

# CHAPTER 16

## Summary

Rahim opens this chapter by indicating that one of the reasons he went to Hazarajat to find Hassan was loneliness for the people he had known all his life and a need to fill Baba's house again with those who had grown up there. He was directed, when he arrived, to a small village outside Bamiyan where they inhabitants said Hassan lived in the only house with a walled garden. Rahim finds him working atandoor, or oven, and slapping dough into it. Rahim says that Amir would have recognized him anywhere, because he still had those narrow green eyes, the scar on his upper lip, the round face, and the affable smile. Hassan brought him into his home and introduced him to his wife who was pregnant. He learned that Ali had been killed by a land mine. Rahim asked him to move with him to Kabul, but Hassan refused, because he had made a home and friends in that village. Hassan was also full of questions about Amir and he wept when he learned that Baba had died.

In the morning, Hassan and his wife changed their mind and decided to go back to Kabul and help Rahim care for Baba's house. When they arrived, Hassan refused to live in the big house out of respect and moved into the mud hut where he had lived as a child. Hassan and his wife immediately took over all the duties of the house and Rahim tells Amir that he didn't know what he would have done without them. In the fall, Hassan's wife, Farzana, gave birth to a stillborn baby girl. Hassan kissed the lifeless baby tenderly and buried her in the backyard. However, they continued to make Baba's house their own little haven from the war.

In early 1990, Farzana became pregnant again and in the middle of the summer a woman in a sky blue burqa knocked on their gate. She was in terrible shape with cuts on her face and sores on her arms. She asked where Hassan was and when he admitted who he was, she revealed that she was his mother. The news caused Hassan to run from the house and he didn't come back until the next morning, but now willing to have his mother with him again. He forgave her utterly for everything she had done. They nursed her back to health and she delivered the new baby, a little boy whom they named Sohrab after Hassan's favorite hero in the *Shahnamah*. She and Sohrab became inseparable and she lived to see him turn four. One morning, she just did not wake up. Hassan took her death hard, but for awhile it was even harder for Sohrab.

By 1995, the factions who were fighting the civil war made life tense and stressful and everyday they worried about the rockets, the mines, and the shelling. During that time, Hassan was with his son as much as possible and even helped him become a deadly shot with the slingshot and how to fly kites. Rahim notes to Amir at this point in his story that Hassan was just as good a kite flyer as he had been when he was small.

In 1996, the Taliban rolled in and Rahim believed the war was finally over, but Hassan just commented with a sober look in his eye, "God help the Hazaras now." A few weeks later, the Taliban banned kite flying and in 1998, they massacred the Hazaras in Mazar-i-Shaif.

## Notes

In this chapter, Rahim tells the story of Hassan as the next step on the journey Amir must take to redemption. We learn along with Amir that Hassan had made a good life for himself and that his innate goodness made him agree to return to Kabul to help Rahim in Baba's house. Hassan is still that ever-devoted and loyal servant and he would not allow himself to abandon Rahim Khan. We also see that goodness in the way he buries his little girl and how he accepts his mother in spite of the fact that she had abandoned him at his birth. He also is a wonderful father to Sohrab and for awhile life is good for him. However, when he tells Rahim that God will need to help the Hazaras defend themselves against the Taliban, he is foreshadowing his own coming fate.