

## CHAPTER 25

### Summary

Amir follows the ambulance to the hospital, but no one will let him see Sohrab. He must wait and while he does, he decides there is something he must do that he has been very reluctant to do in the past. He makes a makeshift jai-namaz, or prayer rug, and he bows to the west and begins to pray. He makes many promises to the God he now knows exists about how he will honor Him in the future if only he will allow Sohrab to live. He begs God not to stain his hands with both the blood of Hassan and Sohrab.

He waits for news of Sohrab for five hours. Finally, he learns that the doctors had to revive Sohrab twice, but that he is alive. He then keeps vigil at Sohrab's bed in the daytime and wanders the hospital corridors at night. Later, he learns that the manager of his hotel wants him to leave, because a suicide attempt in one of their rooms is bad for business. Amir agrees to get his possessions out of the hotel and after he does so, he stops at a Persian bookstore on his way back to the hospital. When he finally speaks with Sohrab, the boy is silent and his eyes look as vacant as they did when Amir pulled him out of the bathtub. He gives Sohrab a copy of *Shahnamah* that he had found in the bookstore and tells how he was named for Hassan's favorite hero. He tries to read from the book to Sohrab, but the boy indicates he doesn't want him to go on.

Then Amir asks Sohrab how he feels and the boy only replies that he is tired of everything. For a moment, the look on Sohrab's face makes him a dead ringer for the way Hassan had looked the last time Amir saw him, walking out of Baba's house. Sohrab also tells Amir that he wants his old life back with his mother and father. Amir tells him he that he cannot give him that and Sohrab tells Amir that he wishes he had just left him in the bathwater. Amir explains that the old life is gone for them both and there is just the two of them now. However, he reveals that the visa to the United States has come through and Sohrab is going home with him. Just like the day he had asked Hassan if he would eat dirt for him, now Amir must prove his own worthiness to Sohrab. The boy just turns his back on Amir and once again says he is so tried.

In the end, Sohrab neither accepts the offer to live in the US nor does he decline it. A week later, they fly home to San Francisco. Like a movie whose ending you are not supposed to reveal, Amir is unsure whether the ending for Sohrab will be one of happiness or not.

For the next seven months, Sohrab seems to merely exist. When Amir checks on him one night, he sees that Sohrab keeps the Polaroid picture under his pillow. It occurs to Amir then Baba may have thought in the secret recesses of his heart that Hassan was really his true son. The idea of that favoritism, for the first time, does not pain Amir. He wonders now if he has finally forgiven Baba.

One day, Soraya's parents come for dinner while Sohrab just sleeps on the couch. The general is concerned that people will talk about a Hazara boy living with them. Amir then explains to the general that he and Hassan were half-brothers and that

Sohrab is his nephew. He then strongly demands that the general never again refer to Sohrab as the Hazara boy.

While Sohrab maintains his silence, September 11<sup>th</sup> occurs and the world changes again. Suddenly, everyone knows and is talking about Afghanistan and how the Taliban was driven out of the country. Through it all, Sohrab never speaks.

Then, a wondrous thing happens. Amir takes Soraya and Sohrab to Lake Elizabeth Park for a gathering of Afghans. The general had finally been recalled to take a ministry position in his homeland and Soraya's mother would be joining him in a month. Sohrab stands in the rain and blends into the background while Amir and Soraya step under a tent. Later, the rain stops, and the sky begins to fill with kites. Amir sees Sohrab watching them and immediately buys one from a kite vendor. Amir brings it to Sohrab and reminisces about how Hassan had flown kites with him. He tells him that Hassan was the best kite runner ever and that he just seemed to know where the kite would come down. When he doesn't get any response from Sohrab, Amir begins to run to get the kite aloft. Miraculously, Sohrab follows him and takes the spool of string into his hand just as Hassan had done for Amir all those years ago. Suddenly, the glassy, vacant look in Sohrab's eyes is gone and the two of them begin to chase a green kite. Amir uses one of Hassan's old tricks - the lift and dive - to beat the green kite. For a moment, as he watches Sohrab's hands handle the spool, he imagines "the chipped-nailed calloused hands of a hare-lipped boy" and "a voice calling them home, the voice of a man who dragged his right leg." Together, he and Sohrab defeat the green kite while other Afghans all around them cheer. Amir feels the same rush he had felt that winter of 1975 when Baba stood on the rooftop, clapping and beaming down at him. He looks down at Sohrab and sees that one corner of his mouth has curled up ever so slightly into a smile. Amir asks him if he wants him to run the kite for him. When Sohrab nods a yes, Amir tells him, "For you, a thousand times over." And so Amir runs and runs with the other children and doesn't care how foolish he may look. For that slight smile from Sohrab is the first snowflake melting when spring arrives.

### Notes

This final chapter is Amir's last step on the journey to atonement. He must make up in some way for his betrayal of his promise to Sohrab. Fortunately, the boy survives his suicide attempt, but now Amir must find a way to draw him back emotionally and psychologically to the land of the living. Ironically, it is the kites that draw Sohrab out of his silence and his desire to escape life in the folds of sleep. His fatigue begins to disappear as Amir and he defeat the green kite. In the end, Amir is able to finally expiate his sin by becoming the kite runner for Sohrab. He, like Hassan before him, can make a promise that will never be broken, "For you, a thousand times over!"