

CHAPTER 21

Summary

As they continue further in Kabul, Amir sees a man hanging from a beam and not far from the body, a man haggles with another man over the price of his wooden leg. When they arrive in Amir's old neighborhood, he sees that the houses are in better shape than the other areas of the city, because Taliban officials live there now. Then they find his street and his house. Farid is impatient for Amir to take a look and quickly leave the property, but Amir needs to go behind the house and up the hill to the pomegranate tree. He finds it still standing and the words, "Amir and Hassan, the Sultans of Kabul," can still be seen on its trunk. He sits for a moment at the base of the tree to reminisce about the Kabul that is long gone in reality, but not from his memory. Then he hears the horn that Farid honks at him and goes back to the car.

They stay at one of the few hotels still open and feast on kabob, which is still as delicious as Amir remembered it. They talk for awhile before they fall asleep and even tell Mullah Nasruddin jokes, revealing that Afghan humor has not yet died. And yet, when Farid asks him why he is coming into such a dangerous place for a Shi'a, Amir cannot answer, because maybe what they say about Afghanistan is true - maybe it is a hopeless place.

The hopelessness that Amir feels is emphasized even more when the two men go to the stadium the next day to find the Taliban official. They are forced to witness a public stoning of a man and a woman who committed adultery before the soccer game. All Amir can do is hide his face and whisper, "And they call themselves Muslims." However, they see the Talib with the sunglasses and Farid arranges a meeting with the man for three o'clock that afternoon. Amir is surprised at how quickly the meeting is arranged, but is determined to go despite his misgivings.

Notes

Kabul is filled with the violence and cruelty of the Taliban. Everything they do, from hanging a man in the streets to stoning a man and a woman before a soccer game, foreshadows that Amir and Farid are in trouble. But they push on, because Amir feels his obligation to Hassan, to Rahim, and to Sohrab hanging heavy over his head. There is no backing out.