to see a vulnerable side of her father, enhancing her understanding of his grief and love. The act of sharing this experience—climbing to the top of the Buddhas together and appreciating the view—creates a shared memory that intertwines their individual experiences of loss and hopes for the future, effectively deepening their relationship.

## **3.Question:**

**What are the contrasting views of Babi and Mammy regarding the war and potential emigration from Afghanistan?**

Babi expresses a hopeful view about the possibility of leaving Afghanistan to seek a better life and ensure Laila's education in a place where 'it's easy to forget' the war. He dreams of opening a small restaurant in America, highlighting his desire for a secure future for his family. In contrast, Mammy



holds a more pessimistic and stubborn outlook; she is deeply connected to the land and sees the idea of leaving as a betrayal of her sons who died in the conflict. Her statement, 'Does their dying mean nothing to you?' encapsulates her refusal to leave Afghanistan, believing that to do so would dishonor the sacrifices made by their family. This difference in perspective causes tension, reflecting the broader themes of loss, loyalty, and hope in the narrative.

#### 4.Question:

**How does the setting of the journey reflect the emotional states of the characters, particularly Laila?**

The setting of the journey—ranging from the beauty of the Bamiyan Valley to the historical significance of the Buddhas—reflects Laila's inner emotional landscape. Initially, as they travel through various landscapes, Laila acknowledges the war's impact on different areas of Afghanistan, contrasting the relative peace in Kabul with the destruction evident in the provinces. Upon arriving at the Buddhas, the awe-inspiring sight and the shared experience with Babi and Tariq evoke a mix of emotions—gladness at the beauty of her heritage, yet sadness and a sense of vulnerability, feeling small in the shadow of history. This profoundly affects her reflections on her family's past and her desire to hold on to those she loves, particularly Tariq, as she grapples with the duality of her current happiness intertwined with the sorrow of loss.

#### 5.Question:

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What does Babi's vision for the future reveal about his character and the challenges faced by his family?

Babi's vision for a future outside Afghanistan reveals his optimism, strong parental instincts, and desire for stability after enduring immense personal loss. His dreams of emigrating to a place where Laila can receive a proper education and where they can start anew reflect his determination to protect his family and honor the memory of their lost loved ones. However, this vision also highlights the challenges they face: Babi's idealism clashes with Mammy's despair, and the social and political circumstances prevent them from easily achieving this dream. Babi's contemplative nature illustrates his depth; while he longs for a better life, he is also aware of the emotional turmoil and loyalty tied to the land where he has roots and has experienced profound grief, creating an internal conflict between hope for the future and attachment to the past.

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## Chapter 22 | 22. | Q&A

### 1.Question:

**What event do Laila, her parents, and Hasina attend on that cold day in January 1989?**

They attend the departure of one of the last Soviet convoys from the city. This event draws a crowd who stand in the snow, waiting to witness the military vehicles, including tanks and armored trucks, leaving Afghanistan. The atmosphere is tense, marked by heckling from the spectators and the presence of Afghan soldiers who occasionally fire warning shots to maintain order.

### 2.Question:

**How does Mammy express her grief during the convoy event, and what does she hold up?**

Mammy expresses her grief by hoisting a photograph of her deceased sons, Ahmad and Noor, high over her head. This photograph depicts them sitting back-to-back under the pear tree, and she stands among other women who similarly hold up pictures of their fallen kin, indicating a collective mourning and a tribute to their sacrifices during the war.

### 3.Question:

**What changes have occurred in Tariq's family prior to this chapter, and how has Tariq's demeanor changed as a result?**

Tariq has been affected by the recent deaths of his uncle and the decline in his father's health, who has become frail and prone to anxiety. As a result of these personal



challenges, Tariq had been moping around, appearing heavy-faced and sullen. However, in this chapter, Laila notices a change in him, as he seems to have regained some of his old spirit and is more cheerful and playful, as evidenced by his antics and humor during their outing.

#### 4.Question:

**What kind of film do Laila and Tariq watch at Cinema Park, and how does this lead to moments of shared laughter between them?**

Laila and Tariq watch a Soviet film that has been dubbed in Farsi, leading to unintentionally funny translations of dialogue, such as a sailor calmly asking a fellow sailor to pass the rope. This absurdity causes Tariq and Laila to burst into laughter, creating a moment of connection and joy amid the backdrop of their troubling realities. Their laughter is contagious, and it also serves as a tension relief in light of their serious circumstances.

#### 5.Question:

**What do Tariq and Laila express about marriage during their time at the cinema, and how does Laila's reaction reveal her feelings?**

During the film, Tariq expresses a cynical view of marriage, calling it 'stupid' and questioning the need for the ceremonies and extravagance surrounding weddings. Laila initially agrees with him, but her response is tinged with nervousness, revealing her inner conflict about the subject. When she reluctantly states she would never get married, it indicates she may have other feelings about love and relationships that she is grappling with, especially as she secretly contemplates her feelings for Tariq.





**1.Question:**

**How has Tariq's family situation changed over the three years mentioned in Chapter 23?**

Tariq's father has suffered several strokes that have left him with a clumsy left hand and a slight slur in his speech, particularly when he is agitated. This deterioration suggests a significant decline in his health and possibly the family dynamic, as they are likely facing struggles associated with caring for someone with a chronic illness.

**2.Question:**

**What major political changes occur in Kabul during the three years?**

The political landscape in Kabul changes dramatically as the Soviet Union experiences a rapid collapse, leading to the Mujahideen's victory and the fall of Najibullah.

Najibullah surrenders in April 1992 and seeks refuge in a UN compound, marking the end of the Soviet-backed regime in Afghanistan. This shift leads to a new political order with various factions of Mujahideen capturing power.

**3.Question:**

**What are Mammy's reactions to the fall of Najibullah and the victories of the Mujahideen?**

Mammy reacts to the fall of Najibullah with joy and renewed hope. For the first time in years, she wears a bright blue dress instead of black, signaling her departure from mourning. She enthusiastically prepares for a party to celebrate this significant change, reflecting her long-held desire for the Mujahideen, particularly Ahmad Shah Massoud



and the other commanders her sons supported, to triumph.

#### 4.Question:

#### **How does Laila's relationship with Tariq evolve throughout Chapter 23?**

Laila begins to develop deeper feelings for Tariq, noticing the changes he has undergone as he matures into a young man. There is a growing tension between them as they share secret moments together, leading Laila to confront her romantic feelings despite the societal pressures and gossip. Their playful banter hints at a burgeoning romantic relationship, transforming from childhood friendship into something more complex and intimate.

#### 5.Question:

#### **What conflict arises during the celebrations, and what does it indicate about the political climate in Kabul?**

During the party, a physical altercation erupts between two men over political opinions concerning Ahmad Shah Massoud and his past associations with the Soviets. This scuffle represents the larger tensions within Kabul, where the end of a common enemy leads to rivalries among the Mujahideen factions. The conflict indicates a fracturing unity among those who fought together, suggesting that without a shared adversary, previous alliances are breaking down into violence and chaos.

### **Chapter 24 | 24. | Q&A**

#### 1.Question:

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What does Laila hate more than anything, and what emotional impact does it have on her during dinner with her family?

Laila expresses that she hates the whistling sound of rockets more than anything else. The emotional impact during dinner is profound, as the sound interrupts their meal and creates a sense of dread and suspense. Her family freezes in anticipation, forks in midair, and the atmosphere becomes laden with anxiety. The whistling signifies a looming threat, and Laila feels a mix of hope and fear, praying that they would be spared from the destruction while also fearing for others who might not be as lucky.

## **2.Question:**

**How does the ongoing war affect Laila's daily life and her relationship with Tariq?**

The ongoing war greatly restricts Laila's daily activities; she goes out very little and only when accompanied by Tariq, who becomes her protector and confidant. He shares information about the dangers of the streets, including the rivalries between warlords and the lethal risks associated with various territories in Kabul. Their relationship deepens amidst this chaos as they share moments that are both tender and fraught with the tension of their environment, culminating in intimate exchanges, such as their kisses beneath the pear tree, which provide a much-needed escape from the harsh realities around them.

## **3.Question:**

**What do we learn about the violent conditions in Kabul during the time**



Laila and her family are living there?

The chapter illustrates a violent and chaotic environment in Kabul, characterized by indiscriminate shelling, targeted attacks on ethnic groups, and the brutal reality of war. Laila learns about the atrocities committed by different factions, such as the execution-style killings of families and the pervasive fear in the streets. The danger is omnipresent, with the narrative highlighting the ghastliness of violence, including reports of bodies found in horrifying states. These grim realities serve to emphasize the desperation and turmoil that the characters live through daily.

#### **4.Question:**

**How does Laila's relationship with her father, Babi, change as the war escalates, and what impact does this have on her education?**

As the war escalates in Kabul, Laila's relationship with Babi evolves significantly. In an effort to protect her and adapt to the unsafe conditions of the city, Babi decides that Laila should drop out of school. Instead, he takes on the role of her teacher, providing lessons on poetry and mathematics in the relative safety of their home. This change reinforces their bond, as Babi becomes a source of knowledge and support, even as the outside world plunges into chaos. However, Laila's mind frequently drifts to thoughts of Tariq, suggesting that while she appreciates her father's efforts, her adolescent feelings complicate her focus on education.

#### **5.Question:**

**What is the emotional fallout for Laila following the death of her friend,**



Giti, and how does this event affect her perspective on the war?

The death of her friend Giti marks a significant point of emotional turmoil for Laila. It is her first experience with the death of someone she knows and loves, leading her to confront the brutal reality of life in war-torn Kabul. She attends Giti's funeral, where she witnesses the anguish of Giti's mother collecting pieces of her daughter, which profoundly impacts her. This event triggers Laila to shed tears for her friend, revealing her inability to process grief regarding her brothers' deaths earlier. Giti's violent and tragic death solidifies the war's harsh impact on her life, making the chaos and loss more personal and real, shifting her perspective from abstract fear to an immediate, visceral understanding of the consequences of violence.

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## Chapter 25 | 25. | Q&A

### 1.Question:

**What emotional state is Laila in at the beginning of Chapter 25, and how does it reflect her circumstances?**

At the beginning of Chapter 25, Laila feels emotionally paralyzed, as if "cement had solidified in every one of her joints." This physical description signifies her sense of heaviness and immobility brought on by Tariq's announcement that he is leaving Afghanistan for good. Laila's emotional state is characterized by confusion and a sense of detachment, as she feels she is merely eavesdropping on the conversation instead of participating in it. This reflects her broader circumstances of living in a war-torn Afghanistan, where her life is unraveling, much like the rotted rope she imagines, symbolizing the disintegration of her familiar world and relationships in a time of chaos.

### 2.Question:

**What is the significance of Tariq's departure, and how does it impact Laila?**

Tariq's departure serves as a pivotal moment in the chapter, representing the loss of a key emotional and support figure in Laila's life. His announcement that he is leaving for Pakistan, and potentially further, profoundly impacts Laila, triggering a mix of anger, grief, and betrayal. Laila feels abandoned at a time when she is already dealing with the loss of friends and the unsettling atmosphere of her neighborhood increasingly losing its familiar faces due to the violence of war. The emotional stakes are heightened as she grapples with the impending separation, her love for Tariq, and her responsibilities to her ill mother and father. Tariq's departure also acts as a catalyst for Laila's internal





conflict; she longs to escape her harsh reality with him, yet feels the weight of familial obligation holding her back.

### 3.Question:

**Describe the emotional and physical interactions between Laila and Tariq after he expresses his feelings for her. What do these moments signify?**

After Tariq expresses his desire to marry Laila, their interaction becomes charged with a mix of vulnerability and urgency. Initially, Laila reacts with intense emotion—crying, slapping Tariq out of frustration for his decision to leave her. However, their emotions lead to a significant moment of intimacy as they end up close together, sharing a passionate kiss. This physical closeness signifies the deep, complex bond they share, demonstrating their connection amidst chaos, but also symbolizes a fleeting moment of happiness before the harsh realities of their lives intrude. Laila's later recollections of this encounter highlight her desire to hold onto the memories of their shared intimacy, indicating a desperate need to preserve joy in the face of inevitable separation and sorrow.

### 4.Question:

**How does Laila's choice regarding Tariq's proposal reflect her character development throughout the chapter?**

Laila's choice to reject Tariq's proposal to marry and leave with him showcases significant character development. Throughout the chapter, we see her transition from the euphoric moment of intimacy with Tariq to the



sobering reality of her responsibilities. Initially, the offer to escape with Tariq represents hope and a chance for a new life; however, Laila's reflection on her obligations to her sick father and her tumultuous home life leads her to prioritize her family over her personal desires. This illustrates her growth from a girl yearning for escape to a young woman who understands the complexities of duty, sacrifice, and love. Laila's ability to recognize her limitations and the necessity to put her father's needs first despite her own desires marks a maturation point in her character arc.

### 5.Question:

**What themes are highlighted in Chapter 25 of 'A Thousand Splendid Suns' and how do they resonate with the events of the story?**

Several themes are highlighted in Chapter 25, including love and sacrifice, conflict and loss, and the search for identity amid trauma. The profound bond between Laila and Tariq represents love's ability to flourish even in dire circumstances. Yet, their love is overshadowed by the painful necessity of sacrifice, as Laila must put her familial obligations above her feelings for Tariq. This theme resonates deeply with the ongoing violence in Afghanistan, which serves as a backdrop to personal struggles and choices. The chapter also emphasizes the theme of loss—Laila is losing not only Tariq but also her childhood innocence and stability in her rapidly changing world. Furthermore, Laila's internal conflict mirrors the larger narrative in which the characters grapple with their identities within a harsh and unforgiving environment, showcasing the personal impacts of the broader



societal conflict.

## **Chapter 26 | 26. | Q&A**

### **1.Question:**

**What are the major emotional conflicts experienced by Laila in this chapter?**

In Chapter 26, Laila experiences significant emotional turmoil stemming from both guilt and a sense of loss. On one hand, she is grappling with guilt and shame related to her recent intimate encounter with Tariq, leading her to question the morality of their actions, particularly in a society where such expressions of love are often condemned. On the other hand, she recognizes her feelings for Tariq as natural and beautiful, suggesting an internal battle between societal expectations and her desires. Furthermore, there is the profound ache of his absence, compounded by the chaotic backdrop of war in Kabul. As she lies on the couch, she feels the physical heat of the day paralleled by the emotional heat of her memories with Tariq, illustrating her deep yearning for connection amid the pain of separation.

### **2.Question:**

**What significant decision does Laila's family make, and how does this affect her emotions?**

Laila's family decides to leave Kabul due to the escalating danger from the ongoing war. This monumental decision brings Laila a mix of emotions—excitement for the possibility of escaping violence and reuniting with Tariq, who she believes is in Pakistan, but also a deep sadness for leaving behind her familiar life and the memories of her deceased siblings. The prospect of moving to a new country presents both hope



for a new beginning and the weight of loss, as Laila acknowledges the void that her siblings' deaths have created in their family. Her exhilaration, particularly in her interactions with Babi and Mammy regarding the move, contrasts sharply against the backdrop of destruction and despair outside, highlighting her inner conflict about leaving everything she has known behind.

### 3.Question:

**How does Laila's perception of time influence her relationship with her memories of Tariq?**

Time plays a crucial role in shaping Laila's memories of Tariq and her emotional state regarding their relationship. Initially, since their departure, Laila feels a heightened sense of awareness of her memories with Tariq, particularly the intimate moments they shared. However, as she reflects on how time will blur these memories, she realizes that, while the intensity of her feelings is overwhelming now, there will come a day when she won't feel the same burden of loss or longing. This understanding of time's passage evokes sadness in her as she recognizes that the vividness of her memories—what she characterizes as the 'sharp edges'—will dull over the years. This realization illustrates the transient nature of love and memory, underscoring both the pain of present loss and the inevitability of moving forward.

### 4.Question:

**Describe the changes in Laila's family dynamics as they prepare to leave Kabul. How do the actions of Babi and Mammy reflect their emotional**



states?

The dynamics of Laila's family shift significantly as they prepare to leave. Babi emerges as a beacon of hope and determination, passionately convinced that their survival and future depend on leaving Kabul. His excitement and optimism in discussing the potential for a new life is palpable, indicating his desire to protect his remaining family member, Laila, and restore some sense of normalcy after their devastating losses. In contrast, Mammy's emotional state fluctuates between resignation and despair. As she reluctantly begins to gather their possessions, her lethargy reflects her deep-seated grief and sense of surrender to fate. The physical act of packing up their lives becomes emblematic of their fractured family narrative—Babi is forward-looking, while Mammy is haunted by the past. This dichotomy points to their varying coping mechanisms in the face of loss and uncertainty about their future.

### 5.Question:

**What literary techniques does Khaled Hosseini employ in this chapter to convey Laila's emotional state and the intensity of her experiences?**

Khaled Hosseini employs several literary techniques to effectively convey Laila's emotional state and the intensity of her experiences. Imagery is a prominent device; through vivid descriptions of the heat and oppressive atmosphere of Kabul, he parallels Laila's internal struggle with the external environment. For example, the sweltering heat reflects her emotional turmoil and suffocation under the weight of her memories. Additionally, sensory



details, particularly regarding sound—such as the artillery fire and the ringing in Laila's ears—serve to immerse the reader in her chaotic reality, illustrating the dissonance between her internal world and the violent outward events. The use of stream-of-consciousness narration allows readers to experience Laila's fluctuating thoughts about her past with Tariq, emphasizing the depth of her longing and the fleeting nature of her happiness. Moreover, symbolism is present in the image of the photographs of her deceased siblings, representing both Laila's love and the burdens of memory that weigh heavily on her as she contemplates leaving and starting anew.

## **Chapter 27 | 27. | Q&A**

### **1.Question:**

**What is the condition of the girl when Mariam first encounters her?**

When Mariam first encounters the girl, she is in a severely traumatized state. The girl has injuries from an explosion, with cuts on her face and neck and gashes on her shoulder, forearms, and lower legs. She is unable to hear from her left ear and spends her initial days mostly sleeping, heavily medicated with pills from the hospital. She experiences moments of agitation, confusion, and distress, often retching when Mariam tries to feed her. Her behavior fluctuates between childlike responses and periods of sad withdrawal, indicating her deep-seated trauma and difficulty processing what has happened to her.

### **2.Question:**



How does Mariam feel about the girl during her early recovery?

Mariam feels a mixture of compassion and helplessness during the girl's early recovery. She tends to the girl's physical needs, applying ointments to her wounds and trying to feed her, yet she also grapples with her own feelings of inadequacy. Mariam recalls moments of her past that resonate with the girl's pain but is unsure of how to provide the emotional support that the girl needs. Her reflections reveal her own struggles with loss and grief, and she occasionally feels that she lacks the wisdom to console the girl, leading to a sense of frustration and helplessness.

### **3.Question:**

**What role does Rasheed play during the girl's recovery?**

Rasheed takes on a supportive role during the girl's recovery, providing for her physical needs. He is the one who found the girl under the rubble and has a hands-on involvement in her recuperation. He brings home medical supplies like antibiotics, food, and new bedding to help her heal. Rasheed attempts to portray himself as a hero to the girl, exaggerating the dangers he faced while rescuing her. However, his motivations are mixed, as he often carries a patronizing attitude, which Mariam observes with discomfort. His care for the girl serves to bolster his self-image while masking the underlying complexities of his character.

### **4.Question:**

**How does the girl cope with the memories of the explosion that killed her parents?**





The girl struggles significantly to cope with the memories of the explosion that took her parents. She experiences flashbacks and periods of intense grief, which manifest in physical reactions such as nausea and agitation. Despite making some progress in her recovery, including eating and bathing independently, haunting memories frequently interrupt her healing process, causing her to retreat into sadness and blame herself for the tragedy. She expresses regret about wanting to take boxes of books from her home, believing she should have been the one to perish instead of her parents, which suggests that she is burdened by survivor's guilt.

### 5.Question:

**What significant event occurs at the end of Chapter 27, and what does it suggest about the girl's future?**

At the end of Chapter 27, a man named Abdul Sharif comes to visit the girl, which marks a turning point in her story. Mariam, confused and uncertain about who he is, notes the girl's reaction to the mention of his name. This moment suggests a potential new chapter in the girl's life, possibly indicating that she may have connections to someone outside the confines of her current situation. The arrival of Abdul Sharif raises questions about her past, her identity, and what her future might hold after such a traumatic experience, hinting at possibilities for reconciliation, rediscovery, or further challenges.





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## Chapter 28 | 28. | Q&A

### 1.Question:

#### **Who is Abdul Sharif and what does he disclose to Laila about Tariq?**

Abdul Sharif is a businessman who owns clothing stores in Kabul and Pakistan. He has returned to Kabul from Peshawar, where he was hospitalized due to a serious illness. During his time in the hospital, he encountered Laila's childhood friend, Mohammad Tariq Walizai. Abdul Sharif informs Laila that Tariq was severely injured in an attack on a lorry carrying refugees, where a rocket hit the vehicle. As a result, Tariq lost his right leg and suffered significant internal injuries, leading to multiple surgeries. Abdul Sharif reveals that while Tariq was in a drugged state much of the time, he still managed to talk about his life and express his feelings for Laila. At the end of their conversation, Abdul Sharif delivers the devastating news that Tariq has since died.

### 2.Question:

#### **What emotional impact does Tariq's condition have on Laila during her conversation with Abdul Sharif?**

Laila experiences a profound emotional turmoil upon hearing about Tariq's injuries. Initially, her heart races when Abdul mentions Tariq; however, as more details emerge regarding the severity of his condition, Laila's awareness of her own physical sensations heightens—she feels heavy and as though she might collapse. The transitions between hope and despair are palpable as she grapples with the horror of Tariq being legless and critically injured. The recollection of her past with Tariq brings her memories mingled with current trauma, leading her mind to visualize tragic scenarios involving Tariq's family and ultimately to a realization of her inability to process all this sorrow as she



mentally distances herself to cope.

### 3.Question:

**How does Abdul Sharif describe his interactions with Tariq in the hospital, and what does it reveal about their relationship?**

Abdul Sharif describes his interactions with Tariq as largely one-sided, with himself doing most of the talking while Tariq struggled to communicate due to his condition. Despite the pain and sedation, Abdul sensed a bond forming, as Tariq would convey moments of clarity and share his past with Abdul, including fond memories of his family and particularly Laila. This indicates a deep connection and affection Tariq had for Laila, as he identified her as 'his earliest memory'. It reveals that even in a desperate state, Tariq's thoughts were centered on Laila, signaling her significance in his life. Abdul conveys that he has grown fond of Tariq, contributing to the emotional weight of his news for Laila.

### 4.Question:

**What reactions does Laila have upon learning about her parents' and Tariq's fates, and how does she cope with the grief?**

Upon learning from Abdul Sharif about Tariq's death, Laila reflects back to a previous moment when she received devastating news regarding her siblings' deaths and her parents' fate. Initially numb, Laila struggles to process simultaneous losses. Despite the overwhelming grief that she feels—the inability to even scream or express sorrow like her mother did when she lost Laila's siblings—Laila finds her mind drifting to memories of peace and



happiness: a vibrant place filled with love, life, and her family. This mental escape serves as a coping mechanism, a way for her to momentarily detach from her anguish and to seek solace in cherished memories of better times.

### **5.Question:**

**What thematic elements are present in this chapter, particularly regarding loss and connection?**

This chapter explores intense themes of loss, grief, and the significance of human connections amidst chaos and suffering. Laila's relationship with Tariq highlights the enduring nature of love and memory, even in the face of tragic circumstances. The stark contrast of life before wartime conflict, as referenced through Laila's memories, versus the harsh reality of loss defines the emotional landscape of the chapter. Abdul Sharif's recounting of Tariq's injuries and eventual death amplifies the theme of helplessness in the face of violence, illustrating how war irrevocably alters relationships and lives. The chapter underscores how individuals seek solace in memories and connections as they navigate grief, showing the deep impact that love and friendship can have, even when faced with devastation.

## **Chapter 29 | 29. | Q&A**

### **1.Question:**

**What is Rasheed's attitude towards the current situation in Afghanistan, as expressed during dinner?**

Rasheed expresses a cynical view about the political situation in Afghanistan, deeming



it a farce. He criticizes the Americans for arming the wrong leaders during the Afghan-Soviet war, suggesting that it has led to the suffering of innocent people. He laments the ongoing violence among different ethnic groups and emphasizes that the U.S. no longer cares about Afghanistan now that the Soviets have retreated, indicating a belief that Afghanistan is seen merely as a 'shit hole' by outsiders.

## **2.Question:**

**How does Mariam perceive Rasheed's behavior after he rescues Laila from the rubble?**

Mariam feels a mixture of unease and disdain at Rasheed's sudden change in demeanor after Laila's rescue. While he had previously been silent and domineering, he becomes talkative and seemingly empathetic, which Mariam interprets as a performance. This change raises her suspicions, leading her to realize that he is attempting to court Laila, framing it as a legitimate arrangement, which fills her with dread.

## **3.Question:**

**What is Rasheed's justification for wanting to marry Laila, and how does Mariam respond to this idea?**

Rasheed justifies the need to marry Laila by stating that it would legitimize her living situation in his home and protect his reputation as well as hers. He argues that it is a common practice for men in their society to have multiple wives, citing his father and others he knows. However, Mariam feels humiliated and betrayed by the suggestion, arguing against the decision on the grounds of her feelings of being too old and not wanting to be treated as





an 'ambagh' (concubine).

#### 4.Question:

**What dilemmas does Mariam face concerning Laila's potential marriage to Rasheed?**

Mariam grapples with several dilemmas: her deep contempt for the idea of Rasheed marrying Laila, the realization of her own powerless situation, and the fear for Laila's safety in a war-torn society. She understands the implications of Rasheed's ultimatum, as he threatens that if Laila were to leave, she would face severe dangers, including poverty and violence. Ultimately, Mariam fears for both her own future and that of Laila, caught between wanting to protect the young girl and facing her own subjugated position within Rasheed's household.

#### 5.Question:

**What does the exchange between Mariam and Laila reveal about their characters and their situation?**

The exchange shows the bond between Mariam and Laila, as well as their differing perspectives and situations. Mariam, embittered by years of suffering and oppression, fights against Rasheed's control and wishes to protect Laila. While Laila initially seems reluctant, her pragmatic acceptance of marrying Rasheed highlights her desperation in a dire circumstance. She views it as a means of survival, displaying a practical approach to the harsh reality around them, contrasting with Mariam's emotional turmoil and resistance.





**1.Question:**

**What significant decision does Laila make by the end of Chapter 30, and what prompts this decision?**

By the end of Chapter 30, Laila decides to keep her baby, which is the only connection she has left to Tariq. This decision is prompted by her overwhelming sense of loss after the deaths of her loved ones and the realization that she carries a piece of Tariq with her. The thought of abandoning this baby, which represents her last link to a life filled with love and hope, prevents her from considering leaving Rasheed, despite knowing it is dishonorable to Mariam and that her choice to remain is filled with shame.

**2.Question:**

**How does Rasheed's behavior towards Laila evolve in this chapter?**

In this chapter, Rasheed's behavior is domineering and controlling. Initially, he demonstrates a perverse kind of enthusiasm for the marriage by showcasing his new suit and ring for Laila, which he has obtained by trading Mariam's ring. His lack of sensitivity towards Laila's feelings and his insistence that she accept the engagement ring reflect his authoritative control over her life. Even as Laila pulls away from him physically and emotionally, Rasheed misreads her discomfort, interpreting it as eagerness—a sign of his misguided belief in his power over her.

**3.Question:**

**Describe Laila's internal conflict throughout this chapter. What are the main emotions she experiences?**



Laila experiences a profound internal conflict throughout Chapter 30. Initially, she contemplates escape to avoid her bleak reality under Rasheed's control. However, upon discovering she is pregnant, her emotions shift to anxiety and despair. She feels shame for being pregnant with Tariq's child while marrying Rasheed, recognizing the dishonor this brings to both herself and Mariam. Despite her desperation, she feels a sense of responsibility as a mother and a deep-rooted instinct to protect her unborn child, which ultimately leads to her decision to comply with Rasheed's expectations, marking a poignant sense of sacrifice and loss of agency.

#### 4.Question:

**What thematic elements are prominent in Chapter 30, and how do they manifest through Laila's experience?**

Chapter 30 highlights several thematic elements, including sacrifice, motherhood, and the struggle for autonomy. Laila's journey underscores the sacrifices that women must make in oppressive circumstances, particularly as she grapples with keeping her child while facing a life dictated by Rasheed. The theme of motherhood is central, as she recognizes the stakes of her decision concerning her unborn child. Additionally, the struggle for autonomy is palpable as Laila contemplates escape but ultimately feels trapped by her circumstances and the responsibility she feels towards her baby, indicating the pervasive control that men like Rasheed exert over women's lives.

#### 5.Question:

**What symbols are present in this chapter, and what do they represent?**



Several symbols appear in Chapter 30. The wedding ring symbolizes Rasheed's ownership and control over Laila, as well as the difficult transition from her past life with Tariq to this new, unwanted reality. The act of Laila bleeding on the sheets serves as a symbol of her defiance and the emotional turmoil she experiences; it reflects her internal pain and the complexity of her coercive relationship with Rasheed. Additionally, the imagery of the refugee camp illustrates her fears of abandonment and despair, while also signifying the fragility of life in war-torn Afghanistan.

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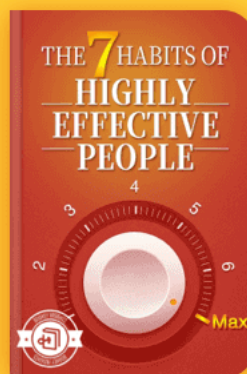
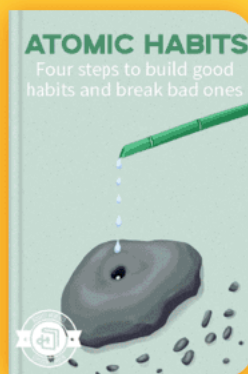
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## Chapter 31 | 31. | Q&A

### 1.Question:

**What is the nature of the relationship between Mariam and the girl introduced in the chapter?**

The relationship between Mariam and the girl is characterized by tension and awkwardness. Mariam, who feels marginalized and resentful due to her status as a harami (illegitimate child), sees the girl as a rival for Rasheed's attention and affection. The girl, for her part, tries to approach Mariam amiably but is met with hostility and defensiveness. Mariam's unwillingness to accept her new role as a servant to the girl further highlights the power imbalance and emotional strain in their relationship.

### 2.Question:

**How does Rasheed assert his control over both Mariam and the girl?**

Rasheed maintains control over Mariam and the girl by imposing strict rules on their behavior, such as requiring them to eat together and instructing the girl to wear a burqa when they go out. He devalues Mariam by calling her a 'dehati' (country girl) and introduces the narrative that they are a family while simultaneously reinforcing his dominance as the husband. By framing Mariam as the servant and the girl as the queen, he enforces a hierarchy that establishes his authority in their household.

### 3.Question:

**What does Mariam reveal about her feelings regarding her status and identity in this chapter?**

Mariam's feelings about her status and identity are deeply affected by her past. She is





constantly reminded of her status as a harami, which Rasheed uses to belittle her. The memories of her mother, Nana, exacerbate her feelings of shame and worthlessness, particularly when Rasheed refers to her as a 'clumsy harami'. Despite her bitterness, she seeks to reclaim her agency by insisting that she will not be treated as a servant to the girl, showcasing her desire for dignity and respect in a relationship overshadowed by oppression.

#### 4.Question:

**What are the implications of Mariam's declaration that she will not be the girl's servant?**

Mariam's declaration that she will not be the girl's servant signifies a pivotal moment in her character development. It reflects her resolve to assert her self-worth and boundaries, despite the oppressive environment created by Rasheed. By clearly stating her unwillingness to take orders, she stands up against the imposed hierarchy in their domestic life. This declaration not only sets the tone for their difficult coexistence but also illustrates Mariam's internal struggle for autonomy after years of subjugation, suggesting a potential shift in her position within the household.

#### 5.Question:

**How does the dynamic between Mariam and the girl reflect broader themes of female oppression and solidarity in the narrative?**

The dynamic between Mariam and the girl mirrors the broader themes of female oppression and the struggle for solidarity among women in a patriarchal society. Both characters are victims of Rasheed's authority and



the societal norms that dictate their lives. Their interactions are fraught with competition and bitterness rather than camaraderie, highlighting the ways in which patriarchal structures pit women against each other. However, Mariam's eventual defiance hints at the possibility of shared strength among women, suggesting that though they are isolated and in conflict, there is potential for understanding and solidarity if they can move beyond their immediate jealousy and bitterness.

## **Chapter 32 | 32. | Q&A**

### **1.Question:**

**What was the gathering Laila remembered, and how did it relate to Rasheed's past?**

Laila recalled a gathering at her home during one of her mother's good days, where women shared stories while eating fresh mulberries. During this gathering, Wajma told a story about Rasheed's son who had drowned at Ghargha Lake, which Rasheed had been neglectful of due to his drunken state. This story resonated with Laila as she later thought about her own situation with Rasheed after announcing her pregnancy, paralleling the negligence that led to the boy's tragedy.

### **2.Question:**

**How did Rasheed react to the news of Laila's pregnancy, and how did that affect Mariam?**

Rasheed reacted very enthusiastically to the news of Laila's pregnancy, immediately going to pray for a boy, which portrayed a sense of desperation and desire for a son. He





later shared the news with Mariam in a callous manner, which Laila described as 'cheerful cruelty.' This news significantly affected Mariam, who felt excluded and was visibly despondent upon hearing it. Laila felt pity for Mariam as she recognized that she was not the cause of Mariam's pain, and this dynamic introduced tension in their already strained relationship.

### 3.Question:

**What does the winter setting symbolize in Laila's life, and how does it reflect her emotional state?**

The winter setting symbolizes isolation and despair in Laila's life as fierce cold winds stripped the trees and snow piled on rooftops, creating a ghostly, oppressive atmosphere. It represents Laila's feelings of entrapment and longing for her lost childhood and freedom. Instead of joy, the season evoked memories of warmth and companionship which she could no longer access. This emotional state is emphasized as she reflects on the stark contrast between her past and her present life under Rasheed's control, where she feels like a shipwreck survivor lost at sea.

### 4.Question:

**How did Laila's relationship with Mariam evolve during this chapter?**

Laila's relationship with Mariam takes a turn for the worse as they experience their first true conflict. The tension escalates during a trivial incident over a missing kitchen utensil that leads to a heated exchange where they hurl insults at each other. This argument unearths Laila's pent-up grief and anger, indicating that both women are using each other as scapegoats for



their own suffering. Despite the hostility, Laila later reflects on the argument as a release of her frustrations, suggesting a complex mix of solidarity and rivalry in their cohabitation.

### **5.Question:**

**What significant moment occurred when Mariam and Laila had their argument, and how did it mark a turning point for Laila?**

The significant moment during Laila and Mariam's argument occurred when they exchanged harsh insults, with Laila calling Mariam a 'sad, miserable woman' and Mariam retaliating by calling Laila a 'thieving whore.' This altercation, although toxic, marked a turning point for Laila as it was during the aftermath of the argument that she experienced the first kick from her baby, an embodiment of her renewal and hope amidst the chaos. This moment served to connect her emotions of grief and anger with the reality of her impending motherhood, illustrating a bittersweet moment of potential joy amid her struggles.

## **Chapter 33 | 33. | Q&A**

### **1.Question:**

**What does Mariam observe when Rasheed escorts the girl out of the house?**

Mariam watches Rasheed's overprotective behavior towards the girl, as he helps her navigate out of the house while she is pregnant. Rasheed is described as being anxious and overly attentive, directing the girl like a traffic policeman and making gestures to ensure she is careful as they exit. This scene sets the stage for Rasheed's controlling



nature and hints at the girl's vulnerable situation.

## **2.Question:**

**How does Rasheed react to his baby daughter, Aziza, and what does this reveal about his character?**

Rasheed displays a frustrated and dismissive attitude towards Aziza. He often refers to her in derogatory terms, calling her 'the baby' or 'that thing', and expresses annoyance at the disruptions her presence causes in his life. His constant complaints about her crying and the mess she creates show his lack of empathy and his view of parental responsibilities as burdensome. This reveals Rasheed's selfishness and a lack of nurturing character.

## **3.Question:**

**What role does Mariam play in the dynamic between Laila, Rasheed, and the baby?**

Mariam is in a complex position. Initially, she observes the struggles that Laila undergoes as a new mother while also feeling a sense of resentment towards her. However, as she witnesses Laila's love for Aziza, her feelings shift to pity for Laila's plight under Rasheed's abusive behavior. Despite her own painful experiences with Rasheed, Mariam is unable to feel vindicated by Laila's struggles, indicating a deeper empathy and a shared sense of womanhood in their suffering.

## **4.Question:**

**What significant moment occurs when Rasheed threatens Mariam with**



a belt, and how does Laila intervene?

During a particularly volatile moment, Rasheed threatens Mariam with a belt, indicating the domestic abuse present in their household. Laila intervenes at a critical point by lunging at Rasheed, attempting to protect Mariam from the beating. This act of defiance not only signifies Laila's courage but also highlights the solidarity between the two women against Rasheed's oppressive behavior.

### 5.Question:

**How does Mariam's perception of the baby evolve by the end of the chapter?**

By the end of the chapter, Mariam observes the baby, Aziza, with a mixture of curiosity and affection. After encountering her lying on the floor and interacting with her, Mariam feels a sense of connection, as she is charmed by the baby's smiles and playful nature. Despite her initial cynical thoughts about Aziza's unfortunate circumstances, the interaction softens Mariam's heart and evokes a protective instinct, indicating a potential shift towards a more nurturing role.





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## Chapter 34 | 34. | Q&A

### 1.Question:

**What are Laila's feelings towards her daughter Aziza, and how does she express them?**

Laila's feelings towards her daughter Aziza are filled with love and tenderness. She enjoys lying next to Aziza, closely observing her features and playing with her. Laila runs her fingers over Aziza's soft skin and describes her as perfect, reminiscing about Aziza's father, Tariq, while avoiding directly mentioning him by name. She whispers sweet things into Aziza's hair, creating an intimate bonding moment. However, Laila experiences a mix of joy and sadness, knowing that Aziza will never know her father. The way she cherishes these moments highlights Laila's deep maternal love and her desire to provide Aziza with a loving connection to her heritage.

### 2.Question:

**How does Rasheed's behavior during his conversation with Laila reflect his attitude towards her past?**

Rasheed's behavior during his conversation with Laila reveals his possessive and controlling nature. His casual but probing questions about Laila's relationship with Tariq show his discomfort with her past and his insecurities. He tries to undermine her memories of Tariq by comparing it to a romantic relationship, prompting a defensive reaction from Laila. His coldly watchful gaze and the way he tries to extract information about her past reflect his oppressive attitude, treating her as property rather than an equal partner. Rasheed's dismissive comments about Tariq, suggesting that Laila would be better off without him, further demonstrate his attempts to dominate her



narrative, making Laila increasingly wary of him.

### 3.Question:

**What significance do the baby clothes have in the narrative, and how does this gesture affect Laila?**

The baby clothes that appear outside Laila's bedroom door symbolize both kindness and the complex dynamics between the women in the household. This gesture signifies a moment of solidarity from Mariam, who has her own painful history and has decided to support Laila and Aziza in a practical way. For Laila, receiving these clothes brings a mixture of gratitude and sorrow, as it highlights her own struggles, her feeling of being stuck in a life dictated by Rasheed's control, and the isolation she faces. It also provides a moment of connection between Laila and Mariam, setting the stage for their evolving relationship.

### 4.Question:

**How does Mariam's skill in cleaning fish reveal her character and her past experiences?**

Mariam's skill in cleaning fish showcases her resourcefulness and the practical skills she acquired during her life, particularly when she mentions fishing by a stream in her childhood. This moment not only highlights her familiarity with domestic tasks but also reflects her tough past, where she had to fend for herself and find sustenance. The act of cleaning fish with expertise indicates independence and a degree of resilience, despite her tragic circumstances. It serves as a reminder of her lost opportunities and the





life she could have had, thus deepening the reader's understanding of Mariam's character and her shared experiences of hardship with Laila.

### **5.Question:**

**How does the relationship between Laila and Mariam evolve during this chapter, and what does this signify for their future?**

In this chapter, the relationship between Laila and Mariam undergoes a significant transformation from adversaries to allies. Their shared experiences, particularly their mutual struggle against Rasheed's oppressive behavior, foster a bond between them. When Mariam acknowledges that Laila stood up for her, it marks a turning point where Laila sees Mariam not as a rival but as a woman enduring her own burdens. Their decision to share chai and halwa together outside, despite the threat of Rasheed's anger, is an act of rebellion and solidarity. This signifies a hopeful shift towards camaraderie, suggesting that they may be able to support one another in their fight against Rasheed and in seeking a better life for themselves and Aziza.

## **Chapter 35 | 35. | Q&A**

### **1.Question:**

**What activities do Mariam and Laila engage in together, and how does Mariam feel about their relationship during these moments?**

Mariam and Laila engage in various household chores together such as rolling dough, chopping onions, and doing the laundry. This newfound companionship brings Mariam a sense of joy and belonging that she has never experienced before. She looks forward



to sharing cups of chai with Laila and the laughter of Aziza, Laila's child. Mariam finds herself eagerly waiting for Laila and Aziza in the mornings, illustrating her growing attachment and affection. Aziza's unreserved love and desire to be held by Mariam further deepen this bond, making Mariam feel wanted and cherished for the first time in her life.

## **2.Question:**

**How does Mariam's perception of herself change throughout this chapter, especially in relation to Aziza?**

Mariam grapples with feelings of worthlessness, reflecting on her view of herself as an 'old, ugly hag' who believes she has nothing to offer. However, Aziza's innocent affection and need for her create a profound transformation within Mariam. For the first time, she feels loved without reservations, which leads her to question her previous beliefs about her own worth. The connection with Aziza makes Mariam 'marvel' at the love she has discovered in her life, prompting her to celebrate her new role as an important figure in Aziza's life.

## **3.Question:**

**What external events are occurring in Kabul during this chapter, and how do they affect the characters?**

The chapter describes the violent turmoil in Kabul, particularly the fighting between rival militia groups, including Dostum aligning with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. This leads to rampant violence, fear, and suffering among civilians, including looting and rape. Mariam hears about the horrific fates of



women and children and reflects on the brutal reality as she attempts to protect Aziza from the chaos. The violence deeply affects their lives, as Rasheed becomes increasingly paranoid and aggressive, creating a tense home atmosphere, which amplifies Mariam's anxiety about safety and her current living situation.

#### **4.Question:**

**How do moments of levity and connection within the household contrast with the external environment in this chapter?**

Amid the grim backdrop of war and violence, there are still moments of tenderness and joy in the household. For instance, when Laila braids Mariam's hair, and they share laughter over Aziza's antics, it showcases the resilience of human connection even in dire times. These moments provide a stark contrast to the external chaos, highlighting how Mariam and Laila find solace and companionship in each other and in their care for Aziza. This juxtaposition emphasizes the power of love and shared experience as a refuge from the harsh realities of their world.

#### **5.Question:**

**What pivotal decision is hinted at towards the end of the chapter, and what does it symbolize for Mariam?**

Towards the end of the chapter, Laila expresses her intention to leave Kabul in the spring with Aziza and invites Mariam to join them. This invitation represents a crucial turning point in Mariam's life, symbolizing hope and the possibility of a new beginning despite her past. It suggests that there may



still be kindness and brighter years ahead for Mariam, who has spent much of her life internalizing despair. The idea that she might leave her oppressive circumstances for a new life ignites the possibility of cultivating happiness, making Mariam reconsider the potential for love and belonging that she thought was lost forever.

## **Chapter 36 | 36. | Q&A**

### **1.Question:**

**What realization does Laila have at the beginning of Chapter 36 regarding Rasheed?**

At the beginning of Chapter 36, Laila becomes acutely aware that Rasheed might find out about her plans to leave him. She feels a constant undercurrent of anxiety and euphoria, suggesting she is both excited and terrified. This realization sets the tone for her desperate attempt to escape with Mariam and Aziza, illustrating the oppressive nature of Rasheed's presence in their lives and the fear he instills in them.

### **2.Question:**

**How do Laila and Mariam plan their escape from Kabul, and what challenges do they anticipate?**

Laila and Mariam meticulously plan their escape from Kabul by deciding to travel to Peshawar, Pakistan, where Laila's uncle supposedly lives. They anticipate several challenges: first, they need to find a trustworthy man who can pose as a family member, as women are not allowed to travel alone or without a male relative due to the strict interpretations of Shari'a law. Second, they are aware that the borders have been closed



to Afghans and that they will have to navigate through potential bribery or enlist the help of smugglers. Their plan is fraught with danger, as they are acutely aware of the risks posed not only by the rigid laws enforced by the Mujahideen but also by the violent circumstances surrounding them.

### 3.Question:

**What significant event occurs at the Lahore Gate bus station, and how does it affect Laila and Mariam?**

At the Lahore Gate bus station, Laila and Mariam encounter a young man named Wakil, who agrees to assist them by posing as their male relative for their bus journey to Peshawar. This marks a moment of hope for them amidst the chaos, as he is willing to help despite the risks involved.

However, the situation turns dire when a militia soldier stops them before they can board the bus and leads them away, highlighting the ever-present danger of their situation as they attempt to escape. The soldier's suspicion represents the very real threat that their plan can collapse at any moment, leaving them vulnerable to Rasheed's wrath.

### 4.Question:

**Describe the interrogation that Laila undergoes at the police station and its implications for her and Mariam.**

During her interrogation at the police station, Laila faces intense scrutiny from Officer Rahman, who questions her about her identity and intentions. He challenges her claims, indicating that he knows about her lie regarding her supposed relationship with Wakil. If he discovers the truth—that she and



Mariam are attempting to escape Rasheed—it could lead to severe consequences, including imprisonment for violating the law against women fleeing their homes. This interrogation puts not only Laila at risk but also Mariam and Aziza, underscoring the ramifications of their desperate bid for freedom in a society that punishes women harshly for defiance.

### 5.Question:

**What happens to Laila and Mariam after they are caught by the authorities, and what consequences do they face?**

After being intercepted by the authorities at the bus station, Laila and Mariam are taken to the police station where they are separated and interrogated. Ultimately, they are returned to Rasheed, who is enraged by their attempted escape. The chapter culminates in a brutal depiction of Rasheed's violent response; he physically assaults Laila upon their return, demonstrating the gravity of their situation. Laila realizes the futility of their efforts as Rasheed punishes them for their rebellion, subjecting them to his oppressive control once more. This moment represents the harsh realities women faced under patriarchal authority and directly foreshadows the violence they will continue to endure.





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## Chapter 37 | 37. | Q&A

### 1.Question:

**What news do Mariam and Laila learn about the Taliban in this chapter?**

In this chapter, Mariam and Laila learn that the Taliban have officially taken control of Kabul, marking a new era of leadership after years of chaotic rule by various Mujahideen factions. Rashid, Laila's husband, expresses a mixture of amusement and approval at the arrival of the Taliban, suggesting they are 'pure and incorruptible' compared to the former warlords who were corrupt and greedy.

### 2.Question:

**How does Rasheed perceive the Taliban and their impact on Afghanistan?**

Rasheed perceives the Taliban as a force that will bring order, stability, and 'peace' to a country that has been plagued by war and corruption. He sees them as boys with no roots, yet believes they will clean up Afghanistan, contrasting them with previous Mujahideen leaders who he claims were involved in violence and drug trade. He anticipates that the Taliban will restore some level of normalcy, suggesting that people will no longer be killed simply for going out to perform a mundane task like buying milk.

### 3.Question:

**What immediate actions do the Taliban take upon arriving in Kabul that Mariam witnesses?**

Upon their arrival in Kabul, the Taliban take immediate control of the streets, conducting public displays of power. Mariam witnesses a crowd gathering in



Pashtunistan Square where two bloodied corpses of former leaders, Najibullah and his brother, are publicly hanged by the Taliban. A young Taliban soldier makes a speech denouncing Najibullah as a communist and calls for strict adherence to Taliban law, demonstrating their brutal approach to establishing control.

#### 4.Question:

**What specific laws do the Taliban announce regarding women, and how does Mariam react to them?**

The Taliban announce a series of draconian laws specifically targeting women, including restrictions on freedom of movement, speech, and attire. Women are mandated to cover their faces with a burqa when outside and are forbidden from leaving their homes without a male relative. Schools for girls are to be closed, and women are prohibited from working. Mariam's reaction is indicative of her internal struggle; while part of her acknowledges the oppressive nature of these laws, another part resonates with Rasheed's disdain for women asserting their rights, reflecting her complex position in an abusive household and society.

#### 5.Question:

**What does Laila argue in response to the Taliban's laws, and how does Rasheed counter her argument?**

Laila argues against the Taliban's oppressive laws, insisting that Kabul is not a rural backwater and that women in the city previously held professional roles in law and medicine. She expresses disbelief that such drastic measures could be taken against half the population. Rasheed counters her argument



by mocking her perspective, stating that the way women lived in Kabul was not indicative of the entire country, and refers to his own experiences in rural Afghanistan where such repression had been the norm. He uses this to undermine her belief that the Taliban's laws could not be enforced, demonstrating a grim reality of patriarchal control.

## **Chapter 38 | 38. | Q&A**

### **1.Question:**

**How does Laila feel about the Taliban's actions in Afghanistan, and what specific events does she recall?**

Laila feels a sense of horror and grief as she witnesses the Taliban's oppressive regime taking hold of Afghanistan. She recalls specific events, such as the Taliban's destruction of pre-Islamic statues at the Kabul Museum, the shutting down of the university, and the burning of books, including works by renowned Afghan poets. Laila also reflects on her fond memories of watching Hindi films with Tariq in cinemas that have now been closed down or destroyed. The overall atmosphere is one of cultural eradication, with music being silenced and public spaces turned into sites of violence and fear.

### **2.Question:**

**What role does Rasheed play in the narrative regarding the Taliban, and how does he view their actions?**

Rasheed adopts a nonchalant and somewhat supportive attitude towards the Taliban. He sees their laws as an inconvenience that mainly requires him to grow a beard and visit the mosque. Rasheed displays a perverse fascination with the Taliban's punishments and



enjoys recounting violent spectacles he witnesses at Ghazi Stadium. He believes that their actions, including brutal punishment and public executions, are justified by the scale of violence previously inflicted by the Soviets and the Mujahideen. This demonstrates his nihilistic perspective and reveals his darker side, as he tries to manipulate Laila into recognizing 'perspective' in a world where he believes violence necessary.

### 3.Question:

**What internal conflict does Laila experience regarding her feelings towards her unborn child and Rasheed?**

Laila grapples with a profound internal conflict about her feelings toward her unborn child, a product of her marriage to Rasheed. Laila feels immense guilt and self-doubt about whether she can love Aziza, her child, as she did Tariq's child. As she lays on the bedroom floor contemplating an act that could harm her unborn child, she realizes that her feelings are complicated by her hatred for Rasheed and the circumstances brought about by war. Ultimately, she chooses to drop the metal spoke, rejecting the idea of harming an innocent life, which signifies her moral stance against Rasheed and her unwillingness to perpetuate the violence that has plagued her country.

### 4.Question:

**What does the chapter reveal about the impact of war on individual lives and the community in Kabul?**

The chapter illustrates the devastating impact of war on both individual lives



and the larger Kabul community. Families are torn apart, cultural heritage is destroyed, and the atmosphere is imbued with fear and oppression under the Taliban regime. Women, in particular, suffer under increasingly restrictive laws, losing their freedom and rights. The physical destruction of cultural landmarks, censorship of art and literature, and public displays of violence create a grim environment where normalcy is replaced by terror. Personal relationships are also affected; Laila's relationship with Rasheed deteriorates further as he becomes more brutal and tyrannical under the Taliban's influence, leading to an emotional and ethical crisis for Laila.

### 5.Question:

**What significance does Laila's memory of her past with Tariq hold in the context of her current life with Rasheed?**

Laila's memories of her past with Tariq serve as a poignant contrast to her current oppressive life with Rasheed. These memories reflect a lost innocence and joy that she once experienced, highlighting the stark differences between her former dreams and her present reality. While the moments spent in cinemas watching melodramatic love stories with Tariq symbolize hope and romantic love, her current existence is characterized by fear and repression. This longing for the past not only illustrates the personal sacrifices Laila has made due to war and circumstance but also serves to deepen her internal struggle as she faces the brutal reality of her life with Rasheed, further enhancing her emotional turmoil and desire for liberation.

## Chapter 39 | 39. | Q&A

### 1.Question:

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What is the significance of the guard's announcement regarding Malalai Hospital, and how does it impact the women gathered there?

The guard's announcement states that Malalai Hospital, which was originally a women's hospital, no longer treats women, indicating a drastic enforcement of Taliban policies on gender segregation and healthcare. This announcement sends shockwaves through the crowd of women, who are already vulnerable and in need of medical attention. The significance lies in the stark reality that the very place meant to care for women is now inaccessible to them, highlighting the oppressive regime the women are under and the dire situation they face as they seek support and care during childbirth. The crowd's groans and protests illustrate their desperation and anger, foreshadowing the further obstacles they will encounter.

## **2.Question:**

**Describe Mariam's internal struggle as she navigates through the chaotic hospital scene. What realizations does she come to about motherhood?**

As Mariam pushes her way through the crowded waiting area, she faces not just physical challenges but also profound emotional turmoil. Her internal struggle reveals her deep concern for Laila's well-being and the health of Laila's baby. While fighting for Laila's care, Mariam reflects on her past decisions regarding her own mother, Nana, and recognizes the sacrifices a mother makes, contrasting her own history with the present moment. She realizes how deeply she now understands motherhood, feeling regret for not



appreciating her mother's struggles. This epitomizes her growth as a character; Mariam evolves from a young girl preoccupied with her own longing for acceptance to a determined woman advocating fiercely for another woman's and child's survival.

### **3.Question:**

**What challenges does Laila face during her labor at the Rabia Balkhi hospital, and how does the medical staff respond to her situation?**

Laila faces numerous challenges during her labor at the Rabia Balkhi hospital, including a lack of necessary medical resources, such as anesthetics and proper surgical interventions. The medical staff is overwhelmed and under-resourced, forcing them to make urgent decisions based on limited means. The doctor informs Laila that she needs a cesarean section due to the baby's breech position, but they lack the proper anesthetics needed to perform the operation safely. Despite the dire circumstances, Laila's resilience shines through as she decides she would rather undergo the painful procedure without anesthesia than risk losing her baby. This response highlights both her strength as a mother and the horrific conditions imposed by the Taliban's restrictions on healthcare for women.

### **4.Question:**

**How does the interplay between Mariam and Laila during the labor scene underscore their relationship?**

The interplay between Mariam and Laila during the labor scene is pivotal in showcasing the depth of their relationship. Mariam becomes fiercely





protective and nurturing towards Laila in this moment of vulnerability, bringing forth the warmth and strength of their bond. As Mariam holds Laila's hand and helps guide her through the pain, their connection deepens, highlighting themes of sisterhood and solidarity. This scene illustrates their shared experiences as oppressed women under a repressive regime and signifies Mariam's transformation into a caring figure, reflecting their evolution from mere cohabitants in a difficult marriage to true supporters of one another. Laila's reliance on Mariam during a significant moment like childbirth implies that their relationship has become one of mutual dependence and respect.

### 5.Question:

**What does the doctor express about her limitations and the broader impact of the Taliban on healthcare, and how does that reflect the societal conditions of the time?**

The doctor articulates her frustration about her limitations due to the Taliban regime, which has severely restricted resources in hospitals catering to women. She explains that they lack essential items like anesthetics, antibiotics, and basic medical care crucial for safe childbirth. Her lament demonstrates not only her professional desperation but also underscores the larger systemic injustices imposed by the Taliban, which stifle women's access to healthcare. This reflects the catastrophic societal conditions of the time, where healthcare for women became a secondary concern to that of men, leading to dangerous outcomes for mothers and infants alike. Her



acknowledgment of the barriers she faces symbolizes the overall oppression of women in Afghanistan, revealing a society where basic human rights and dignified medical care are not prioritized.

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## Chapter 40 | 40. | Q&A

### 1.Question:

**What prompted Mariam and Laila to dig a hole in the backyard?**

Mariam and Laila decided to dig a hole in order to bury their new television and VCR, which Rasheed had purchased on the black market despite the Taliban's ban on television. They were worried about the increasing number of raids and confiscations by the Taliban, and they felt that burying the television was a precaution to protect it from being seized.

### 2.Question:

**How does the drought affect the lives of Laila and Mariam, and the wider community?**

The drought, which began in 1998 and had persisted into 1999, severely impacted the lives of Laila and Mariam, as well as countless others in Kabul. Water scarcity forced many farmers to abandon their land and migrate in search of water, resulting in crowded conditions in urban areas. Laila and Mariam faced long waits for water at deep wells, and the Kabul River had dried up, becoming a site of human waste. This dire situation underlined the desperation and challenges faced by the community, contributing to a sense of struggle and survival.

### 3.Question:

**Describe the contrasting relationships that Zalmi has with Laila and Rasheed.**

**What does this reveal about his character and family dynamics?**

Zalmi's relationship with Laila is affectionate; he is sweet, good-humored, and enjoys



spending time with her, playing games and seeking comfort in her presence. In contrast, his behavior around Rasheed is different; he transforms into a more mischievous and defiant child, eager to please his father and emulate his traits. This shift reveals the contrasting values and influence of Rasheed as a patriarch, which exacerbates tension in the family. Rasheed's approval of Zalmi's defiance as a 'sign of intelligence' further complicates the dynamics, indicating his favoritism towards the son and disregard for Laila's authority.

#### **4.Question:**

**What does the act of Laila striking Rasheed signify in terms of her character development?**

Laila striking Rasheed marks a significant turning point in her character development. It symbolizes her evolution from a passive victim of Rasheed's abuse to a defiant figure who refuses to accept the physical and emotional violence directed at her. The act of punching him represents her taking a stand not only for herself but also for her children and Mariam, who have suffered under his oppressive control. This moment of rebellion emboldens her, revealing a fierce determination to protect her family and asserting her own agency.

#### **5.Question:**

**In Laila's dream where she is digging a hole for Aziza, what emotions and themes are conveyed through this disturbing imagery?**

Laila's dream about digging a hole for Aziza conveys a profound sense of dread, anxiety, and the urgency of survival. The imagery is haunting and





reflects Laila's deep-seated fears for her daughter's safety amidst the violent environment created by the Taliban's raids. The dream evokes maternal love intertwined with panic, as Laila reassures herself and Aziza that the burial is only temporary. This juxtaposition emphasizes themes of helplessness, the loss of innocence, and the desperate measures families must take to protect loved ones in times of oppression and crisis.

## **Chapter 41 | 41. | Q&A**

### **1.Question:**

**What are the conditions in Afghanistan during the summer of 2000 as described in this chapter?**

The summer of 2000 in Afghanistan is marked by an extended drought that has reached its third consecutive year, leading to dire consequences for the populace. In various provinces such as Helmand, Zabol, and Kandahar, villagers are forced to abandon their homes and become nomadic in search of water and grazing pastures for their livestock. Many of these displaced families arrive in Kabul, where they congregate on the Kareh-Ariana hillside, living in overcrowded makeshift slums and huts. The impact of the drought results in significant loss of livestock, famine, and a reshaped social landscape, pushing families into a desperate struggle for survival.

### **2.Question:**

**How do Mariam and the children cope with the harsh realities of their lives during this chapter?**

Mariam and the children cope with their harsh realities through moments of playfulness



and imagination, as shown in their reenactment of the movie Titanic. They find joy in these moments, despite the overwhelming adversity they face. Mariam engages in playful interactions with Aziza, who insists on taking on roles from the film, demonstrating a brief respite from the otherwise bleak environment filled with fear and hardship. Moreover, in the face of Rasheed's increasing violence and the dire scarcity of food, Mariam remains resolute in her determination to care for Aziza and Zalmai, often reassuring Laila that they will get through this together. Additionally, Mariam's act of reaching out to her father, Jalil, showcases her longing for connection and hope amid their struggles.

### 3.Question:

**What thematic significance does the movie 'Titanic' hold for the characters in this chapter?**

The movie 'Titanic' serves as a poignant metaphor for the characters' lives and the broader socio-political landscape of Afghanistan. The interplay between Mariam, Laila, and their children as they watch and enact scenes from the film represents their desire for escapism and resilience in the face of tragedy. The repeated mention of 'Jack' symbolizes hope, heroism, and the yearning for rescue, akin to their desire for relief from their traumatic realities. However, Laila's somber acknowledgment that 'Jack is dead' highlights the stark realization that real-life rescue is unlikely to come, reflecting the despair of Afghan women who lack agency and protection. This juxtaposition of a romanticized cinematic experience against the backdrop of their suffering reinforces themes of loss, betrayal, and the





search for salvation.

#### **4.Question:**

**What incidents illustrate Rasheed's increasing brutality and the impact of the family's financial ruin?**

Rasheed's increasing brutality is evident in several incidents throughout the chapter. After a fire devastates their means of livelihood, he becomes increasingly volatile, taking out his frustration on Mariam and Laila. He starts physically abusing them, slapping Aziza, kicking Mariam, and throwing objects in fits of rage. His cruel words cut deeply, calling Laila a 'hag' and flatly threatening her life, displaying his misogynistic temperament and emotional instability. These actions are compounded by the family's rapid financial decline; they are forced to sell their belongings, including cherished items, which further exacerbates the atmosphere of desperation and fear. The mounting tension in the household, marked by fear of Rasheed's eruptions, clearly illustrates the direct correlation between their financial collapse and increased domestic violence.

#### **5.Question:**

**What is the outcome of Mariam's phone call to Jalil's supposed location, and what emotions does it evoke in her?**

Mariam's phone call to the mayor's office in Herat seeking information about Jalil culminates in the devastating revelation that her father has passed away, dying in 1987. This news is a crushing blow for Mariam, evoking feelings of regret and sorrow as she reflects on her past interactions with him. The



realization that her father, whom she had longed to reconnect with, is gone forever brings about a deep sense of loss. She mourns not just his death but her missed opportunities to reconcile, emphasizing her isolation and the long-lasting impacts of her choices. The scene illustrates her emotional vulnerability and inner turmoil, as she recalls memories and wishes she had acted differently, particularly regretting her choice to destroy his letter instead of opening it, which symbolizes her continued longing for familial connection in a world filled with disconnection.

## **Chapter 42 | 42. | Q&A**

### **1.Question:**

**What are the significant historical events mentioned in Laila's reflections in this chapter?**

In this chapter, two critical historical events are highlighted. The first is the 2001 trip of Ahmad Shah Massoud to France to speak before the European Parliament about the Taliban's actions and the presence of terrorist camps in Afghanistan. He urged the West, particularly the U.S., to intervene, warning that the Taliban posed a threat not only to Afghanistan but to Europe and America as well. The second event is the Taliban's destruction of the Buddhas in Bamiyan, significant cultural artifacts. This act garnered worldwide condemnation, with many global leaders and scholars pleading for their preservation, illustrating the Taliban's extreme views on idolatry.

### **2.Question:**

**What emotional struggles does Laila endure while sending her daughter Aziza to**



the orphanage?

Laila experiences profound emotional turmoil as she prepares to send Aziza to the orphanage. She feels a crushing sense of sorrow and helplessness, comparing her lost happiness and the crumbling state of her own life to the situation of the historic Buddhas that were destroyed. She struggles with feelings of guilt for abandoning her child, recalling moments of physical closeness with Aziza and grieving the impending separation. Laila's internal conflict is highlighted by her inability to openly share the truth about their situation with Aziza, leading to further emotional pain.

### **3.Question:**

**How does Laila describe her interactions with Rasheed regarding visits to the orphanage?**

Laila's interactions with Rasheed about visiting the orphanage are marked by tension and manipulation. Initially, Rasheed accompanies Laila, Mariam, and Zalmai to the orphanage but slowly expresses his frustration, claiming that it physically burdens him. Over time, he becomes increasingly obstructive, claiming he is too tired to take them, using this as a means to control Laila's access to Aziza. Laila resolutely defies Rasheed, demonstrating her determination to see Aziza despite the physical threats posed by the Taliban when she tries to go to the orphanage unescorted.

### **4.Question:**

**What role does Zaman, the orphanage director, play in Laila's life during this chapter?**



Zaman, the orphanage director, serves as a sympathetic figure for Laila in her distressing situation. He listens to her and offers understanding, reassuring her that she is not to blame for having to leave Aziza at the orphanage. Zaman acknowledges the dire circumstances faced by many mothers due to the oppressive regime of the Taliban, which restricts their ability to provide for their children. His kindness contrasts with the brutality of the world outside, providing Laila with a moment of comfort during her emotional crisis.

### 5.Question:

**What is the significance of the closing scene where Laila sees Tariq again?**

The closing scene where Laila sees Tariq again is highly significant as it marks a pivotal emotional turning point for her. Tariq symbolizes hope, love, and the possibility of a future beyond her current despair. After years of separation, his appearance is a moment of profound surprise and relief for Laila, evoking memories of their past connection. This encounter embodies a sense of renewed strength for Laila amidst the chaos of her life under the Taliban, suggesting that reconciliation and love may still exist despite the ongoing struggles she faces.





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## Chapter 43 | 43. | Q&A

### 1.Question:

**What does Zalmai do when Mariam tries to engage him in play?**

Zalmai displays a rebellious spirit as he bounces his basketball around the room despite Mariam's request to stop. This behavior indicates that he feels he has no authority over him, suggesting a defiance towards her influence, partly due to their differing roles and perhaps Zalmai's age.

### 2.Question:

**How does Zalmai react to the arrival of Tariq, and what does this suggest about his feelings?**

When Tariq arrives, Zalmai becomes apprehensive and clutches his basketball while sucking his thumb, a behavior indicative of his discomfort. He immediately questions who Tariq is and expresses his dislike for him, which illustrates his suspicion and possible fear towards Tariq, highlighting his protectiveness over his mother and his insecurity in the situation.

### 3.Question:

**What key event does Zalmai experience related to his basketball, and how does he react?**

Zalmai becomes distressed upon believing that his basketball is lost, leading him to cry out and express his frustration. His outburst escalates as he insists that the ball Mariam presents is not the same one given to him by his father, Rasheed. This emotional reaction reveals his attachment to the gift from his father and his internal turmoil





stemming from feelings of loss and insecurity.

#### **4.Question:**

**In the context of Mariam's perspective, what realization does she come to regarding a past encounter at the Continental?**

Mariam recalls a previous visit to the Continental nine years prior, where she remembered encountering a doorman who had seemed familiar. The realization dawning on her entails a connection to the situation regarding Laila and Tariq, as she begins to suspect a plot involving falsehoods surrounding Tariq's supposed death. This leads her to question the motivations and actions of those around her, particularly Rasheed.

#### **5.Question:**

**What emotions does Laila display when she comes to comfort Zalmai, and what does this imply about her role as a mother?**

Laila portrays a nurturing and calm presence as she comes upstairs to comfort Zalmai during his emotional outburst. She holds him, rocks him, and tends to him tenderly, indicating her deep maternal instinct and her commitment to her son's emotional well-being. This moment underscores her role as a caretaker and a source of solace in his chaotic childhood, contrasting Mariam's more distant relationship.

### **Chapter 44 | 44. | Q&A**

#### **1.Question:**

**What does Tariq share about his time in prison and its impact on him?**





Tariq recounts his experiences in prison with reluctance, sharing that he learned to speak Urdu while incarcerated, suggesting he had to adapt in a challenging environment. He conveys a sense of humiliation and despair prevalent in the prison system, indicating it was a place of severe degradation. His mother attempted to visit him three times, but he never got to see her, which adds to the emotional weight of his time there. He also expresses how he wrote numerous letters to Laila during his imprisonment, highlighting the depth of his feelings for her.

## **2.Question:**

### **How does Tariq describe his life after leaving prison?**

After being released, Tariq describes his life as having improved due to a chance encounter with Salim, an older man who not only supported him in prison but also helped him find work in Murree, Pakistan. There, he finds a job as a janitor and handyman at a small hotel and is treated with kindness by his employer, which is a stark contrast to his previous experiences. This period in Murree represents a turning point for Tariq, where he finds relative stability and a sense of normalcy.

## **3.Question:**

### **What emotional turmoil does Laila experience during her reunion with Tariq?**

Laila feels a mix of joy and dread upon reuniting with Tariq after so many years apart. She's filled with longing and nostalgia for their past, but also grapples with feelings of guilt and shame regarding her current life, especially her marriage to Rasheed. The reality of her situation, including



her family's tragedies and her past decisions, casts a shadow over their reunion. She feels a sense of edginess, fearing how Tariq will perceive her after all that has happened and what their reconnection means for her present life.

#### **4.Question:**

##### **How does Tariq's arrival affect Laila's relationship with Rasheed?**

Tariq's unexpected return stirs up conflict in Laila's household, particularly with Rasheed, who becomes suspicious and aggressive upon discovering that Laila has allowed Tariq into their home. Rasheed's anger manifests in accusations and domineering responses that highlight his abuse and control over Laila. This situation escalates tensions in their marriage, with Laila feeling trapped and resentful towards Rasheed, and leaves her interrogated about her loyalty and past with Tariq.

#### **5.Question:**

##### **What are Laila's thoughts about her life choices when she reflects on her time with Tariq and her current situation?**

As Laila reconnects with Tariq, she deeply contemplates the choices she has made, particularly marrying Rasheed under the belief that Tariq was dead. She reflects on the emotional devastation she felt after losing Tariq, which pushed her into a marriage that now feels suffocating and abusive. The weight of her experiences—her parents' deaths, her struggles in a brutal society, and her children—contrasts sharply with her memories of love and innocence shared with Tariq. Laila longs for a life that might have been had



circumstances been different, revealing her inner conflict between the hope rekindled by Tariq and the despair of her reality.

## **Chapter 45 | 45. | Q&A**

### **1.Question:**

#### **What is the initial situation that leads to the conflict in Chapter 45?**

The conflict begins when Zalmi, Rasheed's son, inadvertently reveals that Laila is downstairs talking to a man, sparking Rasheed's suspicions. This sets the stage for Rasheed's aggressive behavior and the violent confrontation that follows.

### **2.Question:**

#### **How does Rasheed's character evolve during the chapter?**

Initially, Rasheed appears calm and collected, but as the chapter progresses, his demeanor shifts to one of violent aggression. After Zalmi's revelation, he quickly becomes enraged, taking frustration out on Laila with physical abuse. His character is revealed as increasingly menacing, showcasing his brutality and the extent of his control over Mariam and Laila.

### **3.Question:**

#### **What role does Mariam play during the conflict, and how does her character change?**

Mariam begins the chapter as a passive observer but evolves into a more active participant in the confrontation. As she watches the violence unfold, she is initially paralyzed by fear and helplessness, but she gradually finds her strength and agency. Ultimately, Mariam takes decisive action to protect Laila, signifying her transformation



from a submissive wife to someone who fights back against oppression.

#### **4.Question:**

**What is the significance of Mariam's actions towards the end of the chapter?**

Mariam's actions are pivotal; she decides to intervene in Rasheed's assault on Laila when she realizes Rasheed intends to kill her. This marks the first time she consciously chooses the course of her own life rather than being a passive victim of Rasheed's domestic tyranny. The moment she swings the shovel signifies her reclaiming her power and agency, and it culminates in a transformation of her character.

#### **5.Question:**

**What themes are highlighted in this chapter, particularly through the interactions among the characters?**

Key themes in this chapter include domestic violence, female empowerment, and the struggle for agency within oppressive relationships. The intense conflict illustrates the harsh realities women face in abusive environments and the lengths they will go to protect one another. Additionally, the chapter emphasizes the importance of solidarity between women, as Mariam ultimately acts to save Laila from Rasheed's violence, suggesting that female bonds can be a source of strength and resistance against patriarchal control.





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## Chapter 46 | 46. | Q&A

### 1.Question:

**What traumatic event does Laila experience at the beginning of Chapter 46, and how does she initially react to it?**

At the beginning of Chapter 46, Laila experiences a traumatic event when she is confronted by Rasheed, who is physically abusive. During this confrontation, she loses consciousness due to the violence. Upon coming to her senses, she perceives Rasheed lying dead on the ground after Mariam has fatally injured him with a shovel. Laila initially reacts with confusion and shock, feeling disoriented and overwhelmed by the horror of the situation.

### 2.Question:

**How do Mariam and Laila deal with Rasheed's body after his death, and what does this reveal about their characters?**

Mariam and Laila decide to move Rasheed's body to prevent her son Zalmi from witnessing the traumatic aftermath of the violent event. They choose to wrap him in a bedsheet and drag him outside to a tool shed, which demonstrates Mariam's calmness and decisive nature in a crisis, contrasting with Laila's initial panic and emotional turmoil. This action shows a shift in power dynamics, where Mariam steps up as the emotionally stronger one, indicating her growth and transformation from a submissive wife to a protective figure.

### 3.Question:

**What plans do Mariam and Laila discuss after Rasheed's death, and what do they**



symbolize for their future?

After Rasheed's death, Mariam and Laila discuss the possibility of escaping to a new life, one filled with hope, safety, and healing. They envision a place with trees, a small house, and the chance to raise their children away from the trauma they've experienced. This conversation symbolizes their yearning for freedom from their past suffering and embodies their desire to reclaim their lives and motherhood, highlighting themes of resilience and the pursuit of happiness.

#### **4.Question:**

**How does the relationship between Laila and Mariam evolve in this chapter, particularly regarding their mutual support?**

In this chapter, the relationship between Laila and Mariam deepens significantly as they rely on one another for emotional support and strength in the wake of Rasheed's death. Laila initially struggles with shock and grief, but Mariam displays calmness and offers reassurance, which helps Laila regain her composure. Their bond strengthens as Mariam takes on a nurturing role, promising to care for Laila and encouraging her to tend to her son, while Laila simultaneously expresses a desire to protect Mariam. This mutual support highlights their transition from adversaries to allies, united by shared trauma and a common goal.

#### **5.Question:**

**What does Mariam's decision to stay behind and face the consequences of Rasheed's death signify about her character?**





Mariam's decision to stay behind and face the consequences of Rasheed's death signifies her acceptance of responsibility and her resolve to confront her past. She understands the potential repercussions of her actions and recognizes that running away would leave her with unresolved guilt and shame, particularly regarding how her actions have affected Laila and Zalmai. Mariam's choice reflects her growth and embodiment of courage, emphasizing her character's development from being a victim of her circumstances to taking charge of her own narrative, ultimately choosing to sacrifice her own safety for the well-being of the others.

## **Chapter 47 | 47. | Q&A**

### **1.Question:**

**What is the significance of the Walayat women's prison setting in Chapter 47, and how does it reflect the conditions of Afghan women under Taliban rule?**

The Walayat women's prison symbolizes the harsh realities and oppressive conditions that Afghan women faced under Taliban rule. It is described as a dreary and drab environment, highlighting the lack of basic amenities and the degradation of human dignity. Mariam, the protagonist, is trapped in a cell shared with other women and children, showing the communal suffering and the absence of personal freedom. The barred windows and lewdness of the Taliban guards reinforce the threat of violence and humiliation that these women endure. The fact that most women in the prison are there for 'running away from home' emphasizes the severe restrictions placed upon women's autonomy and the societal norms that blame women for their circumstances. Overall, the setting serves as a critical commentary on the systemic oppression of women in



Afghanistan, illustrating their struggles for survival and dignity.

## 2.Question:

**How does Mariam's interaction with the other women in the prison develop her character and show her impact on them?**

Mariam's interactions with the other women in the prison reveal her growth and the respect she commands among them. Initially, she feels isolated, but as she learns more about their stories, she becomes a source of solace and hope. The reverence with which the other women treat her—offering blankets and sharing food—demonstrates her emerging role as a leader and confidant. Naghma, in particular, develops a strong bond with Mariam, showing how Mariam's presence brings camaraderie and a sense of importance amidst their bleak situation. Additionally, Mariam's willingness to listen to their stories reflects her empathy and understanding of shared suffering, which transforms her from a passive victim into a figure of strength and resilience. This dynamic illustrates how even in the direst circumstances, women can uplift one another and create meaningful connections.

## 3.Question:

**What pivotal moment occurs during Mariam's trial, and what does it reveal about the theme of justice in the novel?**

During Mariam's trial, the courtroom scene starkly highlights the theme of justice, or rather, the lack thereof. The trial is characterized by an absence of legal representation, a fair hearing, or any real chance for defense,



encapsulating the arbitrary and brutal nature of the Taliban's legal system. Mariam's admission of guilt, despite the circumstances of her crime being an act of defense against abuse, reflects her understanding of her inevitable fate within a corrupt system. The judges, particularly the young Talib, embody the patriarchal views that devalue women's testimonies and experiences, reiterating the flawed concept of justice that prioritizes adherence to male-dominated interpretations of law. This moment is pivotal as it exposes the futility of seeking justice in a system inherently designed to oppress women, reinforcing the narrative's critique of patriarchal authority.

#### 4.Question:

**How does Mariam find peace in her final moments, and what thematic significance does this have in the story?**

In her final moments, as Mariam prepares for execution, she experiences a profound sense of peace. This serenity comes from her acceptance of her life's journey and the love she found, particularly her connection with Laila and her role as a guardian. Mariam reflects on her past, acknowledging both her illegitimate beginnings and her transformation into a woman who mattered, who was loved, and who loved in return. This thematic resolution highlights ideas of sacrifice, redemption, and the power of love transcending suffering and loss. Despite the tragic circumstances of her life, Mariam's acceptance of her fate signifies a sense of agency over her story; she chooses to embrace a legacy of strength and compassion rather than despair. Ultimately, it conveys the powerful message that love and meaningful



relationships can give one purpose, even in the face of death.

### **5.Question:**

**What role does the character of Naghma play in Mariam's experience in prison, and how does it reflect broader themes in the novel?**

Naghma serves as both a companion and a foil to Mariam within the confines of prison. Her youthful optimism and tragic backstory of familial rejection and betrayal mirror Mariam's own experiences, creating a bond rooted in shared adversity. Naghma's admiration for Mariam and her eagerness to be close to her reflect the human need for connection in oppressive environments. Through their interactions, the broader themes of female solidarity and resilience emerge, emphasizing how women can uplift and support each other amidst suffering. Naghma's reliance on Mariam contrasts with the abusive patriarchal structures they have both faced, showcasing the strength they draw from one another. Their relationship underscores the novel's exploration of female camaraderie as a means of survival and empowerment against pervasive societal oppression.