

CHAPTER 7

Summary

Hassan tells Amir on the morning of the kite tournament that he had had a dream. In the dream, they are at Ghargha Lake with thousands of other people, but no one is swimming, because it is said that a monster has come to the lake. Amir responds to this fear by jumping into the lake and is followed by Hassan. The two of them go all the way to the middle and then swim back to prove that there is no monster. The people clap wildly for them and then change the name of the lake to Lake of Amir and Hassan, Sultans of Kabul. Neither boy has a clue to what the dream means.

Soon after breakfast, the family heads for the tournament. People are sitting everywhere on their roofs, sipping hot tea and listening to Afghan music. For a moment, Amir wants to withdraw from the tournament and nearly does so, until Hassan whispers to him, "Remember, Amir Agha. There's no monster, just a beautiful day." Amir is astounded once again at how well Hassan knows him and it occurs to him that maybe Hassan made up the dream. He finally decides that neither of them is smart enough to make up dream like that, so he just says, "Let's do it." The two send the kite aloft with Amir controlling the string and Hassan feeding it from the reel. A couple of times, Amir daydreams for a moment and almost has his kite string cut; however, Amir makes it to the last dozen and then the last half dozen, by three o'clock in the afternoon. Amir's greatest competitor is a blue kite that has cut many other kite strings. By three thirty, there are only four left and he and the blue kite are two of them.

Finally, it comes down to the two of them. Now for Amir, who learns later that people were screaming, "Boboresh!, Boboresh!" (Cut him! Cut him!) from the rooftops, the only sound he hears is the pounding of his heart and all he smells is victory. When a gust of wind suddenly lifts his kite, Amir loops it on top of the blue one and lets it out so it cuts the string of the blue kite. He and Hassan hug each other and scream, "We won! We won!" while Baba stands on the roof and pumps his fists and hollers and claps. It is the single proudest moment of his twelve years when he sees father cheering like that.

Hassan tells Amir they will celebrate later and takes off after the blue kite as a trophy for his beloved master. Amir calls out, "Hassan, come back with it!" and Hassan responds with his enduring loyalty, "For you a thousand times over!" Amir then gathers in his own kite and takes it to the gates of his house. After he hands it over to Ali, he takes off to find Hassan with visions in his mind of how he will proudly present the blue kite to his baba. Unfortunately, Amir cannot find the Hazara boy even though he searches everywhere. People have seen him go by at times and they stop Amir to help him and to congratulate him, which makes his search for Hassan take even longer. Finally an old man, who runs a dried fruit stand, tells him that he saw Hassan run by being chased by three boys dressed like Pashtuns. Amir knows immediately who they are and frantically picks up his search.

He finds Hassan at the end of an alley, his way out blocked by the three boys - Assef, Wali, and Kamal - and the blue kite on the ground behind him. However, Amir just stands and watches as they close in on Hassan. He hears a tremor in Kamal's voice and he realizes that he is not afraid of Hassan, but is afraid of what Assef has in mind for Hassan. Assef tells Hassan that he forgives him for the incident with the slingshot the year before, but that with forgiveness, there is also a price for the blue kite. Hassan refuses to give it up, because he has run it down fair and square and that now it belongs to Amir. Assef asks Hassan if Amir would be as loyal to

him and reminds him not to ever fool himself into thinking he's something more than a dirty Hazara. Nonetheless, Hassan refuses to give up the kite. Assef then takes off his coat while Amir crouches hidden from the rest and doesn't speak up. He says, "I opened my mouth and almost said something . . . The rest of my life might have turned out differently if I had . . ."

Hassan is only able to throw one large rock before the boys are on him. As for Amir, his shock and his fear causes his mind to remember how he and Hassan had both fed from the breasts of Sakina and that there was a brotherhood between them; how they had once visited a fortune teller together and that the blind man was so shocked by what he felt in Hassan's palm that he had not told him his fortune; how Amir had had a dream where he was lost in snowstorm and a bleeding hand pulls him out of the snow to see that the sky is blue and filled with kites.

When he focuses again on what's happening in the alley, he sees Hassan's pants have been thrown into a corner and the three bullies are about to rape him. Amir also sees Hassan's face and on it is the look of the sacrificial lamb. This reminds of him of how they ate lamb for the first of the three days of Eid Al-Adha, the day Afghans celebrated Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his only son to God. He remembers how for one moment before the mullah sliced its throat, the lamb's eyes reflect a look of acceptance to his fate. This is the same look he sees in Hassan's eyes.

Amir has one last chance to stand up for Hassan before this terrible hurt is inflicted on him. Instead, he runs. As he runs, he convinces himself that this is the price he has to pay to win Baba. The question is: is it a fair price? The answer is: he's only a Hazara, isn't he? About fifteen minutes later, at the deserted bazaar, Amir sees Assef and his two friends run by and soon after comes Hassan with the blue kite in his hands. Amir meets him at the birch tree and asks him where he's been and that he's been looking for him. Fortunately, Amir's face is in shadows and Hassan cannot read his eyes as Amir cannot read his. Amir is glad of this, because he is afraid of what he will see there. He could not bear to see his "guileless devotion." Hassan almost answers him, but then stops and that is the closest they ever come to discussing what happened in the alley. When they arrive home, everything happens just the way Amir had dreamed for so long: he carries the kite into the study where Baba opens his arms to congratulate him. He buries his face into his father's chest and weeps, and for that moment he can forget what he has done.

Notes

This is the most important chapter of the entire novel in that it presents the problem that Amir will have to deal with the rest of his life. It presents his greatest sin and what Rahim Khan had referred to on the telephone as the event for which he could still do good. The dream foreshadows Amir's victory in the tournament, but there is still a monster or monsters to be dealt with: Assef, Wali, and Kamal, and of course, Amir himself. For, Amir's inability to stand up for his friend is, at once, both as bad as and worse than what the bullies have done. For he watched in cowardice even though Amir had stood up for him the year before. The tournament is Amir's greatest moment in his search for acceptance from his father, but in the end, it is his worst hour for what he allowed to happen to Hassan. This will now form the basis for the remainder of the novel.

Also, the foreshadowing set into place with Assef's warning that he was a patient person and would have his revenge eventually has finally come true. Hassan will pay a terrible price for that revenge, but so will Amir.