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“Igniting the Tinderbox” is intended as a nonfiction book and teacher’s guide for middle school students to supplement the texts in the social studies curriculum. The book is a snapshot of Afghanistan between 1989 and 1996 as seen through the eyes of a middle school-aged Afghan boy, his mother, sister and a friend. As the characters live and remember historical events, students learn how world politics and the Afghan culture have impacted Afghanistan then and now. In seeing the world through their eyes, the students also learn about the music, art, traditions and other aspects of the culture that is Afghanistan.

The teacher’s guide provides background for each chapter, as well as suggested resources for further study, discussion questions and activities. All these help the students get into the characters’ minds and understand Afghanistan better, as well as relate the Afghan culture and events to their own lives. Online resources include videos, which use Adobe flash, with the exception of one using Apple Quick Time (.mov). Linked photographs are jpegs and easily viewed online.

When the students conclude the unit, I want them to have learned about another culture by understanding not just the “what” but the “why.” They can extrapolate from the materials a better understanding of how decisions made today will affect generations to come and how one’s worldview is influenced by the past, traditions and culture.

IGNITING THE TINDERBOX

by

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Approved by

Jeff Jones
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To my mother, with thanks, for sharing her love of history and curiosity about other
cultures

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School of The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

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PREFACE

The older I get, the less satisfied I am with simply knowing the “whats.” I want to know what led up to the “whats.” I want to know the “whys.”

That is especially true in wanting to understand what is behind events taking place in today’s world. In fact, Jeff Jones’ “Contemporary World” class was that “ah-ha” moment that helped me to put the pieces together. Each class I took in the MALS program underscored the world’s interconnection across time and continents. I began to see patterns. One event might spark a war, a political movement, a flurry of discoveries or artistic school, but what ignites tinderboxes doesn’t occur in a vacuum. They are the culmination of years, sometimes decades or centuries of other, sometimes apparently unrelated, events.

My goal in this thesis is to illuminate some of those faint threads that connect people, places and pivotal points in time. I truly believe that with understanding comes civil discourse and, if not all-out peace, at least a cessation of hostilities, whether on the global stage or local classroom. Understanding can break down barriers, strengthen ties that bind us to our common humanity and provide a counterpoint to the distrust, disaffection, dissatisfaction and general “dissing” of other perspectives and peoples.

Not seeing these connections, not understanding other perspectives, perpetuates the same misunderstandings and missteps that have made our communities and world such dangerous places. Everyone wants to be understood. I hope this thesis will be the basis for understanding.

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CHAPTER I
THE END BEGINS

The drummer's hands flew across his *tabla*, each beat a staccato explosion. Arman anticipated the familiar whine of the *rubab*'s strings that he knew would follow. August 19th was Independence Day, a celebration of music, dancing and food in Afghanistan. His mother's sisters would visit, sequestering themselves and doing whatever it was women did. Laughter and good-natured scolding would drift from behind the curtained window on the scent of onions and herbs, eggplant and tomatoes. When the meal was ready, his brother would roll out the *dastarkhan* on the hard-packed floor, and his grandfather and father, uncles, cousins, brothers and he would sit cross-legged around the embroidered tablecloth, passing the savory dishes. They'd mold the rice into balls, deftly popping them into their mouths, along with the spicy sauce and lamb, without dropping a grain.

Arman shifted in his sleep, and the dream of that carefree summer in 1979 faded into the grim realities of 1996. A rock from the bombed building jutted into his ribs and roused him, a rude reminder that the rat-a-tats came not from the instruments of Afghanistan's past but from the music of today, Soviet Kalashnikovs spraying bullets and low-flying rockets tearing into homes and bodies. The sounds of war had been Arman's lullaby for as long as he could remember.

His eyes were rimmed with exhaustion as he rose before dawn for his morning prayer. Arman's fatigue stemmed as much from world-weariness as it did from a lack of sleep. He had seen what no man should see and felt what no child should feel. His senses had been blunted by a war that had been going on for 17 years. He thought he had been about four years old when the Soviets had invaded, although he wasn't sure exactly how old he had been. Like most Afghans, Arman didn't know when he was born. But as best he could remember, that sweltering Independence Day in 1979 was the last August without rockets.

In the ruins of Afghanistan's capital city, Arman faced Mecca and slipped his arms out of the heavy *chapan*. He placed the goatskin coat on the ground to prepare a clean place to pray. The 21-year-old brushed dust from the sleeves of his *kamiz* and dirt from the legs of his *shalwar*, pulling its drawstring more tightly around his waist. The thigh-length shirt and loose-fitting pants not only were cooler in the summer than Western-style clothes, they were more practical for moving quickly in Afghanistan's rugged terrain. The traditional clothes also made it easier for the guerilla fighters to scatter after a battle, blending into nearby towns and villages.

Arman tried to stop at the five proscribed times for prayer each day: before sunrise, midday, late in the afternoon, after sunset and before bedtime. The Muslim ritual calmed and centered him, giving his life focus and purpose. Hardships and loneliness fell away as he focused his attention on Allah. Islam was an integral part of who he was, a comforting constant in his life. If his day did not at least start and end with prayer, he felt out of sorts and off-track.

The young *mujahid* poured water from a flask. Starting with his right hand, he washed away impurities, then moved to his left hand, his nose, ears, mouth and finally his feet. Then Arman turned towards Mecca. Standing tall, he began the short prayer. He cupped his hands by his ears, palms facing forward. “*Allaahu Akbar*,” God is great, he intoned quietly in Arabic. “All glory to you. There is none worthy of worship except God,” he continued with his hands one over the other on his stomach, praising God and asked for his help. He bent from the waist with his back straight and hands on his knees. “God is great. Holy is my Lord.” Arman stood erect again, then dropped to his knees and touched his forehead to the ground, praying all the while. His body’s movements reflected his words. He sat back on his heels, “*Allaahu Akbar*.” Again, he prostrated himself. “Glory to God. God is great.”

Arman paused. His morning prayer concluded, he was ready to face the day.

The young man stood, listening. The sounds of war were stilled, and he heard only the murmuring of his comrades-in-arms intoning their own *Salaat*. He imagined the Taliban laying down their grenade launchers outside Kabul and facing Mecca, bowing as he bowed and praising Allah. A rare moment of peace before taking up arms again. Brothers in Islam, adversaries in war.

Retrieving his chaplan from the ground, Arman draped it over his shoulders in the cool pre-dawn air. Late September was the nicest time of the year in Afghanistan. The hot summer had ended and the bitter cold of winter was still a couple of months away. The majestic Hindu Kush mountains rose just outside Kabul, its snowy caps topping the

peaks like whipped cream on a sundae. The goatskin coat had kept Arman warm at night, but he knew that once the sun rose, he could stow his chapan until evening.

His eyes raked the rubble on the ground in the dim light, searching for his *pakol*. He squatted down, his fingers closing on the round, flat, wool cap. Just as he was securing it firmly on his head, he heard loose rocks whispering under approaching feet. He tensed, ears straining as he reflexively reached for the automatic weapon that was never more than an arm's length away. A figure emerged from the lessening darkness, moving silently, but unevenly towards him. Arman let out his breath, his body relaxing and his lips edging up in a broad smile. He recognized the distinctive, irregular gait, a gift from the Soviet Union.

Eleven years ago, in 1985, when he should have been harvesting the pistachios outside his village of Lagmani Kuna in Parwan Province, Farokh had found himself herding goats down a dusty path. The usually happy young man was uncharacteristically grumpy. His little brother should have been tending the goats that day, not he. But, he was sick and Farokh did as he was told, as a respectful son always did. He never would have let his parents know that he was annoyed, but he had no reservation about letting the rocks in his path know, and he grumbled as he kicked them to show his displeasure.

People said later that Allah had inspired his father when he had named Farokh. And, indeed, on that day, Farokh had been fortunate when one of the rocks he scuffed with the toe of his sandal had shot into the white patch on the black goat's leg. With an

angry bleat, the animal lurched ahead, racing along the edge of the path. Farokh took off after him, but the dust the goat kicked up flew back into the young man's face, choking him and slowing his pursuit.

An explosion rocked the ground, nearly knocking Farokh down, and he watched with disbelief as the goat blew apart in a shower of flesh and bone. Instinctively, he put his arms up and turned his head. When the pain came, Farokh couldn't stop himself from crying out. Shrapnel from the landmine that killed the goat pierced his legs, his arms, his back, shooting waves of fire throughout his body.

The basket of mulberries that Farokh's mother had been picking was nearly full when she heard the explosion. The sound was fearfully familiar. Mines littered the land, and one had killed the son of the farmer in the next field over when he had wandered off the path chasing a goat with a mind of its own. The boy had bled to death before his father could reach him, the goat calmly chewing the grass next to his body, unaware of the tragedy it had caused.

Farokh's mother would not let her son die. She knew the explosion had come from the direction that he had gone. She ran towards him, her loose, red pants plastered to her legs and her *hijab* slipping from her hair. Berries from the basket still on her arm left an uneven red trail where the forgotten mulberries had fallen.

The sun glinted off something ahead. It came from a tall, slender figure with a dusty, blood-caked face that was weaving towards her. With a start of recognition, she rushed towards him, crying for help.

Leaving his hospital room, the doctors had told Farokh's father that much would be expected of his son. It was a miracle that he would only have a limp and did not lose a leg. It seemed that Allah had sacrificed the goat so that Farokh would live. How else could they explain the goat running ahead and stepping on one of the tens of thousands of landmines that the Soviet Union had scattered around the country?

Farokh did feel blessed, and as his wounds healed, he began to consider his purpose in life. Being a farmer was no longer enough. He asked his father's permission to join Ahmad Shah Massoud and the Tajik Jamaat-i Islami *mujahideen*, one of the dozen or so groups of "holy warriors" fighting to drive the Soviet Union from Afghanistan.

Farokh brought the mujahideen not only his loyalty but his luck. Even before the USSR invaded, the United States, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were providing the mujahideen with supplies and weapons to use against Afghanistan's communist government. When Farokh joined the fight in 1985, the outside countries stepped up their assistance.

In his first year with Massoud's group, the holy warriors received heavy jackets, thick boots and tents to keep them warm in the frigid mountains. The next year, they finally received guns and missiles that could shoot down Soviet aircraft and rockets, and launch offensive attacks. For the four years that Farokh fought the Soviet army, foreign assistance increased, until the invaders finally withdrew their last soldier in 1989.

But the war did not end. Although the soldiers had left, the Soviet Union continued to supply the communist government of President Mohammad Najibullah with

arms and funding. So, Farokh fought three more years. In April 1992, in a final push for control of Afghanistan's capital of Kabul, mujahideen representing both Sunni and Shi'a Muslims, as well as tribes that included Uzbeks, Tajiks and Pashtuns united to force President Najibullah to flee and find safety in the United Nations complex.

Farokh was joyous as he followed Massoud into Kabul, the first *mujahid* to lead his troops into the freed capital. Within two months, the Jamaat-i Islami political party of Burhanuddin Rabbani and commander Massoud took temporary control of the government, until the *shura* could meet and name a president. Until then, Rabbani would serve as interim president with Massoud as his defense minister. To unite the country, Rabbani asked Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a member of the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan and head of the Hizb-i Islami party, to be prime minister. With the mujahideen united, Farokh could return home and help his homeland rebuild and prosper.

But the mujahideen weren't united. They were more disunited than ever. Hekmatyar, a member of the Pashtun tribe, refused to be prime minister in a Tajik-led government. Instead, he regrouped his forces to continue the fight. After 13 years of war, 13 years of alliances being made and broken as fortunes changed, the mujahideen commanders had gotten a taste of power, and they liked it.

So, Farokh didn't go home. He continued to fight. Kabul became a divided city. The four victorious Islamic mujahideen factions laid claim to different parts of the capital, each exerting control over his turf and none willing to cede power to unite the government. When additional armed groups descended on the city, Kabul became the

capital of destruction. The “holy warriors” turned on each other, fighting an unholy war, not for Afghanistan, not for their tribes, but for themselves. Rockets fell on homes and schools and hospitals. Shopkeepers pulled bullet-ridden shutters across their windows. Children stayed home from school and their mothers warily watched the sky for raining rockets when they dared to play outside. The doctors stayed busy. The Soviet soldiers had left the country, but the war had stayed behind.

The civil war had begun its third year when Arman first met Farokh in 1994. Under the leadership of Ahmad Shah Massoud, the two had fought near-daily attacks of rival mujahideen that were trying to wrest control of the government from President Burhanuddin Rabbani.

That year, a new group that called itself the Taliban had emerged. Over the next two years, its fighters had quickly overrun much of the country, beginning with its home base of Kandahar. Now, as September 1996 began, they controlled the southern part of Afghanistan. Initially, Arman had heard some positive things about the group, but the rumors now reaching him were disquieting. Massoud had heard the same news, stories of extreme laws and punishments, and he was urging the other mujahideen to stop assaulting each other and the government and to band together to fight what had become the greater threat.

Arman had fought side-by-side with Farokh since he had met the veteran guerilla fighter. In the two years that they had been brothers in arms, their friendship had

flourished, born of mutual respect. In this time of uncertainty, they knew without a doubt that they could count on each other. They trusted each other with their lives.

Arman surveyed the unshaven man limping down the street towards him in the growing light. Farokh had two cartridge belts slung across his chest. Clips attached grenades to his brightly embroidered vest. He carried an assault rifle in one hand and a pistol in the other. The dust covering his wiry black hair had turned it gray, and his thin, lined face made him look older than his 29 years. As he drew closer, Arman could see the corners of Farokh's brown eyes crinkle and his grin broadening, mirroring his own. His friend put his right hand, the one with the pistol, across his chest.

"Salaam aleikum, Manda na Bashi." Peace be with you. May you not be tired. I hope your family is well. Long life to you," Farokh said.

"And also with you. May your health be good. May you be strong. I hope your house is well," Arman replied. Formal greetings out of the way, the men embraced and kissed on each cheek.

"I will make tea," Arman offered.

CHAPTER II

HANIF LEARNS THE TRUTH

Hanif frowned in concentration, his turban slipping a bit as his head bent over the Qur'an. Four years ago, when he had entered the *madrasa* in late 1992, he had been 10 and old enough to wear a turban, rather than the small hats that the younger students wore. Since then, he had become quite proficient at wrapping it, but he still didn't always tie it quite tightly enough.

He adjusted his headwear again and concentrated on the holy book before him. Unlike many of the boys, Hanif had had some schooling and could read the Arabic in which it was written. He wasn't always sure what it meant though, he admitted, but every day, the *mullahs* would recite the verses and interpret it for him. The way they explained it, Hanif sometimes wondered if they actually were reading it. They sounded as if they were repeating what their own teachers had taught them. However, the mullahs knew the Qur'an by heart, as did some of the older boys. Who was he to question their understanding? He was eager for the day that he, too, had committed the entire holy book to memory.

Hanif was very lucky to be back in school. When he lived in Kabul, he remembered how excited he had been on his first day of class eight years ago.

Hanif felt so grown up leaving his little sister Hadiyah at home and joining his brothers, Nabil and Omid, and his sister Maliha as they walked to school with the other children in the neighborhood. Under the Soviet occupiers, all children were required to attend school, and the communists had provided crisp gray shirts to wear. His new shirt's collar chafed his neck as he and the others walked past the Soviet and Afghan soldiers patrolling the streets. He was a little frightened of the smiling Soviets. They seemed to loom over the children, casting menacing shadows. His teachers had assured him that they were his friends, but he hadn't been entirely convinced.

Hanif was six years old in 1988, just old enough to attend school. Four-year-old Hadiyah was too young for classes. However, she was not too young to begin learning how to clean the house and do the washing.

The young boy enjoyed school, but he was puzzled by the math problems that his Soviet teachers gave the students: "If 12 Afghan farmers divide the landowners' 144 acres equally among them all, how many acres would each person get?" The accompanying picture showed 13 happy, identically dressed farmers, side-by-side tilling the soil. Hanif guessed that the 13th farmer must have been the former landowner. He didn't understand why the farmers would take the land that belonged to someone else. The Qur'an forbade stealing.

In the classroom, the voices of the children reciting their lesson drowned out the sounds of gunfire. They had become so accustomed to the blasts that they took little notice of it. Until the morning that a stray rocket missed its target and blew a crater in the road just a few blocks from his house.

His mother and grandmother were preparing breakfast. His father was just leaving for work, and Hanif and his brothers and sister were gathering their books for school when the blast shook the house. His mother shooed the children into the living room, as his grandfather scooped up little Hadiyah, who didn't understand what was happening. As the family huddled in the living room, his grandmother loudly began to pray, asking Allah to spare them. His mother shushed Hadiyah's cries, while Maliha cowered in the corner. The eight-year-old girl crouched on the floor with her arms covering her fair hair to protect it from falling chunks of mud shaken loose from the ceiling. Hanif looked with wide eyes at his father and grandfather to take his cue from them. Nabil and Omid were trying to look brave. However, when the second rocket hit, a little closer this time, even his stoic father cringed and pushed his wife to the floor, shielding her with his body.

Hanif and the neighborhood children did not return to school, and that had been the end of his formal education.

For awhile, it was fun staying home instead of sitting behind a desk learning the Russian language, math, science and the history of the Soviet Union. He sat on a big cushion on the woven red rug that covered the packed dirt floor of his living room while his grandfather taught him to read and to do math without dividing up other people's land. Hanif particularly enjoyed the stories his grandfather told him about how Alexander the Great and Genghis Khan had fought their way through the country, leaving some of their soldiers and culture behind. He liked hearing how Ahmad Shah Durrani united the Pashtun people in 1747 to create modern Afghanistan. However his favorite story was the

one about his own family. His grandfather's voice would drop to a low whisper, and the little boy would lean in close to hear how his great-grandfathers had fought the British to keep Afghanistan from becoming part of their empire. His grandfather's voice would rise with each British failure until he triumphantly announced the British defeat in 1919 that made the country independent.

On days that the fighting was heavy, his mother made him stay inside. Some of his reckless friends dared to dash down the street and slip in his front door. The boys would play cards or listen to the news, poetry and music on Radio Kabul.

Some mornings when the guns were silent, Nabil and his friend Arman would take Hanif to the Kabul Museum where they would walk among the tools and art that their ancestors had created thousands of years ago.

In the afternoons, Omid would join them, and they all would fly kites with other boys in the neighborhood. He envied the older boys' kite-fighting skills. He watched them practice twitching the glass-encrusted strings to maneuver their kites at just the right angle so their strings would cut those of the other boys' kites. Hanif imagined that one day, his would be the last kite in the sky.

As the light began to fade, he knew to hurry home. He, Nabil and Omid would run through the door in the tall, anonymous mud wall surrounding his house and dart in the front door. It was 10-year-old Omid's job to roll the dastarkhan out on the floor. His mother would bring the savory dishes of lamb, spinach, rice and beans for the men to share. She and his sisters would serve him, his brothers, father and grandfather. Then after the men had eaten, the women would clean up and have their own dinners.

One evening after dinner, Hanif heard his father and grandfather discussing an agreement that Afghanistan had signed with Pakistan. They called it the Geneva Accord, and the Soviet Union and United States were involved, too. He didn't understand everything that his grandfather and father were talking about, but when they said that the accord set a time for the Soviet troops to leave, he became hopeful that he could return to school. The agreement did not say what would happen in Afghanistan after the Soviets were gone, and there was no agreement on who would govern the country.

In arranging the accord, no one had asked the mujahideen, who had been fighting the invaders for nearly a decade, what they thought. No one had asked the people of Afghanistan, who wanted security in which to raise their families and make a living. No one had asked the religious leaders to whom people looked for guidance and leadership. No one had asked the communists, who still supported the government in Kabul. No one had asked the Afghan refugees who had left their country to avoid the violence. And no one had asked the United States, the Soviet Union, Pakistan or Saudi Arabia to stop giving weapons and money to the different factions fighting each other for control of the country.

So, in 1989, the Soviet army left, and the little boy looked forward to returning to the classroom and spending more time with other boys. But peace didn't come to Afghanistan, just more war. Worse war. Afghan commanders squabbled and fought against President Mohammad Najibullah and each other, as Kabul grew increasingly dangerous.

At night, Hanif's grandfather turned their short-wave radio to the Voice of America or the BBC broadcasting in Pashto. He and Hanif's father hovered around the speaker to learn what was going on in their country. The announcer talked about two governments – President Najibullah's in Kabul backed by the Soviet Union and an interim government in Peshawar, Pakistan, elected by a *shura* of the seven Sunni Islamic resistance groups. The reporter said that neither government could control the country. He added that the president had rediscovered his Muslim roots and was reaching out to the mujahideen, so that Afghanistan could have peace.

Hanif could tell by the noises his grandfather made that he didn't trust the president. His grandfather told his father that when Najibullah realized that the communists were on their way out, he had decided to hitch his fortunes to the next rising star, the mujahideen. If he could unite the quarreling groups, Najibullah thought he might gain their backing and remain head of the country.

Hanif's father was skeptical of the president's sudden religious leanings, too. But he also worried that power had gone to the *mujahids'* heads and that none of the leaders would want to cede or share power. He was concerned about the dangers that the fighting would bring to his family and did not know if he should follow the example of many of their friends and leave Afghanistan.

“What should I do, *Abbajan?*” he had asked Hanif's grandfather. “In Kabul, I have a good government ministry job. It is where I grew up, where you, *madarjan*, my brothers, cousins and all my family live. It is my home.”

“Razaq, home is where your family is,” Hanif’s grandfather had replied. “Family is the tie that binds life together. Your place in the community, your job, even your wife, Khaterah, all are determined by family. We each know our place within our family. When we play our role, life is good. It runs smoothly and predictably.

“But these are not normal times,” he continued sadly. “Fighting and destruction are straining our families. More will die, and life is no longer predictable. Your choice is not an easy one, my son. You must decide what is best for your family.”

One April afternoon in 1990, when Hanif was eight and the rocket attacks were less frequent, his mother asked Maliha to go to the bazaar to get some rice. Although just 10, Maliha was a good bargainer. Sometimes, she was even able to cajole the tough-talking, softhearted shopkeepers into giving her rosewater ice cream as a sweet treat. When Hanif went with her, as he did that day, she always shared her sweets with him.

Little Hadiyah begged Maliha to take her to the bazaar, too. She was tired of playing in the courtyard within their home’s high, mud-and-stone walls that protected the family from prying eyes. So, Maliha threw her *hijab* over her head for modesty, and the three set off in high spirits at the welcome distraction from lessons, household chores and the isolation the war had imposed.

The dust that the three children kicked up on the way to the bazaar was made all the thicker by the powdered concrete drifting from the deep holes left by landmines and rocket attacks. It was a short walk past a sea of gray-walled houses that guarded the

privacy of the families inside. When the smell of spices became stronger than the odor of the garbage they sidestepped, they knew they were almost there.

Red tomatoes, green beans, purple eggplants, white flour and vibrantly painted signs made the teeming stalls and shops a riot of color that contrasted sharply with the drab, gray buildings. Spices in yellows, browns and russets perfumed the dank air. Bicycles, horses, motor scooters and buses vied with pedestrians for mastery of the road. Intricately designed, hand-woven carpets, delicately embroidered fabrics, artfully painted furniture all competed for buyers' attention. Sellers of live birds and dead chickens haggled with customers over prices.

Hadijah clung to Maliha as Hanif looked enviously at a particularly colorful vest that a passing young Tajik on a high-stepping horse was wearing. Maliha found the rice merchant and the negotiating began. Each feigned indignation at the high price the rice seller was asking and the low one Maliha was willing to pay. The game ended when the two agreed on a mutually satisfactory rate, each having enjoyed the exchange.

Hanif lagged behind his sisters, loathe to return to the confines of his house. Hadijah, on the other hand, scampered ahead, peering hopefully into each crater in the street before running to the next.

"Hadijah-jan, you must stay with me, if you are to go out," Maliha chided her. But Hadijah wasn't listening. She had seen what looked like a yellow toy that some forgetful child had dropped into one of the holes.

"Maliha," she called. "Look what I found."

Hadiyah stooped to pick up the small, shiny toy nestled just inside the cavity. Maliha rushed to catch up with her. “You know what *madarjan* said about picking up things in the street,” the young girl had admonished her little sister. But as Maliha was scolding the six-year-old, the yellow “toy” blew up in Hadiyah’s hand.

Word of the tragedy spread quickly. Hanif’s aunts, cousins and neighbors began appearing at their front door. The women who arrived first bathed and wrapped Hadiyah’s body in a white cloth.

Early the next morning, as the women worked in the kitchen peeling the leeks, slicing the eggplant and cutting the lamb that would be cooked for the meal after the funeral, the men lifted Hadiyah’s shrouded body that lay on a flat board and solemnly began the procession to the graveyard. They placed her small figure on its right side, the top of her head facing Mecca. Hanif didn’t like watching his sister being covered with dirt, but he knew that everyone comes from Allah, and to him we all will return. His sister would no longer cry out in her sleep when a rocket shook the house. She was at peace. He placed a rock on the pile that marked Hadiyah’s grave. The small flag, the color of Islam, that their father planted at the head of her burial site was part of a fluttering green sea of flags that waved on the graves of dozens of neighbors.

The funeral was held the day after the burial. Their heads covered by black hijabs, the ladies gathered in the family living room. More female relatives and neighbors arrived to pay their respects to Hanif’s mother, sitting quietly by the living room door,

her face a mask of grief. The cushions the family usually sat on had been propped against the wall. Rented folding chairs took their place on the red rug. A man's voice on a scratchy recording chanted Qur'anic verses.

In the mosque, the men joined Hanif's father, sitting on mats and facing the mullah. The young boy, Nabil and Omid sat by their father's side as a mullah chanted verses from the Qur'an.

No one can die except by God's permission, according to the Book that fixeth the term of life

There were few families that had not been touched by the war. Innocents caught in the power struggle between the communist government and the mujahideen factions that began as the final round of the Cold War played out between the world's super powers.

When Hanif thought about it, his life in Kabul and Hadiyah's death six years ago seemed like it had happened to another boy. He knew it was his responsibility to make sure that Hadiyah's death was avenged. That was the Pashtunwali code of honor – and Allah's will. The communists were infidels, and the warlords were Muslims in name only. Their corruption, greed and lust for power had killed Hadiyah and were destroying Afghanistan. It was his responsibility and the responsibility of his fellow *talibs* to join the *jihad* to create an Islamic nation according to *Sharia* law.

“The Qur’an says that we must fight the unbelievers, even those Muslims who do not act as Muslims,” his teachers told them. “Our community is the right community in the eyes of God. We must strictly obey his command and change others, even if it is by force.”

Hanif paid close attention to the mullahs at his madrasa. They understood the word of God as it was revealed to the Prophet Mohammad in the Qur’an – and they carried sticks to strike anyone who fidgeted or who did not recite the verses they had memorized. The mullahs told the students that there was no need to read other books or listen to the radio. Everything they needed to know was in the Qur’an. Hanif knew what they said was true. He had been a student at Darul Uloom Haqqania, the Center of Righteous Knowledge, for four years now. He knew that this madrasa was highly respected. It was the school where the most important Taliban leaders had gone, including Mullah Omar.

He knew all about Mullah Omar. Hanif’s teachers told him how the mullah had lost his eye fighting the communist infidels. He was brave and even after the Soviets returned to their own country, he continued to stand up for what is right. Two years ago, the mullah was peacefully leading a religious school near Kandahar when kidnappers took a local girl. He knew he must right the wrong and asked his former compatriots to join him. They had gone to the farm where the girl was being held. They had rescued her and hanged her captor from a water tank.

Mullah Omar became a legend. Here was a man who did what no one else in Afghanistan would do. He had had the courage to stand up to the corrupt and wicked.

Soon, others had gone to him, pleading for him to end the banditry on the highways. Hanif knew the story by heart. Mullah Omar and his fellow fighters had confronted the bandits who had put up checkpoints on the Afghan highways to stop trucks on the trade routes and force drivers to pay a tax. The mullah and his group had killed the bandits and had torn down the checkpoints, so that people and trucks could pass freely. He and his followers were becoming heroes.

Soon the Taliban, as they were called, fought the wicked and unjust in city after city, restoring law and order. Mullah Omar's righteousness drew supporters from all over Afghanistan. He directed his followers from his home in Kandahar as they dispensed justice in villages around the region. People throughout Afghanistan welcomed them, and they established Sharia, Islamic law, in villages around the country. Those who followed Mullah Omar, like him, were good Muslims, selfless men who did not want power for themselves. They had one goal: to stop corruption and anarchy and restore morality and order. Hanif wanted to be just like Mullah Omar, righting wrongs around the country.

In the villages under Taliban-imposed Sharia law, men grew their beards to the length men wore in the Prophet Mohammad's day and wore a white cap or turban. Neither men nor women wore their hair or clothes like Western infidels. Women were covered from head to toe, so as not to distract men and only their husbands could see their beauty. To maintain a woman's modesty, she only went to female doctors. The Taliban's laws protected women by forbidding them to talk to men who were not related to them and leave their houses only when a male relative went with them. The Taliban

wanted to make sure that everyone would become closer to Allah, so the five-times daily prayer became required. There were no pictures of people or other living things and no music, so that people could concentrate on God.

Hanif could not imagine that anyone could doubt that these laws would make Afghanistan a more purely Islamic society. Mullah Omar was a holy man. Hanif wished he had been in Kandahar five months ago. More than 1,000 Pashtun tribal leaders and religious scholars had gone there for a shura in April. When the meeting had ended, they had followed Mullah Omar to the tomb of the father of Afghanistan, Ahmed Shah Durrani. There, the mullah had climbed to the roof of the Mosque of the Holy Prophet and had put the Cloak of the Prophet around his shoulders, just as Caliph Omar had done when the Prophet himself had died. Hanif could imagine the awe that all those leaders must have felt. He felt a thrill just by thinking about it. Right then, they swore allegiance to Mullah Omar and named him *Amir-up Momineen*, Commander of the Faithful. Now, there is no question that all good Muslims must obey him. How Hanif wished he had been there.

He was eager to carry out the mullah's first command. Mullah Omar had declared *jihad*, a righteous, holy war, against President Burhanuddin Rabbani and his commander Ahmad Shah Massoud. The mullah said that the two had betrayed Islam, and it was their duty – it was Hanif's duty – to hunt them down and kill the traitors.

Massoud's Jamaat-i Islami group and all the other warlords were just as bad as the Soviets had been. They were arrogant, stole from shops and looted people's homes. They

were not good Muslims. It was as much their fault as the fault of the communists that Hadiyah was dead. The Soviet Union had put explosives in the toys to make Afghan men stay home to take care of their injured children rather than join the mujahideen. The Soviets were gone, but the mujahideen had taken their place. So, Hanif would fight the mujahideen.

At the madrasa, Hanif and the other boys were learning to be good Muslims and follow the example of Mullah Omar. Every morning, he and the 40 other boys in his dormitory woke before dawn to the sounds of the *azan* calling them to prayer. They got up from their mats or rugs for the first of five daily prayers. Each time the *azan* sounded throughout the day, no matter where they were or what they were doing, they would stop, wash their hands, face and feet, turn towards Mecca and roll out their prayer mats. The *muezzin* would chant the Salaat as the *talibs*, whether aged 6 or 24, repeated the motions Muslims followed throughout the world as they say their prayers. “*Allaahu Akbar*. God is great. All glory to you. There is none worthy of worship except God.”

Hanif had to admit that some mornings it was a struggle to get up so early. But after prayers, the boys had breakfast of tea and *naan*. The soft, chewy bread was a comfort food for Hanif, reinforcing dim memories of earlier breakfasts with another family.

Most of the day, the boys memorized the Qur’an in Arabic. They also learned how to dress and groom themselves properly. Hanif’s favorite lesson was learning how to handle weapons. He felt far older than his 14 years as he practiced loading, aiming and

firing the AK-47 automatic rifles and the grenade launchers. He was eager to leave the madrasa and put what he was learning into practice against the mujahideen. The day ended with a dinner of rice and lamb and the day's final prayer.

Hanif was happy at the madrasa. In the refugee camp, it had been hard for his mother, Maliha and him. At the madrasa, not only did he have food and a place to sleep, but he was getting an education, and it wasn't costing his mother anything. He also enjoyed the companionship of the other boys. Memories of his parents, brothers and sisters were fading. They were becoming more like photographs, frozen in an idealized mental image. This was home now. It was here that he belonged. The talibs and mullahs were his family.

CHAPTER III
MALIHA LOSES HER DREAM

Maliha missed the life she had had in Kabul. She missed her father and brothers and her little sister. At Hadiyah's funeral, Maliha could not take her place at her mother's side to accept the condolences of neighbors and relatives. Instead, she lay in a hospital bed.

She still had dreams of watching her little sister's life pulse from her wrist where her hand had been. The force of the blast had torn into Maliha, too. She remembered the sudden warmth, the searing pain in her right leg as the impact knocked her to the ground. As she lay there, she could see Hadiyah's fingerless hand still cradling what was left of the deadly toy. Then she had fainted.

The explosive device that had taken Hadiyah's life had taken Maliha's leg and her future. Just two weeks before the accident, Maliha had become engaged to one of her second cousins, a farmer who made an excellent living not only from his wheat, but from his pistachio, almond and apricot trees. It was a good match. A pretty girl from a good family, Maliha fetched a high bride price. And her mother, Khaterah, was as good a bargainer as her daughter. She knew not only Maliha's but her entire family's future depended on it. If her daughter married well and her price was high, it reflected well on the family's standing in the community and the desirability of her other children as mates. Khaterah took this responsibility extremely seriously.

The courtship had begun long ago. The suitor had sent his sister to ask for Maliha's hand, and Khaterah had turned her down. No one was upset. Both families wanted the wedding to take place, but the bride's mother wanted to send a message: Maliha had a choice. Many men wanted to marry her daughter, and she didn't have to accept the first man who asked her.

Although Maliha knew the rejection was part of the game, she was terrified that her cousin would walk away. But he didn't, and the bargaining began. Maliha's mother wanted to ensure that her daughter continued her education, so she had persuaded the young man's mother to allow Maliha to complete high school. It was important for a good wife and mother to be able to read the Qur'an, she had argued.

Maliha's father and future father-in-law haggled over the price. After two days of sometimes-heated arguments, they finally struck a deal. Her father would receive 50 bushels each of wheat, almonds and pistachios, as well as the first apricot harvest each year. He also would receive two goats and 100,000 afghanis. Maliha would receive two heavy gold bracelets. She would bring linens that she had embroidered and cookware to her new home that she would share with her husband, his parents, his brothers and unmarried sisters. She could complete high school, but only if her studies did not interfere with her share of work around the house and she completed her schooling before her first child was born.

The bride-to-be waited nervously in her room as the men decided her future. Maliha was afraid that the negotiations would fall apart and she would be humiliated. It

would be difficult to find another suitor if the first one had rejected her. To her relief, the deal was sealed.

Her future sister-in-law, Maliha's cousin, had come up to her room and asked Maliha if she agreed to the marriage. Although it had been arranged, the choice was still hers. At least in theory. Since he lived in the country, Maliha had not met the man who would be her husband. Although she had thought about nothing else since she had learned about his interest in her, she didn't know what to say. So, she said nothing. Her cousin asked her again, and again Maliha did not answer. Her cousin paused. They both knew that the third time would be decisive. Maliha remained silent. Since Maliha had not objected, she became engaged.

Maliha could hear the men celebrating in the other room. The tabla kept the beat, while under the skilled fingers of the keyboardist, the harmonium complemented the soaring tones of the rubab's strings. She could imagine the men all sitting in a circle on the floor, encouraging each other as one by one they took their turns in the center of the smoke-filled room. Their backs straight and arms out, the men danced. Their hips rotated from side to side in time with the music. Applause and murmurs of appreciation greeted especially accomplished steps.

While the men showed off their dancing skills, upstairs the women showered Maliha with kisses, sweets and gold. The war was forgotten as a *daira* appeared as if by magic. Grasping the *daira* in her left hand, one of her aunts slapped the goatskin stretched across the hoop smartly with the heel of her right. Between thumps, she flicked the

instrument rhythmically, causing the cymbals that rimmed it to ring. As she swayed to the music, the other women swayed and shimmered. The kaleidoscope of their dresses created ever-changing patterns of violet, crimson and emerald, as they swirled around the bride-to-be.

For her part, Maliha seemed oblivious to the joyous activity surrounding her. She looked sad, as a young woman who would leave her family should. It was hard not to take delight in the beautiful dresses and jewelry, the wonderful food and festive music, but her show of sorrow was not entirely an act. It wasn't often that women, let alone 10-year-old girls, were the center of attention. The thought of marriage and life in a strange household outside Kabul was a little daunting. She was not at all sure what to expect and could only hope that her husband would not beat her but be kind to her, as her father was to her mother. She was a little embarrassed by having the spotlight on her. She had been raised to think that the group, not the individual, must come first. It was why she really had no opinion about the engagement. If her parents thought this marriage would be good for the family, so be it.

Maliha really wasn't sure what would be expected of her as a wife and daughter-in-law. However, she didn't worry too much about that. Everyone told her how lucky she was to be marrying such a fine man. At 45, her husband would be well-established and able to care for her and their children. Plus, she would not be leaving her home just yet. She would remain with her parents for five or six more years until she was about 16, and it was suitable for her to marry.

Maliha never had her engagement party. She did not even meet her fiancé. The next week, she had had her accident and, understandably, his family had called the wedding off. The property had been damaged, so the contract had been nullified.

Maliha knew that now she would never marry. Tears stung the backs of her eyes. As a little girl before her own engagement, she had watched in fascination as her cousin had prepared for her wedding day. Her cousin had sat so still, barely breathing, as hovering women smoothed makeup on her skin to give it a pale glow, a beautiful counterpoint to the red of her lips. She already had been to the beauty salon. Big curls arranged artistically on the top of her head and framing her face had been sprayed to hold them in place for the weeklong celebration. The women had lined her cousin's eyes with kohl and brushed her lids with eye shadow the same green as her wedding dress. When they had finished, Maliha thought that she looked like a beautiful bride doll.

No women ever would paint Maliha's lips and nails or color her cheeks. Her hair would not be elaborately curled and sprayed, then sprinkled with glitter or woven with gemstones. Without two good legs, she never would walk shyly into a room and sit beside her husband, as her mother-in-law placed his hand on hers. She would not gaze into the mirror her mother-in-law would hold in front of them to see the reflection of her husband's face for the first time.

Maliha felt like she was that reflection. She looked like herself, yet she was not herself. Instead of sharing the home of her husband and his family, she was confined with her mother in a room of a house that was not theirs in a Pakistani refugee camp. They lived in the widows' section of the camp, sharing a common kitchen with a woman

whose husband had been killed nobly in the war. She and her children pitied Maliha and looked down on her mother whose husband had been killed in such an ordinary way. He had died while he was sitting down to lunch.

The children were a little afraid of Maliha, too, and their mother had whispered to them to keep their distance from her. They didn't know what to make of the silent young woman who spent her days in the corner of her room sewing or staring at...they didn't know what.

Maliha could have told them what she saw. She saw her sister standing on a Kabul street, flecks of blood dotting Hadiyah's face like so many freckles, her hazel eyes wide in surprise as she looked down at her hand on the ground. She saw her brother Hanif, standing by the rubble of their house, tears streaming down his white face as he cried out to their father and clawed at the rocks covering him, trying in vain to free him. She saw neighbors and friends grieving for their lost children. Maliha saw new lines on her mother's tired face, ones she didn't remember being there a few years – or even a few days – ago.

Maliha saw death and destruction. Reminders were inescapable. She saw them in the faces and the bodies of the refugees, the walking wounded. And when she slept, Maliha didn't just see it, she relived it.

The young woman did not want to see the things she saw. So, she fought sleep. People often thought that she didn't hear them, couldn't understand. On the contrary, she understood too well.

CHAPTER IV
KHATERAH HOLDS IT TOGETHER

Khaterah closed her eyes. She could shut out the sights but not the constant sounds of the teeming life around her: husbands berating their wives, mothers scolding their children, babies crying, rare laughter. The stress of being so far from home, leaving everything they owned, leaving family and living among strangers, all caused tensions within the refugee camp. More than a thousand Afghans had made their way to the camp outside Peshawar, Pakistan, where Maliha and she shared a mud and stone house with another woman and her children. Another 3 million Afghans were scattered in more than 200 other camps throughout the country. Although white cloth and plastic tents still characterized some of the camps, others, like Khaterah's, had given way to semi-permanent villages with bazaars, mosques, health centers, schools and other facilities that gave the camps the appearance of a real town.

But it was not a real town. The camp, like their stay, wasn't permanent. She and the rest of the refugees would be going home when the civil war was over, which would be soon, *Inshallah*. Assuring herself that one day they would leave kept Khaterah going. Without that hope, she didn't know how she would get through each day of the suffocating isolation and deprivation.

The Pakistani government, welcoming when her countrymen fled the Soviets, had been overwhelmed by the tide of humanity. Over the last 17 years, millions had flooded across the border seeking safety. Millions of people – with no signs of the wave slowing – were settling in hundreds of refugee villages. People who needed food and shelter, clothing and health care. The Pakistanis were as eager to see the Afghans return home, as the refugees were to go home.

Khaterah was thankful that the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and dozens of nongovernmental relief organizations were helping Pakistan meet the growing needs. When she, Maliha and Hanif had arrived, they were given blankets, water, kerosene, cooking pots, cooking oil and food. Groups such as the World Food Programme, League of Red Cross Societies, Pakistan Red Crescent Society and Save the Children, among others, had built health centers, sanitation infrastructures and roads.

Khaterah was grateful that her camp had schools. However, she had chosen to send him to a nearby madrasa that was primarily funded by Islamic charities. It seemed to her that the madrasas had more structure and would provide her son with a good, moral education. Because there was no charge, Hanif had been able to resume his studies. The madrasa provided him not only with a free education, but also with a place to sleep and food to eat.

Khaterah sighed, thinking back to that day in 1990, six years ago, when she had been preparing the evening meal and had run short of rice. If only she had gone to the bazaar herself. Even though there hadn't been a rocket attack for several days, she should

not have allowed the children to go out of the house. She knew how dangerous the streets had been with the mujahideen fighting the Soviet-backed communist government of President Najibullah. Her only job had been to be a good wife and mother, and she had failed. If there was anyone to blame for Hadiyah's death, it was she.

Her husband, Razaq, had not blamed her. He had blamed the Soviets whose explosive device had killed their little girl. The Pashtun code required revenge and Razaq would have it. Nothing was more important than family, and Razaq had told her that because of the Soviets, his was no longer whole. Nabil had vowed to accompany Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's mujahideen forces in their fight against the godless communists. At 14, he was old enough to join. Omid had wanted to do his part, too, but he was just 12 and would have to wait.

When Hadiyah had died, Khaterah wanted only to cry and wail. She wanted to ask Allah why he had taken her sweet, innocent daughter. But she knew that she could not understand Allah's will, and it was wrong of her to question it. She had used all her will power to keep her emotions in check. Impassive and pale, she was able to calm her husband and two older sons by reminding them that their responsibilities were at home taking care of her and Maliha.

But keeping them home wasn't a guarantee that they'd be safe. She smiled ruefully to herself. It hadn't saved her beautiful boys Nabil and Omid. Nor Razaq. Nor her mother- and father-in-law.

The loss of her daughter had shaken Khaterah's world, but two years later, it came apart.

In April 1992, all of Kabul had been on edge. The Tajik mujahideen commander Ahmad Shah Massoud had forced Soviet-backed President Najibullah to flee Kabul for protection in the United Nations complex, and his forces had taken the capital. Like many of his countrymen, Khaterah's husband had despised Najibullah, but he was apprehensive about who would take his place.

Khaterah knew. Or at least she knew what would happen. She certainly had heard the men discuss it enough. Changing governments in Afghanistan always was messy. She was sure that this time would be no different.

The BBC had reported that the seven Islamist leaders had been meeting in Peshawar, Pakistan, even before Najibullah had fled. That Najibullah would go was a certainty. The only question was who would take his place that was acceptable to all the mujahideen. From afar, they had talked and talked, arguing among themselves and trying to decide who would run the country when the time came, but Massoud had moved too quickly. So, the Islamists, guided by Pakistan's leaders, had hastily constructed a government.

The radio announcer had said that for the first two months, Sibghatullah Mojadiddi would be president. Then Burhanuddin Rabbani would take over for the next four. A leadership council, acting as a governing body, would oversee them both.

But once Rabbani had power, he didn't want to give it up. He had convinced the council to extend his term to six months while he worked on writing a constitution. He had promised that he would present the document to the *shura* that December.

So, the shura had met in December. Its 1,400 members came from every district in Afghanistan and had overwhelmingly elected Rabbani president for two years. Razaq had been upset by the election. So had the other mujahids. The shura had not been representative, her husband had argued. Since they did not represent all the people, their decision was not binding. In Razaq's opinion, the government was not legitimate. It soon became obvious that the other mujahideen commanders not only agreed with Razaq, they were going to do something about it.

Khaterah suspected that the mujahideen objections had little to do with national representation and everything to do with jealousy. Each of the warlords imagined himself in Rabbani's position. And so the civil war had begun.

Khaterah had hoped that with the Russians and their Afghan puppet both driven from power, law and order would be restored. But President Rabbani was a Tajik, and Khaterah had to admit that she wasn't entirely comfortable with a member of the Tajik tribe in charge of Afghanistan, even if he did ask a Pashtun to serve as prime minister. After all, "Afghan" means "Pashtun," Razaq had told her. Except for nine months in 1929, Pashtuns had controlled the government for almost 250 years, as was their right, her husband had avowed.

Khaterah actually didn't have anything against Tajiks. In fact, until the Soviets had invaded, she really hadn't thought much about ethnicity. People in Kabul of different tribes lived near each other and everyone had gotten along, even the Hazaras whose Mongol features made them stand out from the other tribes.

That nice Tajik boy who was Nabil's friend was a perfect example. Arman had lived just down the street, and his father had worked in the same government ministry as Razaaq had. When Hadiyah had died, Nabil had told his mother that his friend had stayed close to him at the funeral. Later, Arman had listened quietly as Nabil worked through his grief. He seemed to sense when Nabil had mourned enough and showed up one fall afternoon with a beautiful blue and green kite with black eyes and a long yellow and green tail. The gift had coaxed a smile back into Nabil's eyes, and Khaterah would forever be grateful to him for that.

Arman even had made an effort to learn Pashto, which her family spoke at home. He didn't have to. Khaterah's children all knew Dari, so that they could talk with their non-Pashtun neighbors. From the kitchen, Khaterah would hear Nabil and Arman laughing and teasing Maliha and Hanif. The boys switched effortlessly between Dari and Pashtun, their friendship overcoming their different native tongues.

Khaterah thought fondly about Arman, his wiry black hair, long, straight nose and pale skin so characteristic of his people. She had thought as she had watched from her hidden vantage point in the kitchen, that his soft brown eyes had rested a little longer than they should have on her lovely daughter Maliha. With her wavy brown hair and green eyes, Maliha would surely have attracted the attention of more men than Arman before she was old enough to cover her face.

Khaterah looked over at her silent daughter, whose green eyes now lacked the spark that had once lit up her face. She felt a fierce loyalty. Her daughter would always

come first for her. Family would always come first. After family, Khaterah's loyalty spread out to her hometown, Kabul, then to her *qaum*, the greater tribal community.

She hadn't thought about tribal differences until foreigners began pointing them out. Foreign countries and ambitious local leaders had driven a wedge between the tribes for their own selfish ends. They had created a new tribal awareness and sowed distrust of "the others." The mujahideen had been as much at fault as the Soviets in doing this. Maybe they were right. After all, Abdur Rashid Dostum had the loyalty of Uzbeks, Massoud appealed primarily to Tajiks and Hekmatyar rallied Pashtuns. No, she decided, mujahideen support initially sprang not from tribal divisions, but from geographic cohesion. People tended to follow the local commanders, who also happened to be from the same tribe. It was only later that the commanders discovered that emphasizing tribal differences was a way for them to consolidate their power.

As if Afghanistan didn't have enough troubles, Khaterah thought with disgust. By emphasizing tribal loyalties, the mujahideen were widening ethnic divisions. The war was tearing the fabric of Afghan society apart.

Khaterah became angry as she considered the consequences of men's lust for power. Her family, like so many others throughout her county, literally had gotten caught in the crossfire. Fear of shootings and rocket attacks had kept her children as virtual prisoners in their own home. When they had gone out, Hadijah had lost her life and Maliha had lost her leg. They all had lost their childhood. Then in 1992, Khaterah lost everything else.

Kabul had become a war zone, as each mujahideen group fought the others. The mother of five had heard the rockets familiar whine that December day, but this time, it had been closer. She had just left her mother-in-law at the stove where the ground beef, lentils, carrots and potatoes had been simmering for hours. From the kitchen, Khaterah crossed through the living room where Nabil, Omid, Razaaq and his father already had pushed the cushions to the side and were seated around the dastarkhan, waiting for Hanif to bring out the platters of steaming food. She went out into the courtyard to call Hanif to lunch. He and Maliha were enjoying the sunny warmth of the unusually mild winter day. Since Hadiyah's death, Razaaq had come home from the ministry more frequently to have his mid-day meal with his family.

Hanif saw it before she did. She could see it in his horrified eyes. Later, Khaterah would recall turning towards the house just as the rocket arched, a graceful bird of destruction, and neatly pierced the flat roof. She didn't know how long she stood staring in disbelief. Her mind could not comprehend that the pile of debris was the house that she had left just moments before. Maliha's wailing shocked her back to reality. It was a cry that would haunt Khaterah for the rest of her life.

Hanif had run towards the rubble, his thin frame shaking uncontrollably as he frantically dug through the heavy chunks of dried mud and rock. Khaterah could only stare at the ruins of her home and the life she knew. It seemed that Razaaq's laughter still hung in the air as he called to Hanif to come in and get the *naan* that Khaterah's mother-in-law had just baked. Now they were dead. Just like that, she was a widow with a

maimed daughter and a 10-year-old son who suddenly had gone from child to man of the house. Plumes of dust curled towards the heavens, taking the spirits of Razaq, Nabil, Omid and their grandparents to Allah.

After the funeral, Khaterah had considered her options. There weren't many. President Rabbani had rolled back unpopular laws enacted under the communist governments and instituted *Sharia* law. Women's opportunities had become more limited. She no longer could go out in public without being veiled. Hanif, as the sole male survivor, had inherited two-thirds of the family's money and property when Razaq died, and the 10-year-old was now in charge of the finances.

She knew that she and her two children always would have a place to live. Hospitality was the hallmark of Afghan culture. Too many families were making room for those suffering losses. But she couldn't bear the thought of remaining in Kabul. It was too dangerous. She already had lost three children, her husband and his parents to the never-ending war. She could not face the possibility of losing Hanif and Maliha. So, after consulting her uncles, Khaterah made the most difficult decision of her life. She and her children would leave Afghanistan.

Her friends filled water containers, and relatives gave her small amounts of money. Arman, who grieved the loss of his friend Nabil, had paid for a man to drive them part of the way to Pakistan. An uncle gave Maliha a crutch. The trip would be dangerous, particularly for two women and a small boy.

In her neighbor's living room, the women with whom she had shared so many hardships hugged and kissed Khaterah and Maliha. Then mother and daughter shrouded themselves in blue, shapeless burqas. Covered head-to-toe, they were like so many other nameless, invisible Afghan women. However, Khaterah knew that she and her daughter would find a measure of safety in the conservative countryside hidden under the burqa.

Outside, the men put their arms around Hanif's shoulders, kissed him and offered words of advice and encouragement. The boy did not let on that he was frightened both by his journey and his new responsibilities.

A small bus already filled with refugees pulled up. Khaterah, Maliha and Hanif squeezed inside, the men in the front, and women and children in the back. As the bus lurched forward, its colorful plastic fringe dancing jauntily, Khaterah turned her body to line up the burqa's eye grill with the back window. She could see her friends and family grow smaller and smaller, as she left them and her old life behind. Through the swirling dust kicked up by the tires, she thought she could see her uncle reciting a *dua*, asking God for their safe travels. She was thankful that the burqa covered her face and no one could see her tears.

The Kabul Highway wound its way from the capital through the once lush Shomali Plain. The area's irrigation system had been destroyed, and the bountiful crops had withered, their brittle brown leaves becoming part of the pervasive dust. The trees laden with fruits and nuts were gone, razed and burned by armies determined to starve

their enemies into submission. The formerly fertile fields were wastelands now seeded with more landmines than almost anyplace in the world.

The travelers followed the Kabul River, along the path Alexander the Great had taken when he passed through Afghanistan to conquer India more than 2,300 years earlier. The road, pockmarked from years of rocket attacks, looked more like a moonscape than a modern highway. The bus tipped precariously as the two wheels on the left, then the two on the right would disappear into one crater then another. Khaterah prayed the vehicle wouldn't disappear entirely into one of the deep holes that, from where she sat, looked perfectly capable of swallowing the minibus whole.

The rubble over which the bus traveled tore the well-worn tires, and several times, the driver made his shivering passengers disembark as he walked to the nearest village for patches or replacements, cursing as he made the repairs. The band jostled along with the periodic stops for six hours. Then the driver, engine still running, abruptly ordered the tired travelers from the bus. He could go no further, he explained unapologetically, the roads had bandits, his bus was too old and... Khaterah didn't hear the rest of his excuse. Leaving them on the side of the road at the entrance to the Kabul Gorge, he warned them to stay on the road, away from the thousands of landmines that littered the country. The driver was still talking as he got back in the bus, turned it around and disappeared in the dust from which he had come. The group took off on foot, their backs to the setting sun.

The travelers knew that the 40 miles through the gorge would be arduous ones, so as the sun grew low, they began to look for a place to spend the night. Long before the

Germans had built the highway in the 1960s, traders and armies had taken the route. It wasn't long before they came to one of the inns that had sprung up along the way where weary wayfarers could eat and rest. Hanif went with the men to a back room, while Khaterah and Maliha climbed the stairs with the women.

Once safely locked away from men's eyes, the women took off their sandals, threw off their burqas and gathered around the *kursi*, which radiated welcome warmth. A low table over which a heavy blanket had been draped covered the heater. The women sat on the surrounding cushions and thrust their cold feet under the blanket. No sooner had the women settled in than the innkeeper's wife brought pots of tea, platters of rice and chicken, and bowls of yogurt. Although the portions were meager, Khaterah was glad for them, and her spirits perked up for the first time since she had left Kabul. She looked at the other women curiously as they ate in silence. They were of all ages and, apparently, from different social levels. Some had worn hands that told of years of physical labor while others still bore the remnants of a manicure. Their different coloring, facial structures, eye colors and hair textures marked them as being from different tribes, as well. War did not play favorites, Khaterah thought wryly. She wondered what personal tragedy had forced each woman to leave behind her home, her family, her worldly possessions – everything she knew – for unknown dangers.

After the dinner was cleared, the strangers performed their ablutions and quietly stood side-by-side facing Mecca to say their evening prayers. The women unrolled the mats that were stacked in the corner, covered themselves with one of the provided blankets and lay, united in adversity.

Before dawn, the women rose to say their morning prayers. Then they replaced their burqas and, after the men had eaten, descended the stairs to eat breakfast of tea and naan with marmalade. Then the refugees set off.

Following the river through the Kabul Gorge, they picked their way over the uneven terrain. Hanif led his family, followed by Maliha, trying to find a secure spot to place her crutch. Khaterah took up the rear. Her vision was severely limited by the burqa, and she knew Maliha's was, too. The grill that was her new window on the world kept shifting, covering first one eye, then the other. If she fastened the tight cap inside the burqa more securely to keep the peephole in front of her eyes, she developed a headache. Regardless of how she positioned the headwear, she couldn't see her feet, the road in front of her and her surroundings all at the same time. Khaterah worried that her daughter, unable to see the road clearly, would put her crutch down on a loose rock or, worse, into one of the craters. If she took a wrong step or lost her balance, Maliha could tumble 1,000 feet into the deep ravine below. Fearfully, they hugged the sheer rock walls as closely as possible.

It wasn't long before Khaterah and her family fell behind the others, slowed by Maliha's difficult progress. The shadows grew as the sun fell behind the cliffs, and Khaterah asked Hanif to look for breaks in the rock wall where there might be a village and a welcoming home where they could stay the night. She hoped that whatever tribes lived in the gorge adhered to the Pashtunwali code of hospitality, so they would not be turned away.

It was nearly dark when Khaterah caught sight of the dim shape of a man with several goats just ahead. Hanif ran towards him, and Khaterah lost sight of her son in the growing darkness. Just as she began to fear that the man had been a member of a mujahideen group and had taken Hanif by force to fight, he reappeared. True to Afghan custom, the man had offered the family a place to rest and had shown the boy the route to his home, so he could find his way back with his family.

When the threesome arrived at the isolated, flat-roofed mud house, the herdsman's wife showed Khaterah and Maliha to an upstairs room. As the woman disappeared back down the stairs, mother and daughter eagerly took off their stuffy burqas and enjoyed the cold air against their faces. Khaterah was glad to rid herself of the covering that clung to her nose when she breathed. With each inhaled breath, the burqa's fabric clogged her nostrils, and she had to push down a panicky feeling that she was suffocating.

Maliha and Khaterah had just gotten comfortable when the herdsman's wife returned with tea for the travelers.

“It is unusual for a small family like yours to be traveling alone,” the woman commented. “Every day, we see lines of people leaving Afghanistan. The roads are dangerous, and you would be safer in a bigger group.”

Khaterah agreed and explained how the bus driver had dropped the travelers miles from the border, unwilling to risk going further. She had described why they had fallen behind the others and how the trio had come to leave their homeland. As Khaterah spoke,

the woman's eyes filled with tears. Then she sat down next to them and told them how the war had come to her village and the surrounding area. She related stories of Soviet Scud missiles dropping poison on the people in the Salang Valley. Of communist soldiers pouring gasoline on people hiding in irrigation ditches in Karez-e-Baba and setting them on fire. Of arresting and executing people accused of being anti-communist.

The woman recounted how Soviet soldiers had come looking for mujahideen that had attacked their troops in the village next to theirs. The villagers claimed to know nothing about it, but the soldiers did not believe them, so, they had watched and waited. When the people of the town had gathered for a funeral, the invaders did not understand what the men were doing.

“To them, we all were the same – dangerous members of the resistance,” the herdsman's wife observed bitterly.

Fearing that the townsmen were massing for an attack, the Soviet soldiers killed everyone – men, women and children. The only people who survived were those who had been out tending their goats and sheep or who had pretended to be dead.

“The Soviet soldiers even took our children from our homes,” the woman continued. “They were sent to nearby countries, such as Tajikistan, that were part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The children were supposed to return to Afghanistan to spread communism when they were adults. They would have learned nothing of Islam or their heritage. When they came back, the children would have influenced their neighbors and the government and would have raised their own children as communists.

“But people passing through our village told us that the Soviet Union collapsed before the children were old enough to return. They still are there, stuck in foreign countries that don’t want them and with no way to return to home.”

With difficulty, the woman pushed herself up from the cushion on which she had been sitting. With Khaterah’s help, she rolled out the dastarkhan and began to leave to get more tea and their evening meal. She paused at the door and turned towards her guests.

“On your journey, remember that some members of the resistance are no better than the Soviets,” she warned. “One of my neighbors had an argument with a mujahid over a goat. In the middle of the night, he returned with his fellow fighters. They tortured his family as he watched. Then they killed him.”

Their host left them with their thoughts. Khaterah wondered if an honorable man existed who could stop the cruelty and destruction.

The herdsman’s wife soon returned carrying their dinner of spinach, rice and ground beef rolled into balls. She joined her guests to eat from the common plate, using her right hand, while the unclean left hand rested in her lap. The food quickly disappeared as the three ate hungrily. Khaterah knew that her host had had to stretch already meager supplies to provide their meal, and she thanked the woman profusely for her hospitality.

When their host took the dishes away, Khaterah rolled the dastarkhan back up and focused her attention on her daughter, who had been silent since she had arrived. She urged Maliha to join her in a round of *shir jangi*. Composing short poems had been one

of their favorite pastimes in Kabul. She recalled the poetry parties. It had been great fun thinking up a poem that began with the last letter of the previous one. The partygoers that used words most rhythmically always drew murmurs of appreciation.

Maliha did not respond to her mother's question, and Khaterah wasn't sure if she had heard her. She was about to repeat the question when her daughter recited her *landay*:

*The sun awoke, but your spirit slept.
Good-bye, Hadiah, my sister, freed from life's sorrows.*

It was Khaterah's turn. She thought briefly, mentally counting nine syllables for the first line and 13 for the second.

*Swiftly, we flee war, but death stalks us.
I hope for peace like I long for my husband's embrace.*

Silence hung over the small, spare room as Khaterah and Maliha each contemplated their long emotional journey over the past two years. A voice from the door interrupted their thoughts.

*Endure our lives of desperation.
Women cannot choose their love. We can only choose death.*

Startled Khaterah and Maliha looked up to see their hostess in the threshold, her arms cradling their nighttime blankets.

"*Tahamul*," the herdsman's wife said, her eyes moist. "Endure. Our lives are not our own. We can only endure."

As she handed a blanket to her guests, she kissed each three times on the cheek. Without another word, the three unrolled their sleeping mats and lay down beside each other under their blankets, sisters in sorrow. As they drifted off to sleep, they prayed for dreams in which rockets did not crush houses, toys did not explode and women could control their own destinies.

CHAPTER V
THE MIRROR CRACKS

Maliha felt like a hostage. Her surroundings, her body and her mind seem to be conspiring to trap and hold her spirit someplace deep inside her that she couldn't quite reach.

In the refugee camp, she and her mother seldom were alone in the drab, unadorned dwelling they now called home. Although their house in Kabul had been simply furnished, the red rug and ample pillows had brought color and warmth. In the cramped kitchen that her mother and she now shared with other refugees, Maliha had become a proficient, if unenthusiastic cook under her mother's tutelage. But she felt no joy in eating the familiar dishes that they created. It was only because of her mother's worried gaze that she ate at all.

When Maliha wanted to, which was not often, she would lean on her crutch next to the single, narrow window in the only room that was their own. From there, she caught snatches of conversations and glimpses of boys and a few men, often with blue burqa-clad women in tow, passing by. She imagined that they were going to the Red Cross tent for the health classes that foreign aid workers offered. The noisy children that appeared and disappeared from her view, happily rushed to the makeshift tent schools, seemingly oblivious to their surroundings.

From that position, she also could see herself in the piece of cracked mirror that her mother had scavenged from somewhere and balanced on a daub of mud sticking out from the wall. Maliha always was surprised by the somber girl who stared back at her. The crack distorted her face, breaking it in two and not quite putting the pieces back together.

Even if Maliha had been whole, as a woman, she was not allowed to work where she could come in contact with men, which was everywhere outside their hovel. In the four years that they had been in the camp, the restrictions on women only had increased. As dangerous as their trip to Peshawar had been, it was no more dangerous than daily life in the refugee camp. She had heard the other women mutter that it was because the Taliban were becoming more powerful.

When she and the other refugees had first learned that the Taliban had taken over first one province and then another, they all had been hopeful that the Taliban would stop the corruption and disregard for law that had spread since the civil war had begun in 1992. In each area of the country where the Taliban had taken control, they had restored order and stability. Maliha had heard that they now were just outside the capital, poised to take Kabul and with it, the governance of the country. But like the mujahideen who had begun acting more like warlords than holy warriors, power seemed to have gone to the Taliban's heads.

While her mother was in the kitchen making naan, Maliha had heard two men outside the window talking in low tones about the group's increasingly extreme

punishments for not following Sharia law. Maliha did not know the Qur'an well, and she wondered if it said that people should be punished for wearing white shoes, the color of the Taliban flag. She knew that women must be modest and conceal their faces, but it did not seem that The Prophet would have said that their faces should be disfigured by acid if they did not wear their veils, or that their fingers should be cut off for wearing nail polish.

Maliha could hear the men more clearly as their discussion became more passionate. The men agreed that women must uphold the family honor by behaving modestly, but the man with the deep voice argued that it was a father's and husband's duty to discipline his daughter or wife who shamed the family, not strange men or the state.

Maliha had edged closer to the window and leaned against the cool sill, careful to keep her face out of sight. She barely dared to breathe to keep from drawing attention to herself. She wanted to hear everything that the men said. Their voices rose then dropped, too low for their words to reach her. Although she only could hear part of their conversation, one thing was obvious to her. Women were not the only ones living in fear today. These men were afraid of being caught and punished for speaking against the Taliban and their view of Islam. From what she could piece together, it seemed they were talking about the Taliban's leader, Mullah Omar.

"Extreme times call for extreme measures," Deep Voice insisted.

"It is not our way," the high-pitched voice whispered nervously. "The mullah has lost touch with ordinary people. He is relying on foreigners who hold religious beliefs that are not like those that we Muslims in Afghanistan hold. Arab-Afghans," he spat.

“Wahabis from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Pakistan, north African countries and others that have learned about Islam in madrasas. Those mullahs know nothing of science or history or the tribal ways of our country. I don’t think some of them can even read or write!”

Deep Voice started to protest, but they were drifting away and Maliha could not hear what he said.

She thought about Hanif and her brow creased with worry. He was attending a madrasa. He was 14 now, but he had entered it shortly after they had arrived at the camp four years ago. In those religious schools, the boys, some as young as six years old, were away from their families. Isolated. She had heard that in order to concentrate on their studies, they saw no newspapers and did not listen to the radio. All they learned about the outside world and Islam they learned from mullahs. Maliha wondered if High Voice was right. If so, Hanif would grow up without understanding the Afghan traditions in a world of men with only one viewpoint and one goal: to show everyone – by force, if necessary – the “right” way to live.

Their mother had been eager for Hanif to resume his schooling, and she had chosen to send him to a madrasa instead of to the camp school. The camp schools were crowded and had few resources. She had believed that a madrasa would provide him with a better, more formal education. Plus, Maliha suspected, it also meant one less mouth to feed. She hoped that Hanif’s madrasa wasn’t one of the extreme ones. She missed her brother and thought of the last time she had seen him four years ago and how much he had grown up on that long trip from Kabul to Peshawar.

The trip from Kabul to the refugee camp in Peshawar had been long, 17 days, far longer than it should have taken. Although her mother hadn't said anything, Maliha knew it was because of her. She could only walk short distances before the crutch under her right arm began to chafe. She had tried to keep the crutch from rubbing by putting all the weight in that hand, but she had developed painful blisters. By the second night, they had fallen so far behind the other travelers that she and her family had had to stay in the home of a herdsman and his wife in the Kabul Gorge.

She had always dismissed Hanif as just her little brother, but he had shown such initiative the morning they had left their host's house. He had asked the man to send his wife to Khaterah. He had asked him – no, had told him – to ask his wife to get one of their mother's two gold bracelets. It had been part of their mother's bride price, and she had saved it for an emergency. Their mother had handed it to the woman without question. How strange it seemed for their mother to obey her little brother. But he was the man of the family, and they were dependent upon him now.

After their morning prayer, the three women ate breakfast of tea, naan and egg. Maliha noticed that the herdsman's wife slipped her naan onto Khaterah's plate when her mother wasn't looking. She gave her a warning look not to say anything, whispering in Maliha's ear as she pretended to straighten the cushion on which she sat that her mother needed the strength that the extra bit of bread would furnish.

Maliha and Khaterah donned their burqas and cautiously descended the stairs. They still weren't used to navigating in the heavy, awkward garment, and going up and

down stairs was particularly difficult for Maliha. She carefully put her crutch on the step below the one on which she was standing and inched her left foot to the edge. When her foot was as far out as it could go without her losing her balance, she took a wobbly hop, landing on the same stair as her crutch. Just as she was gaining confidence in this unorthodox approach, her crutch caught on the hem of her burqa. As she tumbled into her mother, she felt a strong hand clutch the material at her neck, stopping her fall. Her heart beating wildly, Maliha reached the first floor safely. At the bottom of the stairs, Maliha turned gratefully to the herdsman's wife behind her. She saw compassion, but no pity, in the woman's eyes, and Maliha knew she would miss her.

Hanif waited outside the door, holding a coarse rope tied to a donkey. Her brother had seen an opportunity and seized it. Maliha's crutch hand was raw and the muscles in her right arm were stiff. Even a good night's sleep hadn't completely taken away the dull ache in her back and tenderness in her left foot from the pounding it had taken the day before on the rocky path. The animal would give Maliha's body a much-needed rest and allow the family to travel more quickly.

As they left, she and her mother embraced the herdsman's wife and thanked her profusely. As the woman kissed them, she offered blessings for their safe travels. Then Maliha, with Hanif's help, awkwardly clambered atop the donkey, perching sideways on its back. Taking the lead, Hanif, with Khaterah trailing behind, led the family east, guided by the sun.

The 163-mile journey was slow and arduous. They passed the shells of bombed trucks, as well as dented canteens, a small shoe, a broken-down van and other signs of

travelers who hadn't made it to Peshawar. As they came to roadside vendors, they purchased apricots, tea or *kofta*, those delicious meatballs, from the supply of coins that their uncle had given them when they left Kabul. They ate sparingly, unsure when they'd next come across merchants. Some days, dustings of snow turned their clothes white under gray skies.

Once through the gorge, the little family plodded through burnt wheat fields and sidestepped stumps of fruit trees, all that was left from the destructive forces that had passed through. The fighters on both sides had despoiled the land to ensure that it would not support life, whichever side the farmers had been on. Hanif urged the reluctant donkey across frigid streams, and Maliha was grateful for the donkey's sure step.

Each afternoon, well before dusk, the trio began looking for a place to stay the night. They did not want to be caught without shelter when the sunset and the mercury plummeted. When they could not find a place to sleep, they curled up next to each other in an irrigation ditch where they would be invisible to the occasional passing patrols.

With each purchase from roadside stands, their money dwindled, and they limited themselves to tea and naan. Maliha could see that her mother was worried. She wondered, too, if they would make it to Pakistan before their afghanis were gone. She hoped that if death came, it would be a quick one.

Although armed men were common in Kabul, they had been less visible on the road as they traveled. Then one afternoon when they had nearly reached the Pakistani border, Maliha came face-to-face with two young men, no more than 20, armed with

automatic rifles. Whereas other fighters hadn't given the bedraggled trio more than a passing glance, these two had set up a checkpoint, and they saw Maliha and her family as three more travelers from whom they could collect "tolls." The thugs' swagger told her that they enjoyed the power that their gender and guns gave them. Like schoolyard bullies, they would not let the 12-year-old, her 10-year-old brother and their mother through without getting something in return.

For once, Maliha was glad for her burqa. She would not meet their eyes, keeping hers cast down modestly. She could feel their laser-like stare trying to pierce her burqa to appraise what was inside. She was glad that the garment was long, covering her wrists and ankles. Maliha waited tensely. Apparently, the taller one, who seemed to be in charge, lost interest in her and turned his attention to Hanif.

"Where are you going?" the thug barked at him. "And who is traveling with you?"

Hanif's voice was helpful and courteous without sounding either submissive or aggressive. Maliha marveled at his calm.

"I am taking my old mother and poor, maimed sister to our uncle in Gerdi, he said, naming a nearby town close to the border.

The women did not speak. Nor were they spoken to.

"You must pay to proceed," the tall man continued, but his tone was less sure as he surveyed the small, dusty boy leading the emaciated donkey with a dirty blue figure atop and another burqa standing silently behind. Maliha could tell that he must be wondering if the ragged band could possibly have anything of value.

“We have no money,” Hanif said quietly. “We have been traveling for 12 days, and because my sister cannot walk, we had to buy this tired donkey for her to ride. We have relied on the hospitality of strangers to keep from starving. Our father was killed, in a rocket attack, so we are traveling to our uncle’s house where these women will cook and clean for him in exchange for a bed and food.”

The bandits considered the donkey. Maliha imagined that it knew the danger they faced and took a deep breath to make its ribs stick out more sharply. Deciding there wasn’t enough meat on its bones to make a good meal, let alone serve as a sturdy pack animal, both men glared at Hanif.

“And what of you?” the shorter one demanded. “Why have you not joined the mujahideen? You must join us.”

Maliha knew that armed bands forced young boys to join them, and she felt that the question was a test. If her brother protested, they might kill him. Yet if he agreed, what would become of her and her mother? The law did not reach into the countryside or mountain passes.

“I look forward to the day when I can join my brothers-in-arms, but I am still a child,” Hanif said, trying to sound even younger than his 10 years. “Plus, with my father’s death, I am honor-bound to look after my sister and mother until we reach my uncle’s house.”

Family honor, even among thieves, was sacred. Maliha stole a glance at the men just as the taller one raised his rifle. She held her breath. Yet, he seemed to be waving Hanif away, using his rifle like a fly swatter shooing a pesky bug.

“Come back when you can shave,” he spat, obviously annoyed at having wasted his time with nothing to show for it.

Hanif politely wished them well and, urging the donkey forward, he walked as quickly as he dared. Maliha noticed that although his face was impassive, his knuckles were white as he gripped the donkey’s lead tightly, his hand shaking slightly. They were nearly there.

CHAPTER VI
HOME IS IN THE HEART

In the refugee camp, Khaterah had no voice. Of course, she hadn't been able to make life choices in Kabul either. Although she had grown to love and respect her husband, her parents had arranged her marriage. Since she had to live with her husband's mother, even her kitchen wasn't her own. As the daughter-in-law, she had to do whatever her mother-in-law wanted. Living with a large, extended family, she never was alone. She had cried quietly many nights early in her married life.

But at least in Kabul, she had been treated as a person. Although her father-in-law and husband controlled the purse strings, her mother-in-law made the household budget, and one day Khaterah would have that role. Razaaq had been kind and had given her enough money to buy food, clothes and household items in the market. During the Soviet occupation, she could travel around the city openly. Some women even worked outside their homes, but those women brought dishonor to their families. Their husbands lost the respect of other men who did not think that they could control their wives.

The refugee camp was mostly filled with women and children, but the men controlled their lives. They made the rules and controlled access to food, shelter and health care. Aid workers did what they could, but they could always help the women. After being given initial rations, camp residents were expected to purchase what they

needed. However, unable to have contact with men outside their families, women in the camp had few opportunities to earn a living. Khaterah envied some of the Tajik women who could make money by weaving intricately patterned rugs. She and Maliha were learning to embroider kamizes and tablecloths. However, their time-consuming, tedious needlework did not earn them much, and it was very difficult to buy enough food. Thank Allah that Hanif was being cared for in a madrasa.

With no man to accompany her, Khaterah was stuck inside her house, and she resented it. When she needed food or supplies, she had to give her money to one of the other women who would take their sons when they went out to buy what they needed. Hard as it was, at least she hadn't had as difficult a time adapting to camp life as some of the other women did. She had been used to living in a city with other families nearby. The countrywomen had been used to sharing farm chores with their husbands and walking freely on their land. Wearing a burqa and being accompanied everywhere by a male family member was a painful adjustment for them.

The camp's men weren't much better off, Khaterah had to admit. Yes, they could walk freely. They made the rules and ran the camps, but there wasn't much work for them either. There were no fields or animals to tend, and for professionals like her husband had been, there were no jobs that made use of their knowledge. The nonprofit organizations that were working in the camps were trying very hard to teach them new skills that they could use. Groups, such as the International Labour Organization, offered vocational training, so that men could learn how to repair cars, electrical equipment or

bicycles. Some learned how to be plumbers or carpenters, shoemakers or tailors. However, there were more workers than there were jobs in the camp, even for people with skills. The lucky ones got apprenticeships in Peshawar that sometimes turned into full-time jobs. Otherwise, the men just hung around, hoping to be chosen to dig ditches for sewer lines or other such work.

Maybe that's why the men were so hard on their wives and the other women in the camps, Khaterah considered. Their formerly predictable lives had no stability, and the only way that they could show that they were in charge was to bully and control the women. Just as Khaterah and the other women had achieved a sense of purpose from being wives and mothers and running their households, the men had derived meaning from their work taking care of and overseeing their families. Now, they had no way to provide for them. Khaterah noticed that they shuffled whereas before they strode with their heads held high. To her, it seemed that they had lost their sense of purpose and felt less than men.

Surrounded by all the broken spirits, she sometimes she wondered if the trip had been worth it.

When her family had come upon the bandits outside Gerdi, Khaterah didn't think that they would ever make it to Peshawar. She had listened with her husband to the BBC, and she knew what her children did not. Bandits claiming to be toll collectors manned checkpoints all along roads in Afghanistan. Their main targets were the trucks carrying

drugs or arms to and from Pakistan. However, they also exacted payment from all trucks and travelers passing through. They had no compunction about killing those who could not pay them. Allah surely was watching over them that they were spared.

When they had passed through Gerdi, Khaterah had sensed that they had crossed into the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan. The European-drawn border had never been accepted by Afghanistan, and the area was so lawless that Pakistan had given up trying to govern it. The FATA was the center of the Pashtun tribal homeland. Periodically, Pashtuns on both sides of the border called for an independent country, Pashtunistan, but nothing ever came of it. It really didn't make much difference anyway, since lack of government control gave the area virtual independence. Although Pashtun herself, Khaterah was uneasy.

As the family approached the North West Frontier Province, Khaterah noticed increased truck activity. Transports, following the old Silk Road, carried fruits and vegetables, clear-cut trees, scrap metal from bombed cars, and opium to Pakistan. Khaterah had heard rumors that the drivers unloaded their contraband and filled their trucks with weapons for the return trip to Afghanistan. They took the opium to heroin factories in Pakistan – and increasingly to factories in Afghanistan. Smuggled goods went in both directions, as long as the drivers paid tolls to men like the two that had stopped them. The governments on both sides of the border were powerless to stop the lucrative trading, and no one tried very hard. The payoff was too high. The warlords and the government both exacted payment from the farmers and the truckers to let them go about their business. Then they used these payments to fund the war.

Everyone particularly benefited from the drug trade. On her journey, Khaterah had seen the burnt wheat fields and chopped fruit trees. She and her family had slept in the bombed irrigation ditches. Farmers had told the travelers that with the water supply destroyed, only poppies could grow where nothing else could. In any case, the drug dealers paid much better than the buyers of their wheat or mulberries had. Farming was the only way they knew how to earn enough to take care of their families' needs. Khaterah knew that the Qur'an specifically banned the use of drugs, but the poppy farmers were practical. They had to feed their families, they said. They reasoned that as long as Muslims didn't use drugs, it didn't matter what the *kafirs*, the unbelievers, did with them. In fact, some growers and suppliers laughed at the West's appetite for drugs, particularly the American's. That would destroy them more easily than the mujahideen could.

The closer she got to Peshawar, the more bustling bazaars Khaterah noticed. They sold all the vegetables and meat, clothes and electronics that anyone could want. Had it not been for the brisk business that the merchants also did in drugs and weapons, she almost could have forgotten a war was waging just a few miles away and had been for more than a decade.

As they arrived in Peshawar, Khaterah felt far older than she had just 17 days ago when she said good-bye to her uncle and friends in Kabul. She looked at her son and daughter. Once self-assured and outgoing, Maliha was silent. She had said little since their journey had begun. Now that she thought about it, Maliha had never really been

herself since Hadiah's death. She was still obedient, but she had become more and more withdrawn. When Khaterah looked into her daughter's green eyes, she saw – nothing.

Hanif's boyish face had lost its laughter. Now thin and serious, it reflected the weight of a man's responsibilities. That mantle of authority lay heavily on his young shoulders.

Khaterah sighed. She was not the only member of her family who had grown older in just a few days.

The family fell in with the throngs of refugees heading to the processing center. Before they could be assigned to a camp, they had had to register their loyalty to one of the seven Islamist political groups. Khaterah did not care about politics, but she was not asked her opinion. All decisions now were in Hanif's hands. She remembered how after Hadiah was killed, Razaq, Nabil and Omid had talked about joining Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. After a moment's hesitation, Hanif seemed to remember, too, and he chose the Hizb-i Islami, a conservative Pashtun faction.

The family was shuffled along to one of the international aid groups where Khaterah received food, water, blankets and other supplies with which she would begin her new life. They took their meager belongings to their assigned living quarters that they would share with another widowed refugee and her family.

The babble of multiple languages surrounded her, refugees from throughout Afghanistan who spoke Uzbek, Turkish, Dari and Pashto among other tongues. There were people from different qaums that all had different customs, different cultures and

different identities. Khaterah looked through the narrow grill of the burqa. It cut off her vision, and she had a sense that her perspectives were narrow as well. She had to keep turning her head to be able to see her surroundings. Through the grill, she saw snapshots of many children and women, all as confused and desperate as she.

As night fell in the refugee camp that September night in 1996, Khaterah lay on her mat beside Maliha's, listening to the men in the street. She knew that some were heading out to a building that served as a warehouse by day and music hall by night. Those who had brought instruments would entertain the others. Other men were meeting friends to chew *naswah* and swap stories. Spitting the tobacco on the ground, they would try to outdo each other in their storytelling skills. Still other men were patrolling the camp to ensure that the women inside were safe – or at least that they were inside.

It was odd. The many Afghan tribes with different customs living so closely together under stressful conditions led to misunderstandings, tensions and arguments. When she had first arrived four years ago, she had felt her Pashtun identity strongly. But she now realized with surprise that over time, she had begun thinking of home not just as Kabul, but as Afghanistan. Her loyalty to family and community was unwavering. But far from home, she had begun to think of herself as an Afghan first and Pashtun second. For some refugees, the differences were still too great. But others, particularly the women, some could put them aside, united in their commonalities.

Khaterah wanted to go home. But she didn't know anymore what would await her, if she did. The herdsman's wife had told her about atrocities carried out by the

mujahideen, and now new arrivals to the camp told her of how the ongoing fighting kept them from forming an effective government. Crime, corruption and constant warfare was destroying her country.

Desperate to counter the thievery, extortion and killing, the Rabbani government had recently implemented severe punishments as deterrents. One recent arrival told Khaterah that in March, she herself had witnessed a public execution of three murderers in Kabul. She had heard that since June when Gulbuddin Hekmatyar had been sworn in as prime minister, the government had become even more conservative. The prime minister almost immediately had ordered women to wear black dresses and veils, and he had closed the movie theaters and wouldn't reopen them until they showed films he felt conformed to Islamic standards.

Even more alarming were the stories Khaterah heard about how the Taliban ran the areas that were falling under their control. The group had been welcomed for their law-and-order agenda. However, in many towns, the Taliban had displaced the local leaders and had enacted new laws and special courts to inflict harsh punishments on those who disobeyed them. Men and women who had tried to leave Afghanistan together had been dragged back. It was "unIslamic" for unmarried men and women to be together, and they were stoned to death for that crime. Murderers not only were publicly executed, but entire towns were forced to watch. There was no question about what awaited those who didn't follow the new laws. If the Taliban discovered a home with a television or radio, or even worse, if family members owned music, they were beaten with sticks and whips,

whips made from the antennas of the forbidden radios. The women in the refugee camp buzzed about hundreds of women who just a few weeks ago had held a protest march in Kabul to object to the way the Taliban treated women. They wondered what would happen to the women, if the Taliban ever took Kabul.

The situation in Afghanistan had become so bad that the flood of refugees entering the camp was overwhelming the international aid organizations. Yet they considered themselves lucky to have arrived at all. Camp newcomers said they had heard of Afghans trying to cross the Amu Darya River into Tajikistan who had become trapped on one of the river's islands. If they tried to continue, they were shot at from the Tajikistan side, determined to stem the flow of refugees to their country. If they tried to return home, Taliban fighters used them for target practice. So, they were stuck on the islands, slowly starving to death.

The social order that for so long had dictated people's behavior and responsibilities had broken down. As she heard about the changes in her country, Khaterah felt her dream of going home turn to the dust of the Kabul streets. If she lost hope, she would have lost everything.

Almost everything, she corrected herself. She still had Hanif, although she hadn't seen him since he had entered the madrasa four years ago. And she had Maliha.

Her poor daughter. She was a shadow of her former self.

Maliha stirred beside her, whimpering. Khaterah propped herself up on one an elbow and stroked her daughter's long, thick light brown hair. Each day, Maliha grew

quieter. Now, she sat each day in her corner by the window and barely spoke at all, her beautiful eyes staring expressionlessly at the embroidery in her lap. She looked at Maliha's silhouette in the dim light and hoped that wherever her daughter's mind had gone, it was a place where the morning skies were filled with birds' songs and not the shrill whine of rockets.

CHAPTER VII

HANIF HEADS TOWARDS KABUL

The air was humming with excitement. The mullah had told the boys that the madrasa would close, so that they could join the Taliban in Afghanistan to drive out the corrupt warlords. Over the last two years, the Taliban had been gaining control of the country. Now, they were poised outside the capital, and the students had been called to the fight. Hanif was proud to be among the thousands of Afghan and Pakistani madrasa students who had answered that call over the past two years.

A thrill rippled through him. He **had** been called. At 14, Hanif was old enough to fight, and he was ready. He had been training for four years to be a good Muslim, and now he would fight for what he knew to be right. The mullahs had made his duty clear. To follow the teachings of The Prophet, he must wage jihad against unbelievers and those who are corrupt. Wherever the Taliban went, they established strict Islamic law, enforced morality and restored order. The time had come, and he would return to the country of his birth to take back Afghanistan.

Hanif surveyed his brother talibs. There was solidarity and comfort in their uniformity. When he looked at the other students, he could have been looking in a mirror. They had traded their white turbans for black ones and had helped each other rim their eyes with kohl. Hanif was one of the youngest fighters. He looked enviously at the full

beards of the talibs in their early 20s. His was still sparse and had not yet reached the mandatory length.

Until he had arrived at the madrasa, Hanif had been scared. Among the other lost boys, he had found a sense of purpose. He now knew what he was meant to do.

A convoy of Toyota pickup trucks pulled up outside the school. Gripping their Kalashnikov rifles, the boys piled in and set off for Kabul.

The trucks sped through Peshawar, past the stalls in the bazaar where men hawked carpets, eggplants and grenade launchers. They bounced into the Khyber Pass, careening around the mountain turns, past Landi Kotal, the highest point in the pass and the last town on the Pakistan side of the border. Then they were through the Federally Administered Tribal Area and crossed into Afghanistan. It took the trucks two hours to travel the 35 miles from Peshawar to the border, a trip that had taken Hanif and his family three and a half days to make by foot four years earlier.

The driver dodged both deep holes in the road and knots of refugees heading out of Afghanistan, who scattered as the trucks flew by. Hanif felt a rush of power. He didn't notice the woman in the hijab standing with her goats a bit back from the road. The herdsman's wife stared at the young fighters, hoping they would not stop.

The group drove another two hours to Jalalabad. As they descended on the city, resistance melted away, no match for the swarm of talibs whose rapid-fire stings from their automatic rifles brought pain and death. Surely, Allah was on their side!

Triumphant, the students turned their sights on Kabul and joining the larger Taliban forces gathering outside the capital.

As they drove, Hanif listened to the chatter around him. The Taliban had been making remarkable inroads around the country. Since they had captured Kandahar in 1994, they had gone on to be welcomed in Urozgan and Zabul provinces to the north. They had spent the summer of 1995 rebuilding their strength, then had kept the momentum going, taking Helmand to the south and Dilaram, Nimroz, Farah and Herat in the west. Before stopping for the winter snows, they had pounded Kabul, yet Rabbani's government wouldn't give up. With spring, the Taliban had captured Ghor Province and strategic sites in Paktia and Logar provinces. Now Hanif and his fellow madrasa students had taken Jalalabad in Nangarhar Province. Some of his group had stayed behind to strengthen their position, but he was heading to Laghman Province. Laghman and Kunar were the last two provinces in the east that didn't yet belong to the Taliban. When those were taken, they would squeeze Kabul more tightly, even as rockets continued to rain destruction on the government troops.

Hanif had no doubt that Allah was blessing their jihad to make Afghanistan a truly Islamic country with a government of laws based on the Qur'an. He had learned in the madrasa about the crimes against Islam that the mujahideen had committed, and it strengthened his resolve to fight them and liberate Afghanistan. Honor is an Afghan's greatest virtue, and Rabbani had shown right away that he had none. Although he initially was supposed to be president for only four months, Rabbani had held office for four

years. He had manipulated the shura to allow him to continue to rule, to work on a new constitution, he had said. Hanif heard his teachers say that Rabbani is still manipulating people. Recently, he had talked the Uzbek general Abdur Rashid Dostum into opening the Salang Highway, and he'd convinced the Pashtun commander Gulbuddin Hekmatyar to be his prime minister again.

The other men in the truck chuckled derisively. As if an Uzbek and Pashtun would be led by a Tajik. Hekmatyar had decided two years earlier that the government was not Islamic enough and had resigned his post in disgust. "It is no wonder that Rabbani can't keep a Pashtun in his government," the student on Hanif's left noted, clutching the door handle tightly to keep from being bounced into his seatmate's lap as they hit the bottom of a particularly deep pot hole. "He couldn't even hold on to his Tajik collaborators. When Hekmatyar became prime minister in the second year of Rabbani's presidency, Massoud left his position as defense minister – and took most of the army with him."

Hanif joined the laughter, wanting to seem part of the group.

"Tajiks have no honor," the young talib told the others matter-of-factly, proud that he followed the Qur'an to the letter, just as he was taught. "As soon as Rabbani took office, the president and Massoud started killing the Hazaras in Kabul."

Hanif knew all about the Hazaras. They were Shi'a heretics. He disapproved of the freedom that the men gave their women. However, their Hizb-i Wahdat party was now allied with the Taliban. He did not understand how they could be allies when they

were not good Muslims. Perhaps Allah wanted them to learn from the Taliban why they should become Sunnis.

Hanif turned his attention back to the young talib, who continued to chronicle the ruling party's lack of honor. "The Tajik commander Massoud collaborated with the Soviets, while Mullah Omar and other mujahideen risked their lives and lost arms, legs and eyes."

There was a respectful silence inside the truck, as the students weighed the moral differences between the Tajik traitor and their holy one-eyed leader.

"Imagine Rabbani thinking that the guerillas would peacefully lay down their arms and join him when he became president," the talib to Hanif's right scoffed. "What arrogance! Instead, they turned their guns and rockets on him. But even in their anger, they are not united as we are. They continue to fight not just the government but one another. Their greed makes them weak and makes it easier for us to take back the country from their corrupt hands."

From the conversation, it quickly became apparent to Hanif that none of the mujahideen factions trusted the others. With good reason, he thought. Loyalties shifted among them so quickly. He didn't understand how they could know who was allied with whom from day to day.

The driver chimed in. "Prime Minister Hekmatyar was so suspicious of his one-time partners that he wouldn't go into the capital. He set up his office in Darul Aman, just outside Kabul. Of course, his fears were well founded. When he went to the city in June

to officially become prime minister, a rocket fell near his hotel, killing 61 people and injuring more than 100. A month later, the prime minister's house – where Hekmatyar should have been living – took a direct hit, killing or wounding more than 20 people.”

No wonder the government was not functioning, Hanif thought. The president was in Kabul, while the prime minister was in Darul Aman, and all the ministers scuttled back and forth like so many ants, terrified that they'd be squashed by a falling rocket. Just seven months ago, Hekmatyar had been urging the Taliban to join him in fighting the government. Then he had joined the government himself and his troops were fighting for the very people they recently had been killing. Hanif had no respect for these people who had no honor.

Just a few weeks before he had left the madrasa, Hanif had heard that Allah had proven that their cause was just. With his help, the Taliban had captured Hekmatyar's strongholds in Taboot, the Alikhel and Spina Shega military bases in Paktia Province, and the Azra base in Logar Province – territory that the prime minister's supporters in Hizb-i Islami had held.

Hanif had been so engrossed in what he was hearing from the others in the truck that he didn't realize how much time had passed. The truck was nearing Laghman Province, one step closer to Kabul. Hanif had no doubt that he and his fellow talibs soon would control that province, too. Soon Sharia would be the law of the entire country, and those who did not follow the law would be punished. The president would pay the price of his corruption.

Taliban leaders had tried to reason with him. They had offered to join the government and stop the bloodshed. But Rabbani would not agree to let them have control. He would allow only good Muslims from throughout the country to be part of his government. He had turned them down! By allowing the wicked into his government, **he** had declared war on **them**. Now, Rabbani and the other mujahids were extending peace offerings. But it was too late, Hanif and his fellow travelers agreed. They didn't need to share power. They wouldn't compromise their morals. It was jihad, and they would reclaim the country for Islam.

CHAPTER VIII

HONOR IS A TWO-EDGED SWORD

Arman was nearly invisible as he listened with a practiced ear to the night sounds. The low moans of an injured comrade and the explosion of rockets finding their marks punctuated the stillness. The urban guerilla blended into the shadows of Kabul's high-rises that jutted like broken teeth from the center of the capital. From his perch in a blown-out window of what had been a government office building, Arman looked out on the city where he had grown up. He could see flickering lights here and there. Most likely the remnants of fires from the rocket attacks that had been nearly constant for three days. Although power had been restored in March, the electricity was not on. It still was in short supply and had been turned off for the night. Even a few hours was welcome after two years of unrelenting darkness that had smothered people's spirits just as Afghanistan's dust storms choked their mouths and noses.

The night usually brought a lull in the fighting, an uneasy quiet during which occasional "mailmen" dropped *shabnama*, "night letters," warning citizens of impending attacks. Arman doubted that the Taliban was making any deliveries tonight. The attacks had been ongoing. For days, people had been streaming from the city. Not that there was any place safe to go. Arman scanned the cityscape and wondered how many of his friends still lived in his old neighborhood. Not many, he imagined. His best friend, Nabil, had

been killed two years before he had joined the mujahideen. He had felt a duty to help his friend's mother whose only living son had been just 10 years old when they, along with his crippled sister, had begun their journey to Pakistan. He had given one of Nabil's uncles what little money he had to help them on their way. He hoped they had made it.

Arman's own family had been victims, too. No family had been spared. At least when his great-grandfather had fought the British a little over 75 years ago, the enemy had had a foreign face. The enemy was clear. Now, today's enemy is yesterday's friend. For the better part of five years, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, bolstered first by U.S. support then by Pakistan's, had been committed to their downfall. At times, his drive for power had held the city hostage, keeping food and other supplies from entering. Blocked from national leadership by the other mujahideen, Hekmatyar had taken his anger out on the entire city. Like a spoiled child, he had lobbed rockets not just at the other warriors, but on people going about their daily lives. Then a year ago, the Taliban had broken his siege. Arman would have been grateful had the Taliban not blockaded the city itself and begun its own rocket attacks on the capital. While one group of Taliban had attacked the city from the air, another had attacked Arman's unit on the ground.

Arman surveyed the ghostly capital. In Kabul, women had worked and studied at the university. Tajiks and Pashtun, Uzbeks and even the lowly Hazaras had lived peacefully side-by-side. Commerce had flourished. The once proud city had been reduced to rubble. Foreign governments had closed their embassies. Even many foreign aid organizations had left. The city was just too dangerous.

Smoke from the fires drifted skyward, dispersing like the hopes of the people whose homes smoldered. Those with education and the financial means had fled years ago to Europe, America or countries beyond. Hundreds of thousands of others had gathered what they could and had driven or walked away. They had gone primarily to Pakistan and Iran, but others were refugees in their own country. They had fled the countryside for the safety of the city only to find there was no safe place in Afghanistan. Like friends and family in camps across the borders, these Afghans were living under tents, some in squalid conditions. Dazed by the destruction, confused by the politics, they were the emotionally and physically damaged. They cared little about the politics of those in power and more about their own ability to provide stability for their families to live safely and earn a living.

Arman could feel his anger building. They had done this. Not just the Soviet occupiers, but the Americans, the Saudis, the Pakistanis and other foreign governments who had provided the weapons and whispered encouragement to engage in jihad. They had exploited and divided his people for their own purposes. They had used the holy warriors to fight the Cold War, to expand their territories, to profit from Afghanistan's natural resources, to get inexpensive oil to their countries, to pave the way for corporate profits, to create an Islamic regime, to divert attention from their own shortcomings. Each country had different motives, but the result was the same.

Behind him, a boot scuffed a loose piece of concrete, sending it skittering across the broken tiled floor. In one fluid motion, Arman dropped to the ground, whipping his

semi-automatic rifle into firing position as he rolled, aiming in the direction of the sound. He swore to himself. He was deaf in one ear, his hearing a casualty of the constant roar of the guns he fired and mortars he launched. It was a liability that could get him killed.

“Son of Razaq, you would not want to kill a *rafiq*. We have too few friends.”

Farokh spoke mildly, but quickly, his eyes locked on the gun barrel pointed at his chest. He didn't want Arman to shoot first and identify his target later. They both were on edge after months of intensified fighting.

Farokh could see the tension drain from his friend's body. Arman lowered his gun and got to his feet, fruitlessly brushing off his once black shalwar, now gray and stained. The older warrior realized with annoyance that his calloused hands were shaking. Drops of tea had escaped from the spout and were running down the side of the pot he held. He willed his hands still. In the dim light, he could see the spilled tea pooling on the ground, a dark spot spreading by his feet. He didn't know how much longer he could go on. As Farokh stepped forward, he carefully dragged dust over the telltale spot. His courage must never be doubted.

The veteran fighter settled himself on the ground and poured the strong tea into two dented tin cups, part of the military gear that was compliments of the U.S. government. The warmth soothed him and slowed his still racing heart. The bitter brew provided a sense of normalcy. The hospitable tradition bound Farokh to his parents and to his parents' parents, who had raised innumerable cups of tea to their lips in friendship and kinship.

“So, Arman Khan, is the tea so bad that you would rather kill me than drink it?”

Farokh prodded gently.

“My apologies, my friend,” Arman said sincerely. There was no good excuse, and he did not attempt to give one.

Farokh sipped his tea. The silence was broken by rockets finding their marks and by the muffled cough of the mujahid keeping watch. If Arman wanted to tell him what was on his mind, he would. The minutes ticked by and they drank their tea.

“Have you thought about how foreigners are destroying our country?” Arman asked earnestly.

Farokh considered the question. “And how is that?”

Arman looked surprised. “The Soviets used our differences to divide us. The Americans and Pakistanis gave us weapons, and the Saudis gave us money to fight the communist infidels. Even when we beat the Soviets back, they kept giving us weapons. It was as if they were playing *buzkashi*. But as each foreign government tried to snatch the goat from the other and reach its goal, Afghanistan was the goat slowly being torn to pieces.”

Farokh shrugged. “If they were willing to give us weapons, why should we not take them?” he countered. “The Soviets dishonored our culture. I am proud to have fought to take back our country. The Qur’an tells us that we have a duty to wage jihad against unjust rulers. If we did not fight, we would have no pride, no honor. What are we without that? We are not men.”

“But they used us to fight their battles and for their own gain,” Arman insisted. “We had no experience in such scheming. We take men at their word and believed these false friends.”

“They put the guns in our hands, but we did not have to pull the triggers,” Farokh maintained. “We believed them because we wanted to believe them. Our heads became too big with dreams of power. Each mujahideen commander believed he – and he alone – should guide the future of our country. They would not work with one another, but that is not our way. Our way is that of consensus, of *jirgas*, where every man has a voice. The people – not one person – decide what is best, and when we all agree, we all are bound by the jirga’s decision.

“Why did you join Jamaat-i Islami?” Farokh asked Arman. “I met you when you were new to our unit. The Soviet threat was gone. Why did you want to fight?”

“I was angry,” Arman bristled. “Wouldn’t you be if Hekmatyar’s rockets killed your best friend and most of his family because they were in the wrong place? And if Rashid Dostum’s Jumbish-i Milli-yi freed the prisoners, but took your father and tortured him as a ‘traitor’? My father was an office worker, a ministry clerk! He did not care who was in power. My father did not make big decisions. He did not harm anyone. His job was stamping official documents. He did his job and minded his own business. When they released him... he was ashamed. He can no longer care for his family. He is not the same man.

“So, I joined Massoud to avenge my father.”

“Pride and honor, such noble qualities.” Farokh sighed.

CHAPTER IX
HANIF GOES TO WAR

Laghman Province had fallen as surely as Jalalabad had. Then the Taliban had taken Kunar Province. Now all eastern Afghanistan belonged to them. With control of the east, west and south, nearly all Afghanistan was Taliban country. More people had joined their cause. Some mujahideen had become so disgusted with the warlords' posturing that they had turned their backs on them and joined the Taliban.

The battle for Laghman had been a brutal one. It had been the first in which Hanif had killed someone. He had been so close that several drops of the boy's blood had spattered his shirt. There had been shouting and fighting all around him. The mujahid had rushed at him from the open door of a house he had just passed, and Hanif had fired at him in self-defense.

It was not like the movies; he did not feel like a hero. The boy had been no older than he, about 14, maybe 15, but small for his age. He had had no gun, no knife. He had had a rock. That had been the weapon with which he was defending his home. The boy had cried out when Hanif's bullets had pierced his chest. As he stumbled and sank to his knees, he had clutched the front of his shirt, as if he could keep his life from seeping out through the holes. His eyes had locked on Hanif's in silent reproach. Then the light had gone out of them. It all had happened in just a few seconds, but the memory would stay with Hanif for the rest of his life.

The young talib had repeated to himself what he had been taught in the madrasa. If the boy were a bad Muslim, he would receive the punishment he deserved. If, by chance, he had been a good Muslim, then he would now be in paradise. In either case, Hanif had done a good thing. Knowing that made killing easier.

But it did not make it easy, as least not for Hanif. He did not seek out opportunities to kill or punish as Ghazwan did.

It seemed to Hanif that Ghazwan was born to fight. He had pale skin and a perpetually insolent look in his brown eyes. A child of war, his only skill was intimidation. Hanif had seen him in battle. He seemed to relish bullying the old men and lashing out at women whose ankles were not covered. His motivation was cloaked in Islam, but his attitude was straight from the streets. Before he had joined the Taliban, he had been idle and restless. With no schooling, no available work and few abilities, Ghazwan was ready to fight for whichever side gave him the weapons to use. He was eager to join the Taliban massing outside Kabul and impatient to begin assaulting whatever or whomever stood in his way.

In the nearly two weeks since his close call in Laghman Province – that was how Hanif thought of it – his group had arrived at the outskirts of the capital. Taliban forces had been encamped at the edge of Kabul for nearly a year. By the time Hanif and his fellow students arrived, the Taliban had settled into a routine: launch endless rocket attacks, drop bombs and engage the enemy on the ground, with pauses for prayer five times a day. This had been going on almost nonstop for a year, yet Rabbani's government

had not surrendered. The people were on their side. Afghans were weary of war, and they looked to the Taliban to bring peace and stability and Islamic laws.

The madrasa students neared the encampment that was set against a backdrop of sharp angles rising starkly against a black sky. The moon watched coldly over the destruction being played out in black and white.

Hanif claimed a rocky stretch of ground and dropped his few personal belongings. A murmur rippled through the group, and silhouetted black turbans bobbed as they discussed the significance of the latest victory. Sarobi was theirs. The strategic town controlled the entrance to the Silk Gorge where truckers passed each other, carrying food and arms to warlords who patrolled the roads. By taking Sarobi, the Taliban also had torn out the heart of Hekmatyar's resistance. It was surely a sign, Hanif believed, and those around him agreed.

No one got much sleep that night. The men were tense. They knew that victory was near. Hanif found himself wondering what he would find when he entered the city where he had grown up. Not his home. It had been destroyed in the rocket attack that had killed his brothers and father. Not his family. Hanif had fled to Pakistan with them years ago – had it only been four? His former schoolmates with whom he had suffered through Russian history lessons? Or Arman, his brother's best friend, a constant presence hovering on the edge of his childhood? Probably all gone.

To Hanif's ears, the men's pre-dawn prayers sounded like the expectant murmurings before a kite-fighting tournament. In the dimness, he thought he could see

the bluegreenredyellowpurple kites tumbling over and under and around each other, filling the sky as they jockeyed for position. He imagined that he could smell the pungent spices that insinuated their way through curtained windows of mud and stone houses, their backs turned demurely to the streets, while their courtyard doors were flung open in welcome. The growing light dissipated his dreams and revealed the stark reality.

For the past 24 hours, the fighting had been intensifying. Their rockets continued to fall without let up on the mujahideen holed up in the capital. Today Hanif would enter the city. Today, the Taliban would take Kabul.

CHAPTER X

ARMAN JOINS THE FIGHT

In the fading light, Arman knew that the night of September 26th would be a long one. He tried to shake the feeling that the lengthening nights didn't signify an encroaching darkness as Rabbani's government fought to maintain control of the capital. He knew that the light would continue to lose ground until late December's winter solstice. Then, the light would fight back. He just hoped that the mujahideen could hold on.

Arman could hear the fighting just outside the city. The fierce battles that had begun the day before had moved closer.

It was ironic. For four years, the mujahideen had been unable to find enough common ground to make peace with each other. Last year, when Ahmad Shah Massoud finally controlled all of Kabul, the Rabbani government had tried to broker an agreement both with the Taliban and between the rival factions. The president had agreed to relinquish his powers to a transitional jirga. A representative council, not a central government like the West had, was the Afghan way. After the Taliban had rejected his overtures, Massoud had shuttled between Kabul and Islamabad and between the other commanders. He urged cooperation as he tried in vain to diffuse Afghanistan's powder keg. He also had appealed to U.S. congressional representatives, warning of the growing

Taliban danger. Finally, a few months ago when it became obvious that the well-disciplined Taliban was taking over the country, Hekmatyar had thrown in his lot with the government. Then just last month, the fickle Gen. Dostam had joined them. He wondered if it were too late.

Arman shook his head as if to clear them of such fatalistic thoughts on the night he would face the Taliban.

“It is time.” Farokh intoned, as if reading the young mujahid’s mind.

Arman nodded. He could hear the muffled footfalls as other members of Massoud’s troops rushed down the stairs. Kalashnikovs in hand, they raced to the edge of the city to keep the growing number of enemy from overrunning Kabul.

There was a deafening explosion and the nearby government building where his father once had stamped official documents burst into flames. The deadly fireworks of rocks and concrete showered the street below. The Tajik fighter grabbed his ammunition belt and raced down the stairs, following his compatriots into the street. He darted into doorways and behind chunks of concrete that had blown off adjacent buildings. Homes, too, had become deathtraps, and he mingled with mothers clutching terrified children’s hands and fathers cradling infants, as they tried to keep their families together in their headlong flight. Rockets did not differentiate between civilians and soldiers.

As he left the city behind, Arman heard automatic rifle fire even before he saw the black turbans. His own rifle kicked his shoulder, as he sprayed the black wave threatening to wash over the city. He grabbed a grenade from his belt, pulled a pin and

hurled it into the mob, ducking to safety as bullets whizzed around him. The explosion threw Arman to the ground, and he heard screams as shrapnel from his grenade tore into young bodies. Still they came, unslowed by the mujahideen, united for a common cause: to make Afghanistan a strict Islamic country.

The acrid smell of gunpowder mingled with the stench of blood and burning flesh. Kabulis fleeing the city disappeared and reappeared in the thick smoke, performing a grotesque dance of death with the Taliban rockets.

CHAPTER XI

FORCES COLLIDE

Hanif was exultant. A rumor was spreading that President Rabbani, his ministers and commander Ahmad Shah Massoud had fled from the presidential palace. Resistance was melting away when confronted with the Taliban's superior numbers. Since Hanif and his fellow students had joined the Taliban outside the capital only the day before, throngs of fighters had joined them. There were more defectors from the mujahideen, who seemed to know who the victors would be.

The air was thick and black, and Hanif could still hear the explosions from the ammunition dumps that Massoud's troops had blown up as they had run from the city. A jubilant young man in front of Hanif, the kohl around his bloodshot eyes smeared, boasted that Massoud had run back to the hills of Panjshir, but he couldn't hide. They would find him and administer Sharia justice – right after they carried out the sentence that the communist Najibullah had earned.

The Toyota trucks that had been waiting patiently at the edge of the encampment sprang to life. A new day was dawning as the Taliban, flying their white flag, drove slowly into Kabul. Hanif was carried along with the rest of the fighters as they entered the streets emptied of government forces in the late hours of September 26 and into the early hours of the morning.

The shadow of the earth had nearly covered the full moon, casting a red glow over the advancing army.

CHAPTER XII

A NEW DAY DAWNS

Arman had not waited for the Taliban. He, Farokh and the others had received word from Massoud to leave Kabul. The commander already had set the ammunition dump on fire. Arman had heard the pops and booms as the shells, grenades and rockets detonated, setting off a volatile chain reaction.

From where he was concealed, he could see black turbans between him and the city. The sounds of resistance were dying down. After unceasing gunfire and explosions, the quiet was disconcerting. Arman couldn't believe that after a year of launching rockets at the capital, the Taliban would take it without a fight. He couldn't let that happen

Using early morning shadows as cover, he wound his way back toward the city. Arman slipped into a relatively intact building at the edge of the city and positioned himself at the window with a clear view of the street. The thick walls provided as much protection as he could hope for, and he would be able to see the enemy without their seeing him. His shot, when he took it, would be a surprise. With luck, he'd be gone, back with his unit before they knew someone had been hit. Arman knew that his gesture would have little effect. He just couldn't let them take his country without a symbolic act of protest.

The Toyota engines rumbled and rattled from hard driving on the war-pocked roads. Arman squinted through the sights of his AK47. Their backs were to him, but as

some members of the Taliban turned their heads, he could see in the dim light the long, gray-flecked beard that marked a handful of the men as former fighters in the war against the Soviets. Two were familiar, he noted with a pang. His former companions that had stood with him to fight the very men that they now clapped on the back in victory. He was sure that the men riding separately in another truck were Pakistanis. The Taliban in another were barely men. Beardless, they must be the talibs from the Pakistani madrasas. They were tomorrow's fighters, Afghanistan's enemies of the future.

Arman raised his rifle, taking a bead on one young talib with his back to him. As the young man turned, Arman thought that the kohl around his green eyes made him look like a young girl. There was something familiar about him. Arman thought that he looked a little like Nabil's sister Maliha.

Arman hesitated just a fraction of a moment, wondering vaguely how Maliha and her brother Hanif were doing in the refugee camp. Then he pulled the trigger.

*Spring is coming but you are not, every buddy is laughing but I am not.
Nights are coming but you are not, winter is leaving your memories are not.*

– Zaman Rashid
2010

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APPENDIX A
TEACHER'S GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

For a great interactive map of Afghanistan that overlays highways and city markers on a real-time physical map, use Google maps (<http://maps.google.com/>) and type in “Afghanistan.” The students can get a good overview of where Afghanistan is in the world, the terrain and what the country actually looks like. They can use the map to trace the route of Khaterah and her family as they make the journey from Kabul to the refugee camp in Peshawar, Pakistan. They also can follow the Taliban’s takeover of the country.

Many of the Afghan names have several different spellings. I tried to use the version that I found most frequently.

I: THE END BEGINS

P. 1 par. 1: When Arman dreams, he dreams he hears music. Music has traditionally been an integral part of Afghan culture and their celebration (Dupree 979; Hosseini, *Kite* 129; Hosseini, *Thousand* 410). It was a respite from the war (Sulima and Hala 189) and also a way for expatriates to connect to their culture and the homes that they left behind (Baily 230; “Music”). However, the Taliban banned music, burned instruments, and beat and imprisoned musicians (Baily 220; Hosseini, *Thousand* 281), saying it was against the Qur’an, although that’s questionable (Dupree 979-980). The Soviets killed popular singer Ahmed Zahir, and both the mujahideen and Taliban destroyed his grave (Sulima and Hala 189). Teens in Afghanistan today enjoy music as much as U.S. teens do, however, lack of electricity and ways to enjoy it limit their access to it (Z. Rashid). Nonetheless, “Afghan Star,” an “American Idol”-type show is extremely popular today, but not without controversy.

P. 2 par. 1: It’s always difficult to determine exactly how old Afghans are, since they do not celebrate birthdays. Some people know the approximate year they were born or can figure it out, based on what was going on around that time, but they do not know the day (Seierstad 119; Z. Rashid; Zoya 184).

P. 2 par. 2 Although there are variations in clothing and head coverings depending on the tribe, traditional dress for Afghan men is the kamiz (tunic), shalwar (loose pants) and chapan (heavy coat) that Arman wears (Robson 21; Mortenson *Three Cups* 67).

P. 2 par. 3 – p. 3 par. 1 There are five requirements or “pillars” of Islam that every Muslim is expected to follow. They are: 1) a testimony of faith, affirming that Allah is the only God and that Mohammad is his messenger; 2) prayer, which is required five times a day; 3) zakat (charity); 4) fasting during the month of Ramadan; and 5) haj (pilgrimage) to Mecca. Muslims must try to fulfill the final pillar, although sometimes because of health or finances, this isn’t possible (Abu-Harb).

Before praying, Muslims are expected to cleanse themselves. The description of Arman washing before prayer is based on Manzoor Khan’s ritual in Greg Mortenson’s *Three Cups of Tea* (68-69) and is demonstrated in the first three minutes of the video “Teach me how to pray to God” at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=syE-bhpoFCc>.

If no water is available to actually wash before prayers, the motions are made to simulate washing (Mortenson *Three Cups* 71, 167).

P. 4 par. 2 Farokh is not happy about having to do a chore that usually would be handled by a younger child, yet he does it without complaint “as a respectful son always did.” Everyone in a family has a role, and children are expected to show adults respect and obey their parents without question (Firling 32; Sulima and Hala 25, 165).

P. 4 par. 3 Afghans traditionally do not have last names. A girl has one name that often reflects an admired quality or lovely thing (e.g., wise, beautiful, melody), and a boy usually has the name by which he is called that is an admired virtue (e.g., wise, warrior, honest), plus either a prefix or suffix that is an important trait in Afghanistan (Sulima and Hala 7; Zawaydeh 18, 29; Robson 25) or is the name of the village from which he came.

P. 6 par. 6 Quiet, dignified and deeply religious, with the values of the Afghan villagers, Ahmed Shah Massoud brought both a university education and wily guerilla strategies to Jamaat-i Islami’s battle against the Soviets and, during the civil war, against the other mujahideen and Taliban (Girardet 77-78; Coll 465). Known as the Lion of Panjshir, both for his roots, Panjshir Province, and his relentless attacks against the Soviet Union’s soldiers, Massoud seems to have been the only mujahideen commander who truly had Afghanistan’s best interests at heart. He sought neither to divide nor conquer the other guerilla groups for personal gain or power (Dorransoro §22; Coll 569).

P. 6 par. 3-5 Although the U.S. and Soviet Union didn’t know it at the time, the late 1970s and 1980s were the tail end of the Cold War, as the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was to collapse in 1991. As early as the mid 1970s, the CIA, working with Iran’s secret police, SAVAK, fueled right-wing Afghan extremists

to undermine the Soviet-leaning regime (Fitzgerald 130). Zbigniew Brzezinski, who was President Jimmy Carter's national security advisor, was a vehement anti-communist. He felt that opposing the USSR's engagement in Afghanistan would be payback for its support of the North Vietnamese against the U.S. during the Vietnam War. He encouraged Afghan Islamists to recruit Soviet Muslims. As a result, in July 1979 President Jimmy Carter first authorized the CIA to secretly provide arms and supplies to the mujahideen fighting the Soviets (Blum).

Many of the arms initially were old Soviet weapons of poor quality (Girardet 66-67). However, after rabid, anti-communist congressional representative Charlie Wilson's 1982 trip to Afghanistan, the appropriations were doubled. As a member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense, he kept the coffers open until the collapse of the USSR (Loyn 148-149; *Charlie Wilson's War*). Saudi Arabia matched U.S. assistance dollar for dollar, and the drug trade supplemented the funding. The mujahideen then were armed with grenade launchers, mortars, anti-aircraft guns, mines and ammunition that helped turn the tide against the Soviets (Blum; Kakar 258; Fitzgerald 8; Denker; Hiro; Coll 65; Girardet 66; Crews 39).

The fallout from this policy was that some of these U.S.-funded, armed and politicized Islamists went back to their home countries in the Middle East and Africa where they established or joined extremist forces there, thus spreading armed conflict throughout the world (Hiro; Coll 260). Ironically, these groups were the seeds from which sprang those that later attacked symbols of what they viewed as imperialistic, anti-Islamic countries – the U.S (Hiro).

P. 6 par. 5 Upon Mohammad's death in about AD 632, Muslims divided into Shi'a and Sunni on the question of leadership succession. Sunnis and Shiites both are Muslims and believe in the same tenants of faith. The difference is one of leadership. Shiites believe that Muslim leadership should be hereditary. Therefore, after the Prophet Mohammad died, they thought that his cousin and son-in-law, Ali should lead (Seierstad 133). The Sunnis, on the other hand, believe that leadership should be based on ability. Other small differences have emerged over the centuries, including the proper movements to make when praying, but the theological differences are small. The differences actually seem to be fewer than those between Protestants and Catholics, both of which have the same basic tenants of faith, but differ in biblical interpretation and leadership.

P. 7 par. 1 A true *shura* has representatives from throughout Afghanistan and meets on issues of national importance. However, the *shura* that President Rabbani called and others mentioned throughout this story were not legitimate *shuras*, since the representation was limited to ensure a predetermined outcome.

P. 7 par. 1 Although there were about a dozen important resistance groups, there were seven Islamist groups (politicized Islam) based in Peshawar, Pakistan, four of

which got the bulk of the funding. Members of the Pashtun tribe led all but Jamaat-i Islami, which was led by a member of the Tajik tribe. Each jockeyed for supremacy and continually shifted alliances not only with each other, but also with the other political factions. The major Islamist parties and their warlords, who recast themselves as holy warriors (mujahideen), were:

- Jamaat-i Islami (Burhanuddin Rabbani and Ahmed Shah Massoud) – military commander Massoud was a charismatic leader and a brilliant guerilla fighter.
- Hizb-i Islami (Gulbuddin Hekmatyar) – one of the most extreme Islamist groups with a ruthless leader. As a university student, Hekmatyar threw acid in the faces of unveiled women. His brutality eventually put off both some domestic and foreign supporters. Initially, the U.S. backed him against the USSR (Fitzgerald 162), and until the Taliban eclipsed him, he was Pakistan's favorite warlord.
- Hizb-i Islami Khali (Younas Khalis) – a splinter group of Hekmatyar's outfit, Khalis hated Burhanuddin Rabbani, whose troops killed his son
- Ittehad-i Islami (Abdurrah Rasul Sayyaf) – a Wahabi (pure Islamic) group with close ties to Saudi Arabia. While allied with President Rabbani, Sayyaf's and Massoud's troops massacred members of the Hazara tribe living in Kabul.
- Mahaz-e Melli-ye Islami-ye (Pir Sayyed Gailaini) – a pro-West moderate Islamist group that wanted to see the monarchy return
- Harakat-i Inqilab-i Islami (Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi) – a moderate Islamist group led by a theologian, who wants a jirga-led, consensus government
- Jabha-e nejat-e-milli (Sibghatullah Mojaddidi) – a more moderate Islamist group led by a former Kabul University professor, who wants Afghanistan to be led by a constitutional monarchy and who was president of Afghanistan for two months in 1992 (Fitzgerald 175; Girardet 168-173).

The moderate Islamist groups tried to change the system from within. The radical Islamists wanted to take down the entire system, since they felt it was an impediment to the change they wanted to see (Mamdani 38). The three more moderate groups received less foreign support than the four hard-line Islamist factions and felt forced to throw in their lots with the extremists to survive (A. Rashid *Mirage* 4; Hiro).

Although the foot soldiers of the seven Islamist political parties were predominantly educated in madrasas, their leaders were well educated. Rabbani, Sayyaf and Mojaddedi, for example, all had been professors at Kabul University. Hekmatyar and Massoud had been their students (Girardet 56; Fitzgerald 113).

It is important to note that these groups are not political parties and, in fact, actually did not exist until 1978 when foreign countries began to support them and people began to rally around the warlords like themselves who promised a better future (Isby 52, 215).

P. 8 par. 2 Arman learns about the Taliban through rumors he hears. In the first-person and fictional accounts I read about Afghan life during this era, news traveled extensively via rumors (Seierstad 28; Hosseini *Thousand* 175-177, 254, Mortenson *Three Cups* 155; Zoya 67). Since Arman's father was a government employee and schooling was required under the Soviets, it was likely that Arman could read and write. However, with a largely illiterate population, it would make sense that news would spread through Afghanistan orally. Being great storytellers, with a proclivity to exaggerate (Hosseini *Kite* 12, 140), those repeating the rumors likely would have elaborated on the facts.

As the Taliban gained strength and enjoyed one military victory after another, Massoud unsuccessfully attempted to get the mujahideen to cooperate. When the groups finally put aside their differences in 1996, it was too late. Ahmed Rashid believes that Massoud's failure to unite the warring factions earlier was due, in part, because Massoud was a Tajik (*Taliban* 52). However, I think that the strong personalities and personal ambitions had more to do with it.

P. 9 par. 1 The description of Farokh is based on the guerilla that Edward Girardet describes in *Afghanistan: The Soviet War*.

P. 9 par. 2-3 The traditional Afghan greeting is a reflection of the politeness that is characteristic of their culture (Girardet 162; Stewart 38, 279). It is so important that in *The Kite Runner*, Amir says, "it was better to be miserable than rude" (Hosseini 229). Ironically, Farokh offers the traditional greeting of peace while holding a gun. In *Kabul Beauty School*, Deborah Rodriguez said that Afghans are unfailingly polite "[e]ven when they're pointing a gun at you..." (33).

Farokh's and Arman's demonstration of affection is extremely common in Afghanistan, when it is not unusual to see men walking down the street holding hands or with their arms around each other (Stewart 30; Rodriguez 183-184).

II: HANIF LEARNS THE TRUTH

P. 10 par. 1-2 Boys in madrasas, religious schools, wore turbans from the time they turned eight or nine. The younger boys wore caps (Latifa 120).

Although Hanif was not recruited to the madrasa by Islamists as many students were, he still was taught the strict interpretation of the Qur'an as was common in madrasas at that time (Nojumi 94). The curriculum in Pakistani madrasas of the 1980s and beyond consisted of constant repetition of the Qur'an in Arabic. The mullahs who taught them usually did not speak Arabic and had little, if any, education themselves (Loyn 179; A. Rashid *Taliban* 89). Many of the madrasas also required military training with the understanding that the students would use their skills to fight for Islam (Nojumi 94; Mamdani 136).

P. 11 par. 1 - p. 13, par. 2 In Kabul during the Soviet occupation, younger students wore their traditional Afghan clothes to school, but the high school-aged ones wore uniforms, which changed over the years. When Hanif remembers walking to school with his brothers and sister in 1988, all children were required to attend school, so the government provided blue dresses to the girls and gray shirts to all the students for free (Zoya 128).

Most Afghans resented the school curricula that taught the Russian language and the history of the Soviet Union instead of that of Afghanistan. Also, the communist ideal of everyone sharing everything equally did not make sense to Afghans. From their perspective, taking land from a wealthy landowner was stealing and disturbed the natural order of society (Seierstad 17; A. Rashid *Mirage* 36; Girardet 112-113).

Textbooks in all countries reflect those countries' values and overarching political philosophies. In the U.S., for example, democracy and the values embodied in the Constitution color the views presented. Similarly, Afghanistan's textbooks reflected the philosophies of their various governments. One difference in the 1980s is that the textbooks reflected not the Afghan culture and values, but those of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. For example, students learned that the USSR was a great country, and communism was the best way of life (Dupree 984). Because of this, when the Soviets left the country, their books were useless as teaching tools. The mujahideen and the Taliban that followed them came up with their own books that also were intended to indoctrinate students. According to *The Bookseller of Kabul*, alphabet books under the mujahideen said, "I is for Israel, our enemy; J is for Jihad, our aim in life; K is for Kalashnikov, we will overcome; ...M is for Mujahideen, our heroes; ..." Third-graders practiced subtracting the number of Russian soldier that the mujahideen killed. Taliban math books subtracted bullets based on how many "infidels" a person killed (Seierstad 57-58; Mamdani 137).

Since Afghanistan's history was not taught in school, Nabil must have learned heard about it from his parents and grandparents. The Soviet occupation was just the most recent (at the time the story takes place) of Afghanistan's long history of surviving – and repulsing – invasions as far back as Alexander the Great and Genghis Khan. In 1747, Ahmad Shah Durrani was able to unify the Pashtuns to create Afghanistan. However, the British and Russia used the country as a buffer zone between their two empires during the "Great Game," with Britain fighting three Afghan wars, 1838-1842, 1878-1880 and 1919. Each ended with the British being forced from the country. The final three-month war resulted in Afghanistan's independence (CIA "Introduction"; Baxter 13-14, 18; Fitzgerald 24-60).

Taking field trips with his brother and learning about his country's heritage at the Kabul Museum was a rare treat for Hanif. Had he stayed in school, learning about his own country's history and rich cultural heritage would not have been part of his education (Dupree 982-983).

P. 13 par. 3 Kite fighting was and continues to be an extremely popular winter sport.

(Zoya 22) Homemade kites are made of a tissue paper, bamboo and string encased in ground glass. The men and boys who fight kites become experts in positioning their kites so their sharp strings cut those of their opponents. The kite fighter must be skilled, but so must his assistant who must know when and how much string to feed out. Winners of the kite-flying contests are minor heroes. Like buzkashi, the Afghan national sport described later, kite fighting can cause injuries, as the contestants play the razor-sharp string through their fingers (Hosseini *Kite* 50-51).

P. 13 par. 4 Most Afghan homes are similar and simple inside and out. They are surrounded by high mud walls to protect privacy. Khaterah's house that's described later is of dried mud with a nondescript wall facing the street and opening on to an interior courtyard. It is typical of most houses in Afghanistan. A main room, like a living room, had a packed mud floor covered by a woven rug, big pillows to sit on, perhaps a box containing the Qur'an, and either a bookcase, desk or table. During the Taliban era, pictures of living things were forbidden, but otherwise, there might be some photos. There also would be shared bedrooms upstairs and a kitchen. The fact that Khaterah's family had an oven in their house (later, Khaterah remembers baking bread) was a sign that the family was doing fairly well. As Sulima told Batya Sulima and Hala, most women didn't have their own ovens and still have to use communal ones (Stewart 70-71; Rodriguez 74; Seierstad 227; Sulima and Hala 27).

P. 14, col. 1 Extended families are common in Afghan homes. When a son marries, he brings his new wife to live with him, his parents, and any brothers and sisters still living in the house. (Seierstad 227; Rodriguez 155).

P. 14 par. 1 – p. 15 par. 3 Beginning in 1981, poetry and music, in addition to news, were staples of Radio Kabul before the Taliban took over in 1996 and outlawed them (Girardet 190; Latifa 34). During the Soviet occupation and civil war, Afghans received news about the war from the BBC, Voice of America and Radio Kabul via short-wave radios (Girardet 152, 190; Denker; A. Rashid *Mirage* 25).

A military surge between 1986 and 1987 was the Soviet Union's last-ditch effort to win the war. Sensing his political demise without military support from the USSR, President Najibullah attempted to save his political career in January 1987 by trying to reconcile the various Afghan factions. The two rival Afghan communist parties, the Parchamis and Khalqs, got on board, as did some splinter groups and tribal leaders. However, the mujahideen weren't interested in talking until the USSR had left the country unconditionally.

To appeal to the Islamists (and probably to distance himself from his communist supporters), Najibullah ostensibly returned to his Muslim roots and began quoting from the Qur'an (Hosseini *Thousand* 159). He convened a loya jirga (a representative countrywide council) in November of 1987 that changed

the name of the country to the Republic of Afghanistan from the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan and adopted a new flag and constitution. The constitution made Islam the official religion and for the first time in Afghanistan's history, provided for a representative government with political parties.

A number of the mujahideen agreed to his offer to allow them control over their own territories, with help from the central government – provided they didn't fight. However, the people didn't trust Najibullah or the Afghan communist party aligned with him (Kakar 261-263).

The Soviet did not end their involvement in Afghanistan abruptly. Talks had been going on in Geneva under U.N. oversight off and on since 1982. Finally, on April 14, 1988, Pakistan and Afghanistan signed the Geneva Accords, with U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz and USSR Foreign Minister Edward Shevardnadze as "co-guarantors." The last Soviet soldier left on February 15, 1989. Although the Accords laid out the Soviet withdrawal, all the resistance leaders and other interested parties weren't part of the discussions, so there were no provisions to stop the fighting and create a framework for governance. In fact, not only was there no arrangement to end the war, but the co-guarantors could provide weapons to the sides of their choice. To further his interests, Pakistani President Mohammad Zia ul-Haq directed the ISI to give 67-73 percent of donated weapons to the four fundamentalist groups. The withdrawal of the Soviet Union created both a power vacuum that the armed groups filled (A. Rashid *Mirage* 3; Kakar 264, 294).

Even after the Soviet troops left in 1989, the USSR still supported Najibullah, and he remained head of the government in Kabul. However, a shura consisting of more than 400 members of the seven Peshawar-based Sunni Islamist resistance groups convened to address the country's leadership. The group wrote Najibullah off and elected an interim government. It named the moderate Sibghatullah Mojaddidi as president and extremist Abdur Rab Rasul Sayyaf as prime minister. However, the shura, which convenes only to discuss major national issues, did not include some key players. The communists, nationalists and mujahideen that were not Sunni Islamists were not represented in the group. Additionally, the interim government that the shura created depended on Pakistan's intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence, for unofficial funding. (Kakar 268-270) As a result, the new government didn't get buy-in.

P. 16 par. 1-2 Family is the single most important thing to an Afghan, more important than country and possibly more important than religion. It is the core support system and network from which all other relationships extend (Isby 51; Dupree and Gouttierre). There is a strict hierarchy by gender and age that comes with responsibilities and obligations. However, the place of family not only reflects Afghan values, it plays a pragmatic role. One of the main reasons that family is so significant is that the government is not. The central government has little impact on most of the country and has proven inefficient in providing stability and order.

Therefore, the family and its extended relationships has become the glue that holds society together (Dupree and Gouttierre).

P. 16 par. 5 – p. 17 par. 2 Dust seemed to characterize Afghanistan in nearly every book I read (Seierstad 181; Rodriguez 32; et al.). The Kabul roads are dusty as Maliha, Hanif and Hadiyah head to the bazaar. Later, the buildings are dusty as Arman waits for the Taliban. Åsne Seierstad says in *The Bookseller of Kabul* that the dust was everywhere and on everything, except when it rained and turned to mud (181).

During the Soviet and post-Taliban eras, Kabul was full of color, sounds and activities. The bazaar where the children shopped would be characteristic (Rodriguez 35-36, 45; Girardet 18).

P. 17 par. 4 Razaaq calls his father *Abbajan*, and Maliha refers to Hadiyah as “Hadiyah-jan” and her mother as *madarjan*. *Jan* as a suffix is a sign of affection like “dear.” So, *abbajan* means “father dear” (Sulima and Hala 6, 11, 165).

P. 18 par. 1 The Soviets dropped toys with hidden explosive devices early in their occupation, so it actually would be unlikely, although not impossible, for Hadiyah to still find an unexploded bomb-toy in the street in 1990, a year after the Soviet Union’s soldiers had left. Most people who encountered the devices were maimed, as Maliha was. The toys and other booby-trapped objects (e.g., pens, cigarette packs and other things) were primarily intended to hurt children and strike fear into the civilians to keep them from joining or helping the mujahideen (Hosseini *Thousand* 122; Girardet 213; *Charlie Wilson’s War*).

P. 18 par. 2 – p. 19 par. 2 The first day after the death, the body is buried, and only men go to the gravesite, while the women stay at home to accept condolences. Traditionally, the funeral is the second day after the death, during which men and women mourn at a mosque or rented hall in separate rooms, or the women would go to a relative’s home. The total mourning period, including the burial day is 43 days (Hosseini *Thousand* 139, *Kites* 173-174; Sulima and Hala 51-53, 187; PBS). The verse from Qur’an is from Sulima and Hala (51). It is an Afghan tradition to place stones and green flags on graves (Girardet 238; Mortenson *Stones* 96; Coll 152). For a more detailed description of how a body is washed and shrouded, see Muslim educator Christine Huda Dodge’s very readable explanation of Islamic funeral rites on About.com at <http://islam.about.com/cs/elderly/a/funerals.htm>.

P. 19 par. 3 Most students probably are unfamiliar with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (1924-1991), since it has not existed in their lifetime. Depending on the level of the class, the teacher might want to give a very brief description of the geographical territory the USSR encompassed. Geographer Matt Rosenberg

provides a short, simple geographic, non-political overview at <http://geography.about.com/od/countryinformation/a/ussr.htm>.

It is important to provide a simple explanation of the Cold War, since U.S. involvement in Afghanistan during the Soviet occupation was a direct result of Cold War hostilities. And that involvement then is part of the reason war continues now. This is a complex topic, and for this unit, the teacher probably would not want to get involved in a discussion of capitalism and communism as economic and political philosophies. However, Kenneth Holland, dean of international studies at Ball State University, who has worked to help restore Kabul University, has a PowerPoint that compares capitalism and communism (www.americanhistorykck.org/media/programs/ppt/Communism.ppt). It is fairly straightforward, and is a good refresher for teachers in case the students have questions.

As far as the students are concerned, the teacher might want to keep it simple by explaining that a “cold” war is one with tensions, but without armed conflict. The Cold War between the U.S. and USSR began in 1948 in the aftermath of World War II. The Soviet Union and the U.S. had extremely different economic and social models, and each country wanted the defeated Germany to rebuild in its own image. This was the beginning of the two countries’ competition for influence around the world. Afghanistan was one of the countries in which this competition played out.

After Afghan President Sardar Mohammad Daoud was assassinated in 1978, the next four leaders, Nur Muhammad Taraki, Hafizullah Armin, Babrak Karmal and Mohammad Najibullah, all were members of Afghanistan’s communist party and looked to the USSR for aid. To ensure Afghanistan was not pulled into the Soviet sphere of influence (and as payback for Soviet support of North Vietnam during the Vietnam War), the U.S. armed the rebels fighting the Afghan communist government. The U.S. also encouraged Islamic extremism to give rebels a religiously sanctioned reason to fight nonbelievers (Fitzgerald 96; Sulima and Hala 171, 197).

CIA Director William Casey had one plan to send translated copies of the Qur’an into Soviet territories in the hope of inciting the Muslim populace to rebel (Crews 39; Coll 90, 103) and an earlier one before he became CIA director to addict Soviet soldiers to drugs grown in Afghanistan. (Fitzgerald 199) There’s a good description of how virulent anti-communists in several U.S. administrations, from Nixon through Clinton, planned to undermine the Soviet Union through their activities in Afghanistan in Paul Fitzgerald’s and Elizabeth Gould’s book *Invisible History Afghanistan’s Untold Story* on pages 113-199. Ironically, by supporting the Islamists, the U.S. reversed modernization associated with the Soviet Union (Fitzgerald 126; Sulima and Hala 183).

P. 19 par. 4 Hanif’s desire for revenge is a common one in madrasas. Although portrayed as being based on Islamic law, revenge actually is embedded in the

Pashtunwali honor code (A. Rashid *Taliban* 89, 114). Afghans, but Pashtun boys in particular, were taught that it was their duty to avenge the death of family members. Boys raised in madrasas learned to understand the world as absolutes, as right or wrong, with no shades of gray (Nojumi 98-99).

Although Hanif's view is biased against the mujahideen, it's not far off the mark. A. Rasul Amin, who chaired Kabul University's political science department before fleeing to Peshawar, said that one of the main reasons Afghanistan was unable to form a strong government after the Soviets left was because its leaders of every faction hewed to traditional Afghan loyalties to family, ethnic group and qaum. Additionally, self-pride was a major stumbling block in looking beyond the local to the greater good of Afghanistan (qtd. in Hyman 293).

P. 20 par. 1-2; p. 22 par. 2 The form of Islam that students learned in many – but not all – the Pakistani madrasas of the 1980s and beyond was based on the conservative Indian Deobandi form of Islam. However, depending on the person running the madrasa, the teachings were politicized and many madrasas served as incubators first for anti-Soviet, then Taliban soldiers (Nojumi 107; Evans 9; Mortenson *Three Cups* 242-243). However, mainstream Islamic leaders, including other Deobandi scholars, did not approve such teachings. (Nojumi 107). Most Muslim scholars took the *ijtihad* approach, taking the changing world into account when applying Islamic teachings (Metcalf). Islamists and teachers in Soviet-era madrasas and later did not. They combined a strict interpretation of the Qur'an with Islamic politics (Coll 284; Mamdani 60, 175; A. Rashid *Taliban* 87). Students learned to reject modernity and accept conformity (Haqqani).

Hanif recalls Mullah Omar's call for *jihad*. The term has been misused by some Islamists and by the Western media and is generally misunderstood by westerners. Jihad is indeed a holy war. However, there are two types of jihad. The first is the greater jihad, which is basically a war against one's base nature. It is the battle within oneself to be a better person and help the community. The lesser jihad is the external war, but it should be undertaken only as a last resort for self-preservation or to achieve change when there is an unjust ruler (A. Rashid *Taliban* 87; Mamdani 50).

P. 20 par. 3 – p. 22 The Taliban began with good intentions. At first, Mullah Omar, the Taliban's founder and leader, was highly respected. He had fought honorably against the Soviets (and lost an eye). When he left the mujahideen, he ran a small religious school and was known for his honesty (Mutawakil; Gandhi "Finally, a Talkative..." 5). His views originally were conservative but not extreme and were in line with those of people who lived in the countryside.

The sense of entitlement, growing corruption and generally rude and criminal behavior not only of the mujahideen turned the people against them, paving the way for the Taliban's rise (A. Rashid *Taliban* 52; Marsden 366).

Mullah Omar returned to the political world when he and a few followers got together to avenge the abduction and rape of a teenage girl. Then, they rescued a captured boy (A. Rashid *Taliban* 25; Sulima and Hala 197). So, just as Italian immigrants who could not get justice in the U.S. went to the Godfather for help, people around Kandahar approached Omar and his followers to right wrongs. Smugglers approached Omar and told him that they would pay him an ongoing stipend to stop the shakedowns from the “toll” collectors on the highways, and he did. This ongoing payment became one of the Taliban’s primary “official” sources of income (A. Rashid *Taliban* 27, 189).

A commander in Harakat said that President Rabbani gave permission to Mullah Omar to “clean up” the Chaman-Kandahar Highway, although the president had no idea “what he was getting into.” According to a former Taliban member, Rabbani also briefly looked to the group as an ally against Hekmatyar, who was shelling the capital (Mutawakil; Gandhi “Who Knows” 8).

The many Afghans originally welcomed the Taliban, considering them liberators from the warlords’ lawlessness, corruption and continual sniping (literally) at each other. People also embraced them in a backlash against the forced modernization that the Soviets had imposed. A declassified U.S. government cable reported that when the Taliban took Herat, they doubled the pay of public employees and, unlike the mujahideen, paid for what they took. However, the document prophetically notes that the honeymoon likely would be short-lived due to the restrictions that they immediately placed on women (Gandhi “Eye Witness” 2, 9).

In the interest of reestablishing security, there was initial widespread acceptance of the punishments that the Taliban dealt out. The reasoning was that dire consequences were necessary under the dire circumstances (Crews 7-8, 40; Sinno 64; Fitzgerald 225; Nojumi 104; Mutawakil).

As for the Taliban, they saw themselves as heroes, or as Ahmed Rashid said, “as the cleansers and purifiers of a guerrilla war gone astray, a social system gone wrong and an Islamic way of life that had been compromised by corruption and excess” (*Taliban* 23). In *Ghost Wars*, Steve Coll added that the Taliban’s particular appeal to the Pashtun majority was “Islamic piety and Pashtun power” (283).

Since the Taliban were almost exclusively Pashtun, their interpretation of Sharia law was heavily influenced by the Pashtunwali code of honor and revenge, which was more onerous for non-Pashtuns. Hanif recounts the social restrictions imposed as a result of Sharia law. People often recount how women suffered under the Taliban, but neglect to mention how men fared. They, too, had behavioral restrictions, including the ones mentioned here: required beards of a proscribed length, headwear, traditional clothing and mandatory prayer (A. Rashid *Taliban* 89, 114).

Taliban decrees became increasingly draconian. As the Taliban became more extreme, their rules focused more and more on minutia of behavior that was

unsupported by the Qur'an. One of these was their prohibition against people wearing white shoes because the Taliban flag was white and to them, white shoes represented trampling on the Taliban flag (Latifa 52; Zoya 4).

In March 1996, Mullah Omar called a shura of mullahs in Kandahar. However, the shura didn't represent all Afghanistan's leaders. Conspicuously absent were tribal, clan and military leaders, including those who had fought the Soviets and those who wanted peace (A. Rashid *Taliban* 41).

In an orchestrated piece of theater, he called members of the shura to the Tomb of the Prophet where he dramatically donned the Cloak of the Prophet, consciously emulating both Caliph Omar, who took up Mohammed's cloak when the Prophet died, and King Dost Mohammed Khan, who wore the cloak as he embarked on a jihad against the Sikhs in 1834. Like them, he assumed the title *Amir-up Momineen*, Commander of the Faithful, which bound Muslims to obey him.

Omar's acceptance by the shura gave him and his movement legitimacy, since shuras' consensus was the traditional way in which major national decisions were made. It also was the turning point for the Taliban. When the group began, decisions were reached by consensus through a shura. At that time, the Taliban claimed to have no political ambitions or interest in power. However, power increasingly became centralized in Mullah Omar, beginning in 1994 and culminating when he put on the cloak in 1996 (A. Rashid *Taliban* 95, 102). They transitioned from "humble, consultative Pashtun country folk" into a "political military movement with national goals" (Coll 328).

When Omar declared jihad against Massoud, it was different from the situation under which Dost Mohammad did. Dost Mohammad's war was against outsiders, not his fellow Afghans as Omar's was. Additionally, his claim of being "Commander of the Faithful" was a bit sketchy, since it was a title that only the *ulema*, a group of religious leaders, could bestow, not a shura or Omar himself (A. Rashid *Taliban* 42; Mutawakil).

P. 23 par. 1 – p. 14 Hanif's day is similar to ones that Husain Haqqani described in "Islam's Medieval Outposts." The teachings reflect what a student told Haqqani when he visited Darul Uloom Haqqania, his alma mater, in late 2001. This message is also consistent with a survey that Tariq Rahman did of students and teachers in Pakistani madrasas. Military training in the madrasas picked up in the early 1980s, turning them into "politico-military training schools" Mamdani 136).

Haqqani said that the teachers in extremist madrasas feel "marginalized by modernization" and insist on a strict interpretation of the Qur'an to make themselves relevant. It is difficult to contradict their understanding of the Qur'an, although mainstream religious scholars do, because Muslims believe that their holy book is the word of God and is not open to interpretations. Therefore, unlike the Bible, it lacks any definitive theological texts that define Muslim beliefs

(Haqqani; Rahman 312-313; Stewart 236-237). Many Muslims believe that the Qur'an cannot even be translated from Arabic to another language (Stewart 236).

The Taliban took their name from *talib*, student, to emphasize that it was not just a religious movement but one driven by the young (Crews 41). Although Hanif accepted his teachers' view of the world, occasional questions seem to flicker at the edge of his consciousness. Unlike many of the madrasa students, he had been exposed to a modernizing influence in Kabul, including visiting the city's great museum.

Most of his fellow students were orphans or came from poor families who looked to the madrasa to provide them with free room, board and schooling, their only option for an education. Madrasas at that time were funded by charitable contributions, with some also funded by foreign governments, such as Saudi Arabia. Although there also were day students at some, Hanif was a boarding student. Isolated from the outside world, he was more susceptible to the extremist teachings and propaganda. Maulana Samiul Haq, Haqqania's one-time headmaster said, "We catch them for the madrasas when they are young, and by the time they are old enough to think, they know what to think" (Haqqani) (Crews 28; Rahman 312; Evans 9).

Madrasas were filled with students under the age of 14 who had lived most their lives or had been born in refugee camps and did not remember or had never lived in their family villages. Therefore, they had no experience with or sense of those villages' traditional values, except as interpreted by their teachers (Crews 41; Nojumi 98).

According to Ahmad Rashid, these war orphans were stunted not just intellectually but emotionally and had no marketable skills except as warriors. In talking about these madrasa students that joined the Taliban, he said, "They had no memories of the past, no plans for the future... They were... the rootless and the restless, the jobless and the economically deprived with little self-knowledge. They admired war because it was the only occupation they could possibly adapt to." They had not learned to farm and had no skills or training for a trade (*Taliban* 31-32). As David Isby says in *Afghanistan: Graveyard of Empires*, war became their job (163).

Their isolation also helped explain their attitude towards women, including their mothers and sisters. They had no experience in relating to women as individuals or even as fellow humans, having not grown up around them, feeling somewhat threatened by them. They felt somewhat threatened by them and thought it was normal to hide them. The madrasa students joined the Taliban for the same reason that other young people join gangs. It gave them both a way of life and life's meaning (32-33). For their part, the Islamic extremists did not operate the madrasas from beneficence. They were callously pragmatic. Haqqani said, "refugees needed schools; the resistance needed mujahideen."

III: MALIHA LOSES HER DREAM

P. 25-29 Marriages are usually arranged, and the new wife goes to live with her husband's family. Mothers choose the prospective bride and groom and negotiate the terms of the marriage (Rodriguez 7; Seierstad 71). For example, during the bargaining process, Maliha's mother ensures that her future son-in-law will allow her daughter to finish at least her high school education. Education is important for most Muslims, except for extremists, such as the Taliban. In *Three Cups of Tea*, an illiterate but savvy businessman counters conservative objections to girls' education by voicing his deep regret that he cannot read the Qur'an. He agrees to do anything so that both boys and girls in his village have the opportunity to read the Muslim holy book (Mortenson 153). Fathers don't get involved until it is time to arrange the bride price (Dupree and Gouttierre).

A man can have up to four wives, although having more than one is less common today, largely because of the cost, although the stress of having multiple wives also plays a part. If a man does have more than one wife, either they both move into his parents' house, where each wife has her own room (Dupree and Gouttierre), or if he is wealthy, he might set up the second wife, whom he might have married for love, in her own home. (Naushad) The first wife outranks the others, although a husband must treat all the wives the same (Seierstad 26-27), probably just to keep peace.

The male suitor, usually a cousin, uncle or other close relative, must use a female go-between when asking a woman to marry him. Marriages are generally between members of the same clan. Since men and women are segregated from each other, there is no chance to get to know one another. As a family member, a prospective spouse's health and social background would be known. The woman's looks, social standing, age and skills all are calculated into the bride price that a man pays. Tall, slightly plump, light-skinned females are more "valuable" than short, skinny, darker ones. To increase her value, the family turns down a proposal at least once (Seierstad 3-5, 9, 27, 55-56, 92, 101; Rodriguez 9, 295; Dupree and Gouttierre). High bride prices often require men to marry late in life to ensure they take care of a wife and children. Therefore, they usually marry girls far younger than themselves (Dupree and Gouttierre; Hosseini, *Thousand* 47).

When the girl's family tells her who has asked to marry her, she can say yes, no or nothing. If she says nothing, it's taken as a "yes" (Seierstad 7; Zoya 15). Since 1880, Afghanistan's rulers and constitutions have banned child and forced marriages, as well as extremely high bride prices (Firling 31; Dupree and Gouttierre).

Sometimes, an informal, engagement party for immediate family members on both sides takes place as soon as the betrothal is official (Rodriguez 14-15).

Since a wife lives with her husband's family, she is supposed to look sad from the time of her betrothal through her wedding to show respect to her family that she is sad at the thought of leaving them (Rodriguez 15; Seierstad 95).

Traditionally, the groom's family throws an engagement party for hundreds, sometimes thousands of people, which is a lavish affair. The *nika-kaht*, (also called *nikah*), the formal engagement or marriage contract, is signed after the engagement party, but sometimes it is signed during it. It cements the relationship, making it virtually impossible for the bride or groom to change his or her mind. The more elaborate the party, even if the family goes into debt, the better it reflects on the groom's family and indicates the value it places on the bride-to-be. To break off an engagement dishonors both parties and makes it difficult for the girl ever to find a husband (Firling 32; Seierstad 16, 101, 174; Rodriguez 8, 12 17-25; Zoya 14-15, 201).

Just as in the U.S., Afghan women spend a huge amount of time on their hair and makeup for the ceremony and celebrations. They apply kohl, which is like a powdered black paint, like eyeliner from the inside corner of her eye to the outer edge on both the top and bottom. Perhaps because women, depending on how conservative they are, are discouraged or forbidden, from showing their beauty, except to their husbands, weddings are a chance to go all out. The makeup and hair is over the top by Western standards, rendering the women artificial looking (Rodriguez 19; Seierstad 98-99).

The traditional Afghan pre-wedding dress is green, "the color of happiness and Islam." For the wedding itself, the bride wears a white dress (Seierstad 99). Although the mother-in-law of Maliha's cousin holds the mirror in which the husband and wife gaze at each other's reflections for the first time, Zoya said that today, future spouses sometimes see each other and meet before their wedding day (15).

Abundant food, music and dancing for hundreds of guests all are part of the blowout celebration, regardless of the groom's economic situation. The *daira* that Maliha says some of the women played at her engagement is similar to a tambourine.

IV: KHATERAH HOLDS IT TOGETHER

P. 31-32 In 1978, following the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) communist coup, the first significant group of Afghan refugees crossed the border to Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province. That year, they numbered about 100,000. Five years later, there were 3 million. The United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees estimated that aid was more than \$1 million a day (Girardet 203-206). By the time Khaterah, Maliha and Hanif arrived in the camp, Afghan refugees had worn out their welcomes in Pakistan and frequently were harassed (Khattak 575). Khalid Hosseini says in *A Thousand Splendid Suns* that at

the height of the wars, about 8 million Afghans had resettled in other countries, and as of 2007, there were still at least 2 million Afghans still in Pakistan (417).

Refugee camps during the Soviet era were primarily cities of tents. The tents and the mud houses that some refugees built not only were cramped, but were unheated in the winter and stifling in the summer. The supplies that Khaterah received were typical for new arrivals. (Girardet 165, 203-206; Sinclair; Khattak 576-579).

Both pre- and post-Soviet withdrawal, there were a few job opportunities in refugee camps. Occasionally, the men could find work in construction or utility infrastructure development. Rarely, there would be farm jobs or ones with shopkeepers in the surrounding area (Hosseini *Thousand* 336; Denker). Additionally, the non-governmental organizations offered vocational training and helped women with income-producing projects, such as carpet weaving and embroidery that Khaterah mentions (Girardet 205; Sinclair). This is particularly important for widows who cannot leave their dwellings and have no means of support.

In some camps, dysentery from poor sanitation was a constant problem that resulted in numerous deaths (Hosseini *Thousand* 334-335). As Khaterah notes, refugee camps could be dangerous for women. Women had to wear a burqa and weren't allowed to wear makeup. As the Taliban and Deoband influences grew stronger, they no longer were not allowed to go out without a male relative (Loyn 162). As the camp populations became more diverse, ethnic differences began to make an already stressful situation worse (Khattak 577; Glatzer 379).

Nabil and Omid chose to join Hekmatyar because he was a Pashtun, like they were. They would not have joined a fighting group whose leader and most members were of another tribe.

P. 33 par. 2 Khaterah felt that she could not express her grief in order not to burden her husband and sons further. Afghans try to keep from publicly showing extreme grief, so as not to make others feel worse (Latifa 19). This is likely a manifestation of the politeness that is such an integral part of the Afghan character.

P. 34 – 35 par. 2 Three years after the Soviets left in 1989, President Najibullah was desperately trying to hold on to power, but the mujahideen grew tired of waiting. The spark that ignited the change was Uzbek commander Abdur Rashid Dostum. He became angry with Najibullah for not providing him with money and arms and turned against the president. Although this was characteristic of Dostum, who continually switched to whichever sides was in his best interest at the time, Najibullah and the communists were unpopular, so the president's Deputy Minister of Defense Gen. Mohammad Nabi Azimi abandoned Najibullah and joined Dostum. In the meantime, the Coalition of the North had been seizing cities around Afghanistan in rebellion against Najibullah. Key members of the

coalition were Tajik commander Ahmad Shah Massoud, Uzbek nationalist Azad Beg Khan and Abdul Ali Mazari, who headed the Afghan Shi'a Islamic Unity Party, which was based in Tehran. Sayed Jaffar Nadiri, who led the Sayyed-e-Kayan militia and was the spiritual leader of Ismaili Shi'a of Kayan, also joined the coalition. The group, led by Massoud under Burhanuddin Rabbani's direction, took over Kabul in March 1992, saying that they were protecting the capital from Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, who also was angling to control Kabul (Coll 236).

As the mujahideen entered the city, Najibullah left and holed up at the U.N. complex for safety (Kakar 274-275).

With Kabul now in the hands of the resistance, Pakistani Premier Nawaz Sharif and the Islamist mujahideen leaders (except for Hekmatyar, who wouldn't cooperate) quickly crafted an interim power-sharing plan. Under the April 25, 1992, Peshawar Accord that Pakistan brokered, Sibghatullah Mojaddidi would serve as interim president for two months and Burhanuddin Rabbani would be president for four more, with both serving under the oversight of a leadership council. At that time, a shura would convene and decide on a new two-year interim government that would include members of minority tribes that could be easily influenced, particularly by Pakistan (Kakar 276; Hosseini *Thousand* 164).

Everyone promptly ignored the Peshawar Accord, so Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the Islamist groups tried again, crafting the Islamabad Accord. This new accord outlined the president's and prime minister's role, as well as how the government would be elected by a shura. However, for the accord to work, all the major players had to buy in. When it was signed March 7, 1993, two of them, General Abdul Rashid Dostum and Mohammad Unus Khalis, wouldn't sign. So, it was back to the drawing board to negotiate a compromise, as well as to counter complaints that the first two accords had had too much foreign influence. The result was the Jalalabad Accord, which was finalized on May 20, 1993. This time, Hekmatyar accepted the position of prime minister in Rabbani's government, a role he initially had refused in 1992. When Hekmatyar came in, Massoud, who didn't trust him, resigned as defense minister, so the rest of the accord's provisions weren't enacted (Kakar 284-286). However, Hekmatyar ended up leaving the government in 1994 and attacking it without letup until May 1996 when he rejoined as prime minister (Agency 20, 21).

With the Soviet Union ousted, the mujahideen had served their purpose, and they should have disbanded. However, to do so would have meant giving up the power they had, as well as the profits they were receiving from bribes, looting and drugs. Without a strong central government and no common external enemy, the mujahideen fought one another. The power vacuum sucked Kabul into chaos. With each faction firing rockets at the others, the city was blasted into ruin, the rest of the country was basically left to fend for itself, and the government couldn't do anything about it (Kakar 280-281, 294; A. Rashid *Mirage* 15).

P. 35 par. 3 – p. 37 par. 2 There has never been an accurate census of the Afghan people. (Crews 18; Robson 4) However, the four largest tribes of Afghanistan, with approximate percentages in 1996 and 2010 are the Pashtuns (1996: 40 percent; 2010: 42 percent), Tajiks (1996: 25.3; 2010: 27 percent), Hazaras (1996: 18 percent; 2010: 9 percent) and Uzbeks (1996: 6.3 percent; 2010: 9 percent). There are dozens of other ethnic groups, including Aimak, Turkmen, Nuristani and Baloch (Dupree and Goutierre 38; CIA).

Before the Soviet invasion, Afghans were aware of ethnic differences, with some tribes stereotyping others. For example, the majority Pashtuns, who often had green eyes and fair skin (Hosseini *Thousand* 67, 108; Dupree) had become accustomed to ruling the country and to feel that it was their God-given right (Kakar 3-4). Uzbeks were considered more “bad-natured” than others (A. Rashid *Taliban* 150), and the Aimaq viewed the Hazaras as untrustworthy, violent killers (Stewart 130).

In fact, the Hazaras, who are distinguished by their Mongol looks and are the poorest of the four major tribes, were viewed dismissively by the other three. The Hazaras were independent until the 1880s when Abdul Rahman conquered them, distributed much of their land to Pashtuns and enslaved many of them. Their poverty, liberal social policy (Hazaras allowed unveiled women in public) and practice of the Shi’a form of Islam all set them apart from the more conservative Sunni majority. (Stewart 187; Hosseini, *Kite* 9). When the Hazaras stayed in “their place” – didn’t disrupt the social hierarchy – everyone got along (Dorransoro §33). However, foreigners and warlords exacerbated tribal divides (A. Rashid *Mirage* 52-53, *Taliban* 149).

The Soviets required cards that identified Afghans based on religion and tribe as a way to help themselves categorize people’s political affiliation. However, ethnicity did not automatically put someone into one camp or another (Crews 21, 26). Increasingly, once the civil war began, foreign powers, then Afghan commanders identified each mujahideen faction by the tribe of its leaders (and the majority of their followers). The mujahideen played the ethnic card to forge a stronger bond with their troops and to rally them against the other tribes (Dorransoro §31; Seierstad 44). This ethnic emphasis changed people’s way of thinking and deepened divisions among tribes. (Aitken 252; Rashid *Mirage* 52) For example, under both the mujahideen and the Taliban, the Hazaras were actively persecuted and massacred. When they retaliated, they were dismissively called “Mongols” in reference to both their appearance and their forefather Genghis Khan’s cruelty (Stewart 187; Hosseini, *Kite* 9).

However, differences between the mujahideen were actually more personal than ethnic. Strong or charismatic leadership, not ideology, held the groups together (A. Rashid *Taliban* 95).

Tribes in Afghanistan function very differently than ethnic groups do in the West. They provide important local governing and social infrastructures. Foreigners didn’t make that distinction, particularly as they saw mujahideen form

along largely ethnic (and localized) lines. They assumed that ethnicity divided people more than they did. However, ethnicity, like Afghan political alliances, can be fluid. Ever pragmatic, Afghans can request to switch tribes and, after a few generations of following their adopted tribe's code of conduct, the family can be accepted into the new tribe. Interestingly, as Afghans began to flee their country, ethnicity began to take a backseat to national identity. Although tribal identity remains important for expatriates, they have begun to do what no ruler was able to accomplish – think of themselves first and foremost as Afghans (Glatzer 380, 382, 387-388, 396, 399).

Today, religious affiliation still appears on ID cards, but tribe does not. Each card simply identifies its carrier as being “Afghan.” Nevertheless, war-enflamed tribal animosities, while improving, continue. Quotas for minorities are viewed as being unfair and “institutionalizes” divisions when quotas are at their highest (Simonsen 710, 722, 726; Aitken 255-256, 260; Z. Rashid). Like the turbulent black/white relations in the U.S., it will likely take generations for divisions to lessen.

P. 39 par. 1 Although the Taliban subsequently instituted an extreme form of Sharia law, Islamic law had long been common throughout the country. When the Soviet Union left Afghanistan, the Afghanistan Interim Government (AIG) under Mojaddidi set up special courts to try “traitors and transgressors.” Under Rabbani’s presidential term, the laws became more conservative, with music, “un-Islamic” movies and alcohol officially banned. Books considered “anti-religious” were not allowed, and women were told to wear veils when they went out (Kakar 277, 279). To emphasize the break from their predecessors and emphasize the Islamic base for the laws, the mujahideen government changed the name of the country from the Republic of Afghanistan to the Islamic State of Afghanistan (Hosseini *Thousand* 259).

When Hekmatyar, a strict Islamist who was far more conservative than Rabbani, became prime minister for the second time in June 1996, government workers had to stop for prayers or be fired; movie theaters were closed; women had to wear black dresses and veils; and about 300 women who worked in Afghan radio, TV and film petitioned the government not to enact any laws that would forbid women from working. (Agency 22) However, with Kabul divided among the various mujahideen, these laws were not universally enforced (Kakar 279), and burqas, while encouraged, were not required until the Taliban took over (Sulima and Hala 177).

Although the Taliban referred to the laws they instituted as Sharia, they were based more on the Pashtunwali code than on the Qur’an (A. Rashid, *Taliban* 112).

P. 40 par. 3 – p. 41; p. 54 par. 3 – p. 55 par. 3 Before the civil war, the Shomali Plain was fertile farmland that provided the bulk of Afghanistan’s food, as well as

exports to the Soviet Union, India and Pakistan. As the Taliban swept through the country, the fighters razed homes and trees and destroyed irrigation systems in a scorched-earth policy, making the land unable to support the families who lived there (Mortenson *Three Cups* 322-323; Seierstad 138). Most of the people gave up and went to Iran or Pakistan during the Taliban era, 1996-2001. By the time the Taliban were driven out, this part of Afghanistan was among the most mined places in the world (Cunningham).

The trip that Khaterah and her family made as they fled Afghanistan was a common one for refugees. They left everything they had except what they could carry and faced dangers on the road and nature's elements (Firling 32; Filkins; Zoya 170-172, 183-196). A woman from an extremely wealthy family with whom I spoke fled Afghanistan with her husband and a baby, making the same trek as Khaterah did. Because they were well-educated and well-connected, they ended up in the U.S. under the auspices of the Catholic Social Services, instead of in a refugee camp in Pakistan. Still, the change in her circumstances was dramatic. She had grown up with a maid, a cook and a chauffeur (since her mother couldn't leave the house without a male relative to accompany her). In the U.S., she was a refugee, living hand-to-mouth until her husband could find a job (Naushad).

P. 39-42; p. 43 par. 3 – p. 44 par. 1 Hospitality is an Afghan core value (Sulima and Hala 5; Dupree and Gouttierre; et al.) and even strangers can expect to be invited in for food and overnight accommodations, regardless of how poor the host family is (Dupree 980; Stewart 43, 58; Mortenson *Three Cups* 161).

P. 43 par. 2 Imagine putting a piece of heavy, floor-length material over your head that is attached inside to hat that fits tightly over your head and around your forehead. To see, you would cut out a narrow rectangle around your eyes that is about six inches long and two inches high with a screen in the opening. You would be able to see what was directly in front of you, but you would have no peripheral vision and would have to move your entire body – or at least the upper part to have whatever you want to see in your line of sight. So, you could see straight ahead or down near your feet, but not both at the same time, without moving your head up and down. There is no hole for your nose. As you breathe, the material sticks to your nose and mouth as you inhale, and the air inside becomes stale. In the summer, it is hot (Hosseini *Thousand* 232; Latifa 47; Seierstad xv). [*note: Ask the children if they ever have worn a Halloween mask that covered their entire faces and had holes for their eyes and nose.*]

Although people associate the burqa with the Taliban, the garment didn't suddenly appear with the ultra-conservative group. The Taliban is just the only government in Afghanistan's history to require all women to wear it. When Amir Habibullah ruled between 1901-1919, burqas were chic fashions identified with the upper class. His daughters and members of his harem wore beautifully embroidered ones made of luxurious fabrics. Before he was assassinated,

Habibullah made inroads into modernizing the country's infrastructure and economy. However, as a conservative Muslim, he took the Qur'an's dictate that women should keep their beauty to themselves seriously. Until 1925, Sharia was the law of the land.

His son, Amanullah took the opposite approach when he was king. He moved to a more secular system, instigating a "civil legal code" that embraced Western ways. Not only did his wife appear in public without any veil, he urged all women to do the same. He pushed what he viewed as modernization on what was, for the most part, a very traditional and resistant public. Because the mullahs and most the people in the countryside viewed his reforms as being contrary to Afghan traditional values, he was extremely unpopular outside Kabul and had to flee when the mullahs rose against him.

Since both these rulers were Pashtun, Pashtun women were at the leading edge of these fashion/religious statements, although they trickled down to other women in other classes and tribes (Seierstad 90-91; Kakar 3; A. Rashid *Taliban* 83; Fitzgerald 61-62).

Even without a burqa between them, men and women would not boldly address or even look at each other. It is why Arman used Khaterah's uncle as the go-between when he gave her money for her trip. And Maliha would not have looked directly at the man at the checkpoint later in the story, since it is not considered proper for women to make eye contact with men (Hosseini *Kite* 236).

P. 44 par. 5 – p. 46 par. 3 The litany of Soviet atrocities in Afghanistan is extensive: burning villages and crops and killing animals (Girardet 36), chemical weapons (Latifa 154, Kakar 248-251), setting people on fire (Kakar 234), arrests and killings (Latifa 140; Girardet 36), retributive killings, shellings and the kidnappings of women (Kakar 216), killing Afghans out of fear (Kakar 224), and children being sent to Soviet satellites to be indoctrinated (Mirza; Girardet 236-237).

The Soviets weren't the only ones to commit atrocities. The mujahideen – all factions – and the Taliban did as well. Of course, at the time that the herdsman's wife is telling her stories, it is 1992, and the Taliban had not been formed. However, there were both rumors and documented cases of looting, unarmed civilians being massacred, women and boys being raped, and people of all ages being decapitated, slashed, burned, shot, mutilated and left to die by the mujahideen. The "holy warriors" also killed enemies who laid down arms and looted (Sulima and Hala 122, 173-174, 187; Kakar 266). During the civil war, fighting – and atrocities – against each other intensified (Latifa 141-142; Rashid *Taliban* 34, 63-64; Hosseini *Thousand* 253; Dorronsoro §33).

One of the points that Kakar makes is that unceasing war coupled with Afghanistan's culture of revenge and sanctioned killings all contributed to the unimaginable and pervasive inhumane treatment that became increasingly common. (199-201) When the fighters began targeting civilian, rather than

military or political targets, they crossed the line from guerillas to terrorists (Mamdani 88, 91).

P. 46 par. 5 Neither the herdsman's wife nor any other Muslim would have used a left hand to eat, since the left side of the body is considered unclean (Mortenson *Three Cups* 68).

P. 46 par. 6 – p. 47 The oral tradition of story telling and poetry is an important part of the Afghan culture (Sulima and Hala 189; Dupree 979; Girardet 162; Robson 22). Since so many people are illiterate, it's a way to remember history from a personal perspective, shape public opinion and pass down values. Poetry also is a way for women to express longings denied them in their restrictive world (Rzehak 182-201; Dupree 979).

In addition to the poetry game *shir jangi* (Sulima and Hala 42), Afghans enjoy poetry readings as entertainment (Dupree 979). The *landay* is a two-line, unrhymed but rhythmic poem with nine syllables in the first line and 13 in the second. According to Dupree, warrior-poet is held up as the ideal Afghan. The two main topics in Afghan poetry throughout the ages, from Rumi to contemporary poets, are love (often erotic) and war. Since both have been such so intimately a part of women's lives, they are often intertwined in their poetry, particularly forbidden love (Seierstad 37-40; Majrouh ix-xvi; Dupree 979). In addition to Rumi, there are a number of Persian and Afghan poetry books available, as well as quite a bit of additional information about poetry and Afghanistan's oral tradition. As I mentioned, most the poetry is erotic or suggestive love poetry, so I would suggest that the teacher screen any examples to be shared with the students.

P. 48 par. 3 The guesthouse and farmhouse where Khaterah, Maliha and Hanif stay on their journey are similar to houses throughout Afghanistan. In addition to the features described in Chapter 2, the houses wouldn't have had central heat. Instead, a *kursi* would supply warmth. They are similar to electric heaters under low tables that are covered with blankets (Hosseini *Kite* 57; Stewart 60) Private rooms in which to sleep were unusual. In fact, some children slept in the same room as their parents until they married. The only examples of single rooms that I found were either in small households or wealthy ones. It seemed to be far more common for multiple members of the same sex – whether several generations of family members in home or strangers in inns or houses – to sleep together (Seierstad 97, 108; Stewart 43).

V: THE MIRROR CRACKS

P. 49 par. 2 – p. 50 par. 2 Refugee camps were crowded, alien places, but there were bright spots, too. Non-governmental organizations taught camp residents about basic hygiene and sanitation. They explained the relationship between tainted drinking water and dysentery, and explained that people could get malaria from mosquitoes. There also was medical care and convenient schooling for both children and adults (Girardet 165, 205; Sinclair).

P. 49 par. 2 Food has been mentioned extensively throughout the story, because it is an extremely important part of Afghan life (Sulima and Hala 82). Afghans are both extremely family-oriented and extraordinarily hospitable. Although usually eaten in silence (Steward 138), meals are opportunities to be with family or guests seated around a tablecloth (*dastarkhan*) spread on the floor. The food mentioned in the story, which is eaten with the fingers (Seierstad 110; Rodriguez 25) is described in a number of sources (Hosseini *Thousand* 40, 65, 69, 88, 155; Hosseini *Kite* 14, 27, 85, 173, 183, 206; Seierstad 67, 96-97; et al.).

Tea not only accompanies all meals, it is a sign of hospitality. As Deborah Rodriguez says in *Kabul Beauty School*, “There’s always time for tea.” The more tea you share with someone, the closer the bond. Haji Ali says in *Three Cups of Tea*, “The first time you share tea with a Balti, you are a stranger. The second time you take tea, you are an honored guest. The third time you share a cup of tea, you become family, and for our family, we are prepared to do anything, even die” (Mortenson 150).

The following discussions and activities can take place anytime during the discussion of the story when food is discussed.

P. 50 par. 3 – p. 52 par. 1 People primarily welcomed the Taliban because they hoped that the group would provide stability (A. Rashid *Mirage* 16). But that stability came at a cost.

The conversation that Maliha overhears is one that could have taken place secretly in many homes. As the Taliban assumed responsibility for “disciplining” women for transgressions against their families’ honor, Afghans became increasingly disenchanted with them. (65) In effect, the Taliban were behaving in the same manner as the communists had, putting the state in the role of social arbitrator, a role that by tradition was a private, not a state matter (Dupree and Gouttierre).

A number of Wahabis, strict Islamists from Saudi Arabia known as “Afghan-Arabs,” joined the Taliban and helped radicalize it. Afghans particularly disliked this group for their uncompromising – and unAfghan – interpretation of the Qur’an and just because they were foreign (Isby 32-34; A. Rashid *Taliban* 85; Hosseini *Kite* 307). They not only shunned tobacco and alcohol as all Muslims did, but forbade modern electronics, including TVs and radios, as well as cars.

Due to their influence, when the Taliban took over, they created a new religious police, the Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice. (Coll 76)

Many Pakistani madrasa teachers were Deobandis, a Sunni Islamist extremist group that originated in Deoband, India, and had an especially restrictive view of women's roles. (A. Rashid *Taliban* 87) A number had been trained in Saudi Arabia where they were influenced by the Wahabis (Coll 286-287). When the Wahabis joined the Taliban, they differentiated themselves by wearing white – rather than Taliban black – turbans (76).

P. 55 par. 4 – p. 57 As mentioned earlier, the Taliban arose, in part, because of public outrage over the bandits such as the ones Khaterah and her family encountered.

VI: HOME IS IN THE HEART

P. 59 – p. 61 par. 1 What constitutes a “family” is very broad in Afghanistan. It includes parents, children, grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins (no matter how distant), in-laws, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, multiple wives and their children. And they all can live in the same household.

Traditional male/female roles in the U.S. have blurred, where it no longer is uncommon for a man to follow his wife to a job in a new city. Although still not the norm, there are stay-at-home dads, as couples decide that one parent should stay home (usually the one with the lower paycheck) to raise the children.

This is not true in Afghanistan, where roles are rigidly defined and male superiority is accepted as fact. Men are expected to make all decisions, and an independent wife is a blot against a husband's masculinity and the standing of the entire family. There is a strict hierarchy by and within each gender. Elders are respected; children are expected to obey (Sulima and Hala 25, 165; Dupree and Gouttierre). The family is the center of Afghan life, providing security and establishing each member's identity.

Before arriving in a refugee camp, everyone knew his or her role, and each family was self-sustaining. Women and girls cooked, cleaned, washed, raised the children and catered to their husbands. Men provided for their families and were the source of discipline and heads of the household. On farms, men and women shared chores and developed an understanding of and respect for the roles each played (Dupree and Gouttierre).

However, men who lived in refugee camps rarely had a way to provide for their families. Vocational education programs were popular, but there were not enough jobs to meet the demand of the graduates. Apprenticeships were a little more promising, with supervisors sometimes offering the apprentices full-time jobs (Sinclair).

To regain their manhood, men in refugee camps dominated women by controlling every aspect of their daily lives. That manipulation and punishment for infractions, not only was tolerated but accepted. For both men and women, refugee camps magnified the psychological toll the war had taken.

Because so many of the women in refugee camps were widows, they had to fend for themselves under cultural restrictions that severely limited their ability to earn a living. Not only did they have to worry about how to get money for daily necessities, but they did so while dealing with the grief of their husbands', and often their fathers', sons' and brothers' deaths. Often they also had to care for maimed family members. Sometimes they were forced to remarry. At the same time they were experiencing these traumatic events, women were treated as non-people or abused (Khattak 578-579).

With family being the heart that regulated the rest of life's connections, the hardest thing about living in a refugee camps was the loss of that connectivity. Instead of being surrounded by extended family that shared values, memories and an identification, refugees were alone amidst strangers with different customs and history, many of whom did not speak the same language. Refugees lost the feeling of security and belonging when they lost their homes (Khattak 577).

P. 61 par. 3 – p. 63 par. 2 Smuggling, which Ahmed Rashid said was euphemistically called “the Afghan Transit Trade,” was conducted openly and seemed to benefit all sides in the wars, except for the legitimate local economies (*Taliban* 189-193).

Although the drug trade was more lucrative than other cash crops for the poppy farmers, they received a pittance of the profits, less than 1 percent. The local drug dealers received another 2.5 percent. Dealers in countries through which the drugs traveled got another 5 percent. But it was U.S. and European drug traders that received the lion's share of the profits – more than 90 percent (A. Rashid *Taliban* 119). The growers justified the drug trade, which is against Muslim teachings, by reasoning that it was the only alternative to poverty (A. Rashid *Mirage* 118). In the Peshawar bazaars, there was not effort to hide drug buys (Latifa 84). In 2006, Afghanistan supplied more than 90 percent of the world's opium (Crews 332-333).

P. 63 par. 3 – p. 64 par. 2 With all that she has been through, Khaterah feels old. Relatively speaking, she is, since the average life expectancy in Afghanistan is 44.4 years and the median age is 18. Since Arman is about 20, the same age as Khaterah's son Nabil would have been, and Khaterah likely had Nabil when she was about 17, she probably would be about 37 years old. The short life expectancy is a result not just of the war, but of all the vector- and water-borne diseases, such as typhoid, malaria and dysentery (CIA).

P. 65 par. 3 – p. 67 par. 2 The extreme punishments that the Taliban dealt out to those who disobeyed their laws have been well-publicized. However, shortly before

they fell, the government had begun enacting extreme punishments of their own. According to the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief's "News Summary on Afghanistan," on March 30, 1996, more than 5,000 people watched three men who had been convicted of murder being hanged in a Kabul park. Crime was so bad that the government said this was the new policy. (Agency 40)

Members of the government might have been influenced by the Taliban, which had been holding public executions for quite some time and seeing great success in reducing crime. Just the month before the Kabul executions, the Taliban had executed two men found guilty by Islamic courts (*Qazi*) who were shot in the city of Khost. Another man accused of murder and theft was hanged in Kandahar shortly before the Kabul executions. However, the Taliban didn't just execute people for murder, they also stoned people accused of adultery or "illicit" relationships (40-41). The Taliban carried around whips made of antennas and long sticks with which they hit people who owned music, TVs, radios, movies, sculptures or pictures of living things in their homes. They hung the TVs, videos and cassettes – along with their owners – from lampposts and trees. Everyone engaged in the arts particularly suffered their wrath (Crews 6-7; Seierstad 10; Mortenson *Stones* 71).

Support for the Taliban dwindled as word about their particularly repressive laws regarding women reached parts of the country not yet under Taliban rule. The media reported on September 4, 1996, that about 200 women in Kabul protested the Taliban's restrictions (Agency 42). Ironically, the Taliban would take over the city three weeks later and institute increasingly harsh laws against women.

Afghan refugees also suffered from the Taliban. Greg Mortenson relays in *Three Cups of Tea* the story of the Taliban and Russians shooting at Afghan refugees on islands in the Amu Darya River. Not only did the refugees face peril when they tried to cross the river in either direction, but they struggled to survive as long as they could by building mud huts and eating riverbank grass. (238)

Afghanistan has been a war-torn country for more than 30 years now. Maliha, like so many of her countrymen, has seen and experienced horrors that have done profound psychological damage. Many have become so desensitized by the constant violence, that they know no difference. Zoya relates how she and a friend witnessed young boys playing with the severed hands of a thief. When he saw the women, one of the boys held the severed hand up for his picture to be taken. (151-152)

VII: HANIF HEADS TOWARDS KABUL

P. 69 - p. 71 par. 1 In the mid- to late-1990s, some of the larger madrasas would close and the students willingly sent to fight when the Taliban needed foot soldiers. (Loyn 180; Gandhi "Finally, a Talkative..." 7) Like Hanif, some of the boys were

barely in their teens. Yet, the Taliban was not the only group using young boys to fight. According to Ahmed Rashid, all the warlords did. They especially made use of orphans, some just 12 years old. (A. Rashid *Taliban* 109) Orphans didn't have families to object to their being used as human weapons.

Former mujahideen joined the talibs. Their previous commanders' violent jockeying for power turned some of their followers against them and towards the Taliban, which they saw as a force that would restore stability and fight corruption. (Mutawakil 120) The Taliban paid these seasoned fighters double their former pay to train the young madrasa students in military skills. (Gandhi "Finally, a Talkative..." 7)

When they arrived at a battle site, the Taliban looked little like the traditional Afghan warriors. They usually arrived in U.S.-supplied Toyota pickups (Coll 134; Mortenson *Three Cups* 215), wearing black turbans and kohl, also called surma, around their eyes to make themselves look more aggressive (Zoya 142). However, it is the same makeup with which women lined their eyes (Coll 333).

These were the warriors that descended on Jalalabad, which had been under attack by the Taliban since Aug. 25. However, it wasn't fear that caused the Frontier Corps in that city to step aside and cede control to the Taliban. Rather, they stopped because Saudi Arabia had stepped in and bribed the head of the local shura, Haji Abdul Qadeer, who fled Sept. 10, 1996, leaving the city to be taken by the Taliban the following day (A. Rashid, *Taliban* 48). Ironically, it was this type of corruption against which the Taliban were taking a stand.

Alliances shifted continually. According to Hassan Kakar, the alliances fighters made throughout the war were predicated on "...political expediency, rather than ethnicity, sectarianism or ideology..." He call it "politics without morality" and characteristic of all Afghan groups (290). As one fighter told Debra Denker in her article "Along Afghanistan's War-torn Frontier, "I will join whatever party gives me arms" (Denker). The civilians had a similar view, supporting whichever side appeared ready to take control (Marsden 366).

Herat was a case in point. When the Taliban overran it in September 1995, the always-pragmatic Afghans realized there was no purpose in continuing to fight and getting slaughtered, so they abandoned their unpopular leader, Ismael Khan (Gandhi "Eye Witness" 3).

With popular support initially, the Taliban gathered tremendous momentum and followers from the time they began in 1994 to their control of the country in 1996. According to Ahmed Rashid, the Taliban took Urozgan and Zabul provinces in 1994 without any shots being fired. Because they had so many early victories, the Taliban believed that God was on their side, and they were invincible (*Taliban* 33-34).

Helmand Province was a different story and unlike Hanif asserts, it hardly welcomed the Taliban in 1995. Ahmed Rashid describes "fierce resistance" that

was eventually overcome through Taliban alliances with drug warlords and with bribes (*Taliban* 34).

After so many quick victories, the Taliban took the summer off to regroup and prepare for new campaigns (A. Rashid *Taliban* 39).

One thing students need to keep in mind is that fighting was going on throughout the country simultaneously. Although one faction might control an area one day, it could change hands the next. So, although the Taliban did indeed control the provinces that Hanif notes earlier, there were sporadic, fierce fighting and rocket attacks at key bases and cities after which another group might control it.

Fighting wasn't the only way a group might gain territory. Officials could be bribed, and the people themselves would gauge which way the wind was blowing and throw their lot in with whichever side looked like it would be the victor. Afghans are very pragmatic people. The various mujahideen continually shifted alliances whenever they thought it would benefit them (Girardet 240; Metcalf).

P. 72 par. 3-4 Like members of all ethnic groups, Hanif looked down on the Hazaras. Prior to 1893, the people epitomized the best in Afghan culture. However, after having their land taken and being disenfranchised, they were relegated to low-class laborers on the lowest rung of the social hierarchy.

The Taliban particularly despised the Hazara for their poverty, liberal social policy and practice of the Shi'a form of Islam. This set them apart from the more conservative Sunni majority (Stewart 187, 243; Hosseini *Kite* 9).

The Hazaras treated their women more equitably. They considered women heads of their households upon the death of their husbands and strongly encouraged women's education. Also, many Hazara women dressed in Western clothes, were unveiled, were not segregated and took part in conversations with men. In short, as Shiites, they weren't "real" Muslims, and they flaunted the Taliban's code of conduct, particularly in regards to women (A. Rashid *Taliban* 69; Minority Rights Group; Stewart 195-196, 243).

It was obviously hard for Hanif to reconcile these second-class citizens as the Taliban's allies. He considers the brutality of Massoud's forces towards the Hazara and conveniently forgets (or perhaps, never knew) the rest of the story.

As Hanif says, President Rabbani directed Massoud to kill the Hazaras and thousands who lived in the Afshar section of Kabul were killed in February 1993. Although there is no doubt that Massoud's troops were in on the attack, Rabbani ordered it not because the people were Hazara, but because the Hazaras were allied with Hekmatyar, who had been shelling government forces. According to David Loyn, fundamentalist Islamist troops led by Abdul Rasul Sayyaf fought with Massoud and were actually the ones that went from house to house killing, looting, mutilating bodies and putting decapitated heads in windows, among other atrocities (171). As a result, Hazara political leader Abdul Ali Mazari made a pact with the Taliban to fight with them against Massoud.

However, the Taliban turned against the Hazaras in 1995 and murdered Mazari. The Hazara political party Hizb-e Wahdat then joined Abdul Rashid Dostum's group, Shura-ye Ali-ye Difa to fight the Taliban. (Minority Rights Group; A. Rashid *Taliban* 34). In March 1996, the Taliban said it would look into Mazari's murder, and Hizb-e Wahdat re-allied itself with the group against Rabbani's government (Agency 9).

The massacres continued on both sides after the Taliban took over Afghanistan in September 1996. The following year, the Hazaras rebelled and killed thousands of Taliban when they tried to take over Mazar-i Sharif. The Taliban retaliated a year later and slaughtered three times as many Hazaras, about 8,000 unarmed men, women and children (A. Rashid *Taliban* 73).

However, the massacres weren't limited to the Hazaras and other tribes. All the mujahideen committed atrocities (63-64).

Although the Taliban rank and file were largely products of the madrasa, others were Pakistanis, foreigners and disaffected mujahideen (Crews 28-29; Mutawakil 120). As noted previously, all mujahideen factions committed atrocities. This was in part cultural, where revenge is considered the norm. But it also was a result of CIA encouragement, of the U.S. agency trying to fire up the Islamic fighters against the godless communist invaders. The Afghan culture of revenge, coupled with accessible weapons and foreign encouragement, justified killing anyone that they deemed an enemy – another mujahid or civilian, man, woman or child (Mamdani 168).

P. 73 par. 1 Massoud did indeed make a deal in 1983 with the Soviets for a ceasefire. However, he said that he did so in order to give his troops much-needed time to regroup, so that he could fight the USSR more effectively. Massoud did not make the decision unilaterally. Before agreeing to the Soviet offer, he checked with councils and religious leaders (Girardet 62).

P. 73 par. 4 – p. 74 par. 1 Hekmatyar knew a thing or two about changing sides, having done it many times himself, continually fighting, then allying himself with Rabbani's government. As late as February 1996, he had called on the Taliban to join the mujahideen's efforts to fight Massoud and force Rabbani from office (Agency 8). Three months later, he agreed to become prime minister and by July, his troops were fiercely fighting the Taliban in Paktia Province (10-11). After making and breaking a number of temporary alliances with other mujahideen throughout the years, he had made a lot of enemies, as was evidenced by the rocket attacks near his hotel in Kabul when he arrived there in June 1996 to be sworn in. (35). He wisely refused to live in the prime minister's official residence, which suffered a direct rocket attack just three weeks later on July 19 (36).

P. 74 par. 2 The Taliban victories that Hanif heard about in areas that were loyal to Hekmatyar were possible in a large part because Pakistani Islamists joined the

Afghans in the Taliban. Also, through the Inter-Pakistan Intelligence agency, Pakistan heavily influenced events in Afghanistan, hoping to impose their extreme views on their neighbor (Elias).

P. 74 par. 4 True to both his Pashtun and madrasa upbringing, Hanif sees the war as between “good” and “evil.” According to Mahmood Mamdani in *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*, politicizing religion creates the dangerous no-win situation that does not allow for a negotiated peace. President George W. Bush referred to the U.S. fight against the Taliban as a “crusade,” later changing it to a “war on terror,” while the Taliban and the mujahideen before them referred to the fighting as “jihad.” Those on the side of “good” must conquer “evil.” As Mamdani said, “...in holy war, there can be no compromise.” (254) That was true during Afghanistan’s civil war, and is true in any other ideological war that takes on moral overtones.

In *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, Ahmed Rashid describes the Taliban’s terms for joining Rabbani’s government, including the “good Muslim” caveat (34). According to Robert Crews and Amin Tarzi, the Taliban defined a “good” Muslim as being a Pashtun (30). The Taliban see everything in black and white. Either people are with them and follow their way of life, or they are against them (107). Pashtun pride and honor are part of the dynamic, as well as ethnic biases. The Taliban give this a veneer of morality, pointing to the Qur’an (at least their interpretation of what they think the Qur’an says), insisting that they are doing God’s will.

VIII: HONOR IS A TWO-EDGED SWORD

P. 76 par. 1 According to the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief’s “News Summary for Afghanistan 1996,” electricity was out in Kabul between 1994 and March 1996 (Agency 40).

P. 76 par. 2 “Nightletters” (*shabnama*) have been around since the 1960s when they would appear overnight with messages that protested injustice. The mujahideen picked up the tradition in the 1980s, using the letters not only for anti-Soviet diatribes, but as warnings about impending attacks. During the civil war, one group of mujahideen warned Kabulis about neighborhood rocket attacks, so people could temporarily clear out of the area (A. Rashid *Mirage* 1, 6; Girardet 152).

P. 77 par. 2 As Arman notes, the Taliban broke Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s siege of Kabul in 1995, paving the way for Rabbani’s government to control the entire city (A. Rashid *Taliban* 34; Dorronsoro §9). This was a sign of Hekmatyar’s growing weakness and the Taliban’s increasing strength.

Initially, the U.S. and Pakistan both backed Hekmatyar, an extreme Sunni Islamist and major drug lord, who most Afghans did not support (Mamdani 144). The U.S. began funneling funding to him specifically in 1979 (Fitzgerald 162) because Zbigniew Brzezinski and the CIA thought he represented the best shot of goading the Soviets into becoming embroiled in an unwinnable war, which the U.S. publicly condemned the country for entering (Fitzgerald 173-174; Mamdani 146). Pakistan's leaders supported Hekmatyar because they believed that they could work with him to institute their vision of an Islamic Middle East. As a result of U.S. and Pakistan's support, albeit for different reasons, he received the lion's share of funding – about \$600 million, leaving Massoud with about a third of that (Fitzgerald 174; Mamdani 150; Loyn 154; Coll 4).

However, when it appeared that Hekmatyar's star was waning, Pakistan backed the up-and-coming Taliban. The country's Inter-Services Intelligence had the change of heart after it watched the Taliban successfully run off the toll collectors on roads Pakistan wanted to see open, and after the group came out on top in a battle against Hekmatyar. In any case, Hekmatyar had alienated just about everyone with his ruthlessness (A. Rashid *Taliban* 27; Fitzgerald 222). Without Pakistan's backing and coming off a military loss to the Taliban, a far weaker Hekmatyar joined Rabbani's government while he thought he still had enough clout to have something to offer. Rabbani and Massoud recognized his diminished strength (Burns), but probably were glad to have his military backing.

P. 77 par. 2 – p. 78 I Because of the Soviets' superior weaponry and fortification, Kabul suffered only minor damage during their occupation. However, once the mujahideen took over, the city underwent a constant barrage of rocket attacks, forcing hundreds of thousands of people from their homes, killing thousands more, destroying the infrastructure and basically turning the city into rubble. The shelling during the civil war destroyed the homes, businesses and lives of more people and did more the damage to the city than it incurred during the 10 years of Soviet occupation (Loyn 173; Dorronsoro §3; descriptions of the devastation in Mortenson *Three Cups* 318; Seierstad 112).

The Rabbani government not only had to contend with the other mujahideen, but beginning in 1994, with the Taliban as well. While some of the Taliban's forces were overrunning provinces in the south, east and west of Afghanistan, another group was outside Kabul shelling the city throughout 1996. (A. Rashid *Taliban* 47)

Arman's fond recollections of Kabul, like all memories, were idealized. For decades, Kabul had been more westernized than the rest of Afghanistan, particularly under Soviet occupation. Even so, conservative (and some moderate) Muslims objected to women appearing in public without a headscarf, and they did not want their daughters to attend classes in the same room as boys. They were not against girls getting an education. They simply wanted to protect them from "moral corruption" by segregating them. A. Rashid *Mirage* 78)

Under the Soviet government, women legally had the same rights as men. In Kabul, many women lived public lives that were similar to those of women in the West. However, these and other Soviet-era laws that were considered a threat to family stability were generally unpopular and were immediately repealed when the communist government fell in 1992 (Dupree and Gouttierre).

At home, even under the Soviets, women's roles were more traditional. They often deferred to their husbands and still lived according to traditional Afghan customs, including living with their in-laws, doing all the household work, being segregated from men, unless the men were immediate family members, and agreeing to arranged marriages.

Laws of the central government didn't have much affect on the countryside. Rural people lived according to tribal custom, and an independent woman was an indication that the man was not in charge of his family, which brought dishonor on him and, by extension, on his family. A woman's behavior was the single most important indicator of the family's honor and, therefore, the respect in which the family was held and its place in society (Firling 31; Dupree and Gouttierre).

During the Soviet occupation, most Afghans objected to their atheism. Equally importantly, the majority of Afghans perceived modernization as a direct contradiction to their traditional values. They felt that the Soviets' efforts to give women equal rights struck at the heart of the family. They viewed as public interference in private matters the Soviets' establishment of a minimum marriageable age and upper threshold for a bride price, the offering of daycare options and the opening of the workplace to female employees. Additionally, they resented the school curricula that taught the Russian language and the history of the Soviet Union instead of that of Afghanistan. Also, the communist ideal of everyone sharing everything equally did not make sense to the Afghans. From their perspective, taking land from a wealthy landowner was stealing (Seierstad 17).

In short, Afghans felt that the Soviet way of life devalued their culture (Zoya 40). So, when American offered them arms to fight the Soviet soldiers, the angry people, who became the heart of the mujahideen, accepted (Sulima and Hala 93, 171). Unfortunately, the weapons also short-circuited the traditional Afghan way of settling disagreements through discussion and consensus. It simply became far easier to shoot someone who disagreed with you (A. Rashid *Mirage* 49). Before the Taliban arrived, Afghans were fairly tolerant of other perspectives, provided they did not clash with their values.

It is important to note that there is and has been a serious disconnect between the central government policies and the urban way of life with life in the countryside. As previously noted, wearing or not wearing a burqa, as well as laws intended to modernize social policies or educational practices, all began in Kabul and were imposed on rural areas with little success. With the exit of the Soviets and beginning of the civil war, efforts at modernization stopped and the

countryside reverted to the traditional way of life, becoming even more conservative in a backlash against modernization attempts (Dorrnsoro §11-12).

A very pragmatic people, Afghans are not anti-progress, if whatever is new or changed is effective and meshes with their traditional values (Kakar 111; Isby 55).

The more educated, better off Afghans, particularly Kabuli Pashtuns and Tajiks occasionally intermarried, although other Afghans overwhelmingly married within their own ethnic group (Simonsen 709; Kakar 2).

A few days before Kabul fell to the Taliban, all the foreign aid workers left the city. (“Afghan Forces”) Afghans themselves not only fled the country, but moved to other parts of Afghanistan, so tent cities sprung up within the country (Girardet 210; Hosseini, *Thousand* 393).

P. 78 par. 3 Ahmed Rashid said that many of Massoud’s men became deaf from the continual sounds of their Russian D-30 howitzers. (*Taliban* 47)

P. 79 par. 1 Farokh calls Arman a *rafiq*, a friend (Hosseini *Thousand* 162). He also refers to him as “son of Razaq” and “Arman Khan.” Both are signs of respect. “Khan” is not a last name, which most Afghans don’t have, but an honorific similar to “Mr.” (Zawaydeh 18, 22).

P. 80 par. 5 – p. 81 The U.S. actually had been encouraging the radicalization of Muslims and supporting the mujahideen against the native communist government in Afghanistan since it supported Hekmatyar in 1979 (Fitzgerald 162). When President Reagan signed the National Security Decision Directive 166 in 1985, it boosted supplies (Mamdani 128). The U.S. wanted allies in the Cold War against the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Pakistan, largely through the powerful Inter-Pakistan Intelligence agency (ISI), was the point organization for foreign aid to Afghanistan. It used that position to try to manipulate Afghanistan’s future. In part, this was because it wanted allies against its nemesis, India. It also had ambitions to lead the Islamic world and wanted a friendly – and malleable – country next door. Pakistan also wanted to defuse the Pashtun nationalist movement that had lobbied off and on for its own homeland, Pashtunistan, which would have included a large chunk of Pakistan along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border where the Pashtun tribe was dominant. Additionally, Afghanistan was a treasure trove of natural resources that, if developed, would be of tremendous economic value. In 1995, as the Taliban gained more territory and power, 3,000 Pakistanis traveled to Afghanistan from Peshawar to join the group (Zarwan; Hiro). The country’s leader, Gen. Mohammad Zia ul-Haq, who came to power in a coup, further encouraged developing radical Islam to shore up his own base of support (Hiro).

The Taliban picked up support from not only Pakistan, but from Saudi Arabia, which was happy to support extremists, as long as they weren’t in its

home turf. Saudi Arabia gave the mujahideen \$1 for every \$1 that the U.S. gave them (Coll 65).

The three countries believed that all their interests would be served by encouraging radicalization. The U.S. reasoned that Islamic extremists would fight the godless communists, whereas Pakistan anticipated a well-armed faction that would join them to regain Kashmir from India, and Saudi Arabia figured the extremists would focus on another country and not trouble them (A. Rashid, *Taliban* 129).

These weren't the only foreign government to take sides in the Afghanistan civil war. In April 1996, Russia, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Iran sent arms or technical help to Rabbani, while India supplied airplane parts. Together, these foreign governments supplied arms, food, fuel, parts, communication, cash and pick-up trucks (A. Rashid, *Taliban* 44-45).

By the time that the last Soviet soldier had left Afghanistan and into the early 1990s, the CIA gave up to \$200,000 per month to Ahmed Shah Massoud's faction alone. (Coll 4-5) During the war against the Soviets, the U.S. gave between 2,000 and 2,500 Stinger missiles to the mujahideen, which they tried to buy back when the Soviets left, using Pakistan as a broker (Coll 1).

However, other foreign governments backed their favorite mujahideen group, too. Iran was behind Abdul Ali Masari's Hizb-i Wahdat, a Shi'a group; Saudi Arabia was for the Ettehad (Sayyaf's fundamentalist group). And Russia was back in the game, leaning towards Massoud's Jamaat-i Islami (Dorransoro footnote 6). Additionally, Polish dissidents, Egypt and Turkey sold old Soviet weapons to the combatants, and China, too, supplied the mujahideen with weapons (Coll 66).

Throughout its history, foreigners have made decisions about Afghanistan without involving the people who live there. In the 19th century, Afghanistan was a pawn between Russia and Britain until the country finally served as a buffer zone in their imperialistic ambitions (Fitzgerald 46). Even its boundaries were determined by a foreign power, when Great Britain drew the Durand Line in 1895, separating Afghanistan from what is now Pakistan and dividing the Pashtun people (Kakar 2).

In "A Message to the People of the United States of America," Massoud urges U.S. support for his fight against the Taliban. In his comments, he blames both foreign involvement and the Afghan people themselves for the ongoing war and breakdown of its social and civil infrastructure, just as Arman and Farokh do (Coll 430; Massoud). There is plenty of blame to go around. Ahmed Rashid says in *The Mirage of Peace* that Afghans hold warlords and foreign countries equally culpable. (159) Rory Stewart found that to be true when he asked two members of the Hazara tribe who caused Afghanistan's violence. One man said the Russians, while the other said that they did themselves by engaging in village warfare for more than 25 years (204-205).

Throughout the story, there are references to pride (*namoos*) and the importance of honor (*nang*). As part of this strict code is a respect for elders and the sanctity in which Afghans hold the privacy of their homes. It also helps explain the repression of women. What we view as segregation, they view as protection.

In part, the honor code is positive. People know they can trust those with whom they have a relationship with their lives (A. Rashid *Mirage* 31, 36). However, it also can be destructive. For Afghans, particularly Pashtuns for whom *nang* is part of the Pashtunwali code, honor is so important that if someone compromises it, the penalty is death. This is especially true when it applies to women. Women are repositories of a family's honor. So, if a woman breaks a moral code, it is the duty of her family to restore the family honor, even if it means killing her. (Hosseini *Kite* 145; Sulima and Hala 55; Seierstad 35).

P. 80 par. 5 One of the most unusual national sports I ever have come across is *buzkashi*, yet its no-holds-barred violence perfectly captures the Afghan culture. Basically, it's a game played on horseback in which men try to get a decapitated, gutted goat or calf whose legs have been cut off at the knees around a post and across a goal line. There are two rules: no tying the carcass to the horse and no hitting the hands of the person with the calf. Other than that, all bets are off. Hitting, kicking, tripping all are allowed, and severe injuries of the players (and spectators) are common. Games, which can go on for days, are played on special occasions or in the winter, probably to keep the animal cold to preserve it better (Stewart 262-264; Lambert).

People take *buzkashi* extremely seriously, and it can determine leadership. There is a description in *The Bookseller of Kabul* of Hamid Karzai and Dostum competing against each other (Seierstad 156-157).

IX: HANIF GOES TO WAR

P. 82 par. 1 Hanif was correct that they had been winning the hearts and minds of the populace, at least initially. As previously noted, some people did want to see Sharia law reinstated. However, the primary reason people supported the Taliban was because they weren't corrupt like the mujahideen.

P. 83 par. 2-3 By 1996, Afghanistan had endured 17 years of war, with an entire generation growing up with little, if any, education and no skills with which to make a living (A. Rashid *Taliban* 32). Like disaffected youth everywhere, they were looking for something to do. Fighting gave young men such as Ghazwan both jobs and an adrenaline rush. Many had become hardened to the horrors of war and figured fighting was better than sitting around doing nothing. Some of the

soldiers took pleasure in using the cover of morality to exert power on others and engage in bullying, torturing or killing others (Crews 47).

P. 84 par. 2 The Taliban captured the strategic town of Sarobi on September 25, 1996 (Agency 13).

X: ARMAN JOINS THE FIGHT

P. 86 par. 3 Arman gives too much credit to Rabbani and Massoud. In 1995, Rabbani agreed to turn over his authority to a jirga consisting of respected Afghan VIPs and representatives from the mujahideen only after years of United Nations shuttle diplomacy. The meteoric rise of the Taliban forced Rabbani's hand. He decided that the U.N. plan was in his best interest.

Unfortunately, it was too little too late. Since the Taliban hadn't existed when the plan originally was drawn up, the agreement didn't include a place for the group on the council. So, regardless of how many of the mujahideen leaders bought into it, the plan was dead on arrival.

Figuratively under the gun, U.N. representative Mahmoud Mestiri exhaustively renewed his efforts to broker a peace accord, this time including the Taliban. In any case, the Taliban knew that at this point they held the upper hand, so were not eager to negotiate away any of their power (Burns).

Although Massoud was both an unrivaled military strategist and highly charismatic, the Taliban's noose closed in 1996, and he was unable to talk the warring factions into working together for the good of the country. Hamid Gul, former member of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence, claims that Massoud and Rabbani invited Osama bin Laden to Afghanistan when he was expelled from Sudan, so that he could act as a go-between to forge a peace agreement with the Taliban (Keane). However, Gul, who currently supports the Taliban (and likely did then), also claimed that the World Trade Center Bombing was a plot between Israel's Mossad and the U.S. Air Force, so any claims he makes are suspect (De Borchgrave).

In January of 1996, Massoud tried to broker an accord with the Taliban that involved compromises on all sides, reiterating Rabbani's willingness to relinquish power. However, the Taliban turned him down (Agency 8). In April of that year, Massoud also talked with U.S. Sen. Hank Brown, who was in Afghanistan on a fact-finding trip, and U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Robin Raphel. (19) Sen. Brown invited Massoud and other Afghan leaders to testify at a Senate hearing in Washington, D.C., and U.S. congressional representative on diplomatic missions met with him in August and September (21, 23, 24).

XI: FORCES COLLIDE

P. 89 par. 1 According to Steve Coll in *Ghost Wars*, Hekmatyar switched loyalties once again at the 11th hour, betraying Massoud to the Taliban, which necessitated Massoud's flight from Kabul (332). To keep the ammunition from falling into the Taliban's hands as he left the city, his troops blew up the ammunition dumps (*Rashid Taliban* 48).

P. 90 par. 1 The earth cast its shadow on the full moon over Western Europe and Africa in the early morning hours of Sept. 27, 1996. At the height of the lunar eclipse, the moon turned blood red shortly after the Taliban entered Kabul.

XII: A NEW DAY DAWNS

P. 91-92 After the Taliban took over Kabul and claimed the country, people were optimistic that war and corruption would end, and stability would return (*Hosseini Thousand* 275-277). However, within 24 hours, those hopes were shattered when the Taliban tortured, mutilated and hanged former President Najibullah and his brother in the center of the city and announced new, repressive Sharia laws.

Literally from the moment they took Kabul, the Taliban instituted its leaders' extreme view of Sharia law, a code rooted in Pashtunwali rather than the teachings of the Qur'an (*A. Rashid Taliban* 4, 112). Women were treated especially harshly. Those who broke Sharia law had hands cut off (for stealing) or were stoned (for "inappropriate" contact with the opposite sex) or shot to death in a public spectacle in the Kabul soccer stadium (*A. Rashid Taliban* 2-5; *Zoya* 140). Non-Muslims were required to wear yellow clothing or part of a yellow cloth to identify themselves, and their houses had to display a yellow flag (*Seierstad* 80-83; *Latifa* 36-38; *Zoya* 137). Fortunately, the rules were not universally followed, particularly outside Kabul (*A. Rashid Mirage* 146).

Although the Taliban were Islamist extremists as were Hekmatyar's, Sayyaf's and other mujahideen factions, at some point in 1995 they further differentiated themselves from the others by taking the Wahabis' obsession with behavior and dress to a whole new level. As they became increasingly focused on their rules, the rules stopped being a means to an end (to return Afghanistan to Islamic values, provide stability and establish the rule of law) and became ends in themselves. Enforcing these strict, and progressively odd, dictates became a way to exert control over the people they had conquered (*Loyn* 189).

David Isby believes that the Taliban became radicalized due to al-Qaeda's growing influence coupled with Arab funding in the mid-1990s (34). However, even before that, the Taliban were out of the mainstream. Foreign fighters, the "Arab Afghans," brought extreme intolerance that was foreign to Afghanistan's culture (*Loyn* 157; *A. Rashid Taliban* 132). The uneducated mullahs and Mullah

Omar himself had minimal education and had been raised with a narrow view of Islam. (Gandhi “Finally, a Talkative...” 4) And the rootless, aimless, emotionally stunted madrasa students and Taliban leaders who had been steeped in perverted Deobandi teachings also played a critical role (Isby 32-33; A. Rashid *Taliban* 87). The Taliban gained strength by feeding on Afghans’ hopes for peace, security and stability. The movement itself, as much as its followers, was a product of years of war (Mamdani 161). It stepped in to create order in a country whose infrastructure has been systematically dismantled by foreigners and Afghan warlords (Loyn 203).

Pakistan immediately recognized the Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan. In the six years that the Taliban controlled the country, only Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates acknowledged the Taliban (Seierstad 43).

Ahmad Shah Massoud continued to rally international support against the Taliban. He warned of an impending Taliban attack and had just secured funding from the U.S. to bolster his efforts when he was killed Sept. 9, 2001. Two men posing as Arab journalists smuggled a bomb in a camera and detonated it. Two days later, Taliban members hijacked three U.S. airplanes and crashed them into the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. and a field in Pennsylvania. That last plane presumably was headed to the White House or the Capitol in Washington before passengers overpowered the hijackers.

When the Taliban were driven out in 2001, most Afghans were glad. However, they were less thrilled that many members of the mujahideen, now called the Northern Alliance, that had fought the long, destructive civil war had returned to power (Zoya 226; Sulima and Hala 158).

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APPENDIX B

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS, ACTIVITIES, FURTHER RESOURCES

I: THE END BEGINS

Activities:

Music

- View pictures of traditional Afghan instruments at http://www.afghandesk.com/afghan_music/traditional_afghan_instruments.html
- Listen to clips of classical and contemporary Afghan music. Two University of California-Berkeley graduate students went to Kabul in 2005 and conducted the Afghan Music Project to resurrect traditional Afghan music that was in danger of being lost. Musicians had fled the country during the Soviet era when music was censored, and they were killed under the Taliban (Becherer and Gouttierre). This video, at about 30 minutes, probably is too long to keep the students' interest. However, the first few minutes have great images of people playing traditional Afghan instruments that are mentioned in the story (view pictures of the instruments on the link above first). It also has some very good footage of Soviet tanks (with big Lenin poster) and pictures of people fleeing in minibuses, as the narrator talks about the USSR invasion. It also has clips of Taliban beating women and a brief scene of a man hanging in the background that the voiceover talks about music being outlawed under the Taliban and musicians paying the price. If students watch more, they can see some contemporary scenes of Kabul, including women in traditional dress with hijabs (head scarves) but their faces uncovered, as well as women in burqas.
http://stream.qtv.apple.com/qtv/cgcwf/afghan_music_project/amp_300.mov
- For a fascinating mixture of East and West, check out "Afghan Star," the Afghan version of "American Idol." It's more Afghan than Western, but still too Western for some. See if the students can note where classical Afghan music influences the songs and what Western influences they see and hear: <http://www.afghanstar.tv/>. To get a feel for how controversial this is, watch the New Tang Dynasty Television news report from March 17, 2008. It includes a clip from a not very good female contestant and condemnation from a cleric.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X-rQWZexiRw&NR=1&feature=fvwp>. Because of the controversy, a movie was made chronicling four of the contestants on the show. The movie "Afghan Star," a 2009 Sundance Film Festival award winner, is available through Netflix. It is a chilling microcosm of some of the complex issues (e.g., urban/rural, tribal, traditional/modern and the role of women) that conspire to keep peace from Afghanistan. The trailer is here: <http://www.imdb.com/video/imdb/vi360776217/>.

Discussion:*Music*

- According to John Baily, professor of musicology at Goldsmiths College at the University of London, music creates powerful emotional connections and forges bonds to a national identity that override ethnic differences (216, 225). The Taliban banned music, saying it was against Sharia law. Do you think there could be any other reasons for the Taliban or any government to ban music? How does music make “Afghan Star” contestants feel (if the students watch the movie)? How has music in the U.S. been important in cultural or political movements? What makes music powerful? Give examples to support your answer.

Videos:*Islam*

- A four-minute contemporary video by an American college-age student, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M_SSHDTjuM0, describes the three types of Sunni Muslim prayers, two of which, the dua and Salaat (spelled Salah in the video), are mentioned in this story. Detailed descriptions of the prayer movements are in the “Teach me how to pray...” video, starting at about 6:30. The remaining six minutes of that video are the word of the Salaat spoken in Arabic with English subtitles. Mortenson also describes the movements in prayer in *Three Cups of Tea* (62-63, 69).
- An older, more traditional Muslim with a description of prayers are in a six-minute video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kScrL8m1qMs>.

Discussion or short paper:*Names*

- The characters’ names are Hadiyah (gift), Khaterah (remembrance, memory), Maliha (beautiful), Arman (ideal, hope, aspiration), Farokh (happy, fortunate), Hanif (true believer), Nabil (noble, honorable, intelligent), Omid (hope), Razaq (provider) and Ghazwan (warrior). As you read the story, decide if you think these characters are well named. Give examples to support your answer.

Discussions:*Irony*

- What is irony? Discuss other examples of irony within this story and the Afghan culture. For example, the Taliban and Islamists repress women to protect their honor and virtue, literally “respecting” women to death.
- Can you think of examples of irony in our own society? (e.g., parents whose efforts to do what’s “best” for their kids result in over-scheduled children who are unable to make decisions on their own)

II: HANIF LEARNS THE TRUTH

Video:

Culture

- Watch the 3-minute 2010 video about Kabul Museum at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FxFO_YC0fW4 that gives a brief history of the museum and shows a few of the artifacts dating from thousands of years ago.

Discussion:

Culture – family

- What advantages and disadvantages are there in living in extended families? (Ask students to draw on their own experiences, if they have them, of living with family members besides parents, brothers and sisters.)

Research:

Culture – religion

- Choose a religion or country and learn about its funeral traditions, e.g. Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism or others.

Discussion:

Culture - funerals

- What is the purpose of funerals? Give examples from the religion or country you studied that illustrate how a rituals or tradition satisfies that purpose. What are similarities among funerals in different religious traditions? Why do you think there are similarities?

Discussions:

Critical thinking

- During the Cold War, the U.S. demonized the Soviet Union and the Soviet Union did the same to the U.S. Define propaganda. What is the purpose of propaganda? How is it different from marketing/advertising?
- Do you think reporters should use news stories to convince their readers to think as they do? Should they inject their personal opinions without stating that they are doing so? What are ways that reporters can color their stories to be sympathetic to one side or another?

Activities:

Critical thinking

- Choose an ad. What visuals, sounds, expressions or word choices convey or emphasize the message that sells the product? How is emotion used to sell the product? How are facts used? How are opinions used? What are tips that can tell you if a claim is fact or hype?

Teachers can choose activities and discussions below based on the students' level of maturity and time available.

- Read a major news story in three different media: a foreign report, a newspaper or magazine, and either a TV, blog or other source). What differences are there among the stories? How do the U.S. and foreign reports differ? How does the story change depending on what facts are included or omitted? Find words (or intonations and visual cues, if broadcast media) that push the reader/listener to draw a particular conclusion. Does the medium affect the message? How can you be a smarter consumer or smarter citizen – whether buying a product or voting in an election – in separating facts from opinions, realistic from unrealistic promises, and truths from half-truths. How can you do a reality check before forming an opinion?

Discussion:

Critical thinking

- This chapter is called “Hanif learns the truth.” What is the “truth” that Hanif learns?

III: MALIHA LOSES HER DREAM

Video:

Dance

- Maliha mentions men dancing as they celebrate her engagement, and this hand-held five-minute video shows men dancing, although it takes place in a refugee camp in Jalozai, Pakistan in 2007. It's a lot of the same, so watching for two minutes is enough. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bDDJVTozUfM>.

Discussions:

Differences

- The word for bride is *arus*, the same word that means doll. (Seierstad 95) Talk about why that probably is the case. [*note: The teacher should encourage the students to consider not only the physical resemblance, but also women's place in Afghanistan.*]
- Why would the children in the refugee camp fear and stay clear of Maliha? Give examples of people you or others might tease or stay away from and why. How would that make someone feel? What would be another way to handle people who look unusual or act differently?

Activities:*Psychological impact of war*

- Many people in Afghanistan exhibit the same symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder that Maliha does (Zoya 146-147; Firling 33; Khattak 578). If any members of your family have been in a war, talk to them about what it was like.
- Find news stories about the difficulty that some soldiers coming back from Iraq or Afghanistan are having adjusting to civilian life. Why do you think they are having trouble?

IV: KHATERAH HOLDS IT TOGETHER

Research:*Ethnicity*

- Choose one of Afghanistan's ethnic groups to research. What are their customs? Their dress? Their origins? Share what you learn with the class and as a class, discuss what makes the tribes different from or similar to each other.

Activity:*Ethnicity/heritage*

- Talk to family members about your own heritage. Where does your family come from? What did they wear (traditional dress)? What languages did they speak? What did they eat and what were some of their customs? Does your family retain any of those old traditions?

Discussion:*Ethnicity/bigotry*

- The Hazaras were and, in some areas, still are discriminated against. Why do you think that people discriminated against them? Why do people treat people who are "different" badly? What do minorities bring to the countries in which they either were born or to which they have migrated? [Note: this discussion can go beyond ethnic groups and discuss discrimination, bigotry or bullying based on gender, sexual orientation, physical or mental disabilities, socioeconomic status or looks – e.g., weight, attire, academic ability, athleticism, etc.]

Activity:*Refugees*

- Look at the physical map of Afghanistan again and discuss what it must have been like to make the journey from Kabul to Peshawar through the mountains in

winter, with a crippled child where women had no rights. Google maps allows users to zoom in

http://maps.google.com/maps?q=afghanistan+map&rls=com.microsoft:en-us:IE-SearchBox&oe=UTF-8&rlz=1I7SKPB_en&um=1&ie=UTF-8&hq=&hnear=Afghanistan&gl=us&ei=-SQeTeDMLsys8AbEh7jjCg&sa=X&oi=geocode_result&ct=title&resnum=1&ved=0CB4Q8gEwAA)

Further reading for the teacher:

Afghan poetry

- Lutz Rzehak's article "Remembering the Taliban" describes the oral heritage of storytelling and poetry on pages 182-211 in *The Taliban and the Crisis of Afghanistan*, edited by Robert D. Crews and Amin Tarzi.

Activity:

Poetry

- Write your own landay (first line of nine syllables, second of 13)

Video:

Refugees/assimilation

- Watch "The Sweetest Embrace," a short Canadian documentary available in some libraries and the Canadian consul's office. The movie is a first-person account of the return to Afghanistan of two young men now living in Canada who were sent to Tajikistan as small children to be taught how to be good communists. Now in their 20s, they search for the families they left behind, as they struggle to reconcile what they were taught, what they remember, what they see in Afghanistan today and the lives they now live. Of particular interest to students is that everyone in Afghanistan seems to have a cell phone, which seems odd in their desolate surroundings. Also, one of the young men fully intends to marry a woman to whom he had become engaged at age 6 and hasn't seen in about 15 years. It is a bittersweet story (Mirza).

[Note: The teacher can revisit the earlier section about heritage and discuss what the students' own family members experienced/might have experienced as they tried to assimilate. Should refugees assimilate?]

Discussion:

Critical thinking

- The title of the chapter is "Khaterah holds it together." What does she hold together?

V: THE MIRROR CRACKS

Research and discussion:

Refugees

- Talk to family members about where your ancestors came from. Why did they leave their home countries? What barriers did they face when they came to the U.S. (e.g., language, customs, lack of family support, etc.)?

Activity or discussion:

Refugees

- Discuss or write a short story that imagines you had to leave the U.S. and become a refugee. Include in your story the reason you are becoming a refugee, what you would take (only what you could carry), who would go with you, the difficulties you would encounter and how you would begin a new life in a place with unfamiliar customs and a different language. Also include whether you would want to come back and the reasons for your answer.

Discussion:

Culture – food

- What is special about sharing meals with others? What food do you think is traditionally “American?” How has “American” food incorporated items from other cultures (e.g., bagels, hummus and pita chips, salsa and tortilla chips, spaghetti, pizza, sushi, etc.) and how have other cultures adopted American food (e.g., French fries, McDonalds, hot dogs in baguettes sold in French parks)?

Research:

Culture – food

- Have students research the origins and significance of foods we eat in the U.S. that originated in another country or with a particular ethnic, cultural or regional group. This could range from Cajun food to spaghetti, tacos to crepes. Encourage students to choose foods that they might eat regularly in their own homes and learn their histories. (*note: If this is too advanced, students could choose a favorite dish or recipe that’s been passed down in their families, asking caregivers for anecdotes and if the recipe has changed over the years.*)

Activity:

Culture – food

- If possible, have the entire class make a simple dish together and eat it. Discuss how the experience made them feel.

VI: HOME IS IN THE HEART

Activity:

- Pretend that you are Hanif, Maliha or Khaterah. Write a letter home to a friend telling them how you are adjusting to your new life. Use examples of life in a refugee camp or madrasa in your letter, and imagine how your character must feel.

VII: HANIF HEADS TOWARDS KABUL

Discussion:

Avoiding and resolving conflict

- What happens when someone takes a stand that is “set in stone” or when one “paints oneself into a corner”? (i.e., engaging in behavior in which there is no compromise or no good way out)
- What are some examples with which you are familiar in which honor, pride, moral righteousness or a combination of these makes it impossible to negotiate a compromise or to back down? For example: teen/parent battle lines over dress, schoolwork or curfews from which neither side can back down without “losing;” gangs’ turf wars; partisan politics in Washington, D.C., or locally that create a no-compromise mentality.
- From your experience, why do you think people take stands that to them are nonnegotiable? *[note: This would be an opportunity to discuss listening and really hearing other people’s perspectives, and how the students feel when others don’t seem to listen to or value them.]*
- Is there ever a time when “drawing a line in the sand” is justified? If so, how do you know when it is justified? If not, why not?
- What are ways to work out compromises or to avoid creating such difficult divisions to begin with? What can you personally do as sons and daughters, students, friends and citizens to ensure standoffs don’t occur in which there only can be “winners” and “losers”?

Research and write:

Critical thinking/conflict resolution

- Choose a topic that you care about that is in the political arena (e.g., noise ordinance that would affect concerts or car stereos, legalizing marijuana, ending the war in Afghanistan, etc.) Then research the issue, finding at least one source that argues each side of the issue. Identify any views that are based more on emotion than fact. Make two lists, one for each side of the argument, and list the pros and cons of each side, then suggest a compromise. Write a short paper for

class or a letter to an elected official that lays out the valid points each side in the argument has and offering a compromise.

VIII: HONOR IS A TWO-EDGED SWORD

Activity:

Map reading and imagination

- Using the Google map at the beginning of the Teacher's Guide, follow the Taliban's victories by tracking the provinces that they captured. What obstacles would they have had to overcome?

Discussion:

Acceptance and inclusion

- Arman remembered that "even" Hazaras were part of the ethnically mixed neighborhoods. What does his use of the word "even" show? Discuss some words that people might use without thinking that are obviously or subtly derogatory. What is a good way to address the situation when someone uses an offensive or belittling word without understanding the effect it is having on someone else?

Discussion:

Critical thinking

- Is pride good, bad or both? When can pride that is good become bad? (e.g., school pride, pride in a sports team, pride in a job well done, etc.)

Video:

Culture – sports

- There are a number of videos on YouTube showing buzkashi matches. However, in some, narrators make fun of the game or have a paternalistic attitude towards the people. Here's one that starts slowly, but if you skip the first 30 or 45 seconds (apparently it's part of a longer piece), it gets into the game.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b8WgCAgZTP8&NR=1>

XI: FORCES COLLIDE

Picture:

- the eclipse on Sept. 26/27, 1996.
http://astrophotography.aa6g.org/Eclipses/lunar_eclipse.html

XII: A NEW DAY DAWNS

Discussion

Symbols

- Afghanistan's flag had changed more times in the 20th century than any other country (CIA, "Afghanistan Facts"), six times between 1979 and 1996 alone. The country's name has had variations, too. Under the Soviets, it was the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. Then in the last two years of Soviet occupation prior to the civil war (1987-1992), it was simply the Republic of Afghanistan. During the civil war, 1992-1996, the name changed to the Islamic State of Afghanistan, and when the Taliban took over, it became the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Since then, the name changed twice more. Today, the country officially is the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.
 - Why do countries and groups have flags?
 - What is a symbol? Why are symbols important?
- Afghanistan's flag today bears the number 1298, the solar year of its independence; wheat; the Muslim creed; a rising sun's rays over the words, "God is great;" and the name "Afghanistan." The colors are black (the past), red (blood of those dying for independence) and green (Islam, hope or good crops) (CIA, "Afghanistan Facts"). What do the stars and stripes on the U.S. flag symbolize? What do the red, white and blue symbolize?
- Would it make a difference to you if the U.S. flag were changed? Why or why not?
- Do you think that changing the flag so many times affected the Afghan people? If so, how? If not, why not?

Activity:

Symbolism

- Create your own personal flag and explain to your classmates what the images on it symbolize. How would you feel if someone destroyed your flag? Why?

Discussion:

Critical thinking

- In what way are Arman and Hanif alike? In what way are they different? What factors led to each choosing different sides in the civil war? Give examples of what they do or think that lead you to draw these conclusions.
- How old are Hanif, Maliha, Arman and Farokh at the end of the story? How are their outlooks and expectations different from those of people their ages in the U.S.?
- In *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, one of the characters says, "...the only enemy an Afghan cannot defeat is himself" (136) What does he mean?
- Ahmed Rashid says in *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in*

Central Asia, “The Taliban are bucking the entire trend of Afghan history because they have no understanding of it” (212). Why is understanding history – our country’s and that of others – important?

Video:

War’s impact

- This 18-minute video, *Starving to Death – Afghanistan*, was made just months before the Taliban took over Kabul. It shows the city in ruins, the majestic mountains and desolate countryside, the children in hospitals with missing limbs, and extensive footage on Ahmad Shah Massoud with his mujahideen strategizing and fighting against the Taliban. It shows the human toll that war takes, and is a good video to show near the end or at the end of this unit.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zzPcMB9SQz0>

OTHER RESOURCES

Web

Afghanistan Online: <http://www.afghan-web.com/facts.html>, has current news stories, recipes, poetry, short biographies of key leaders, music by popular Afghan artist Ahmad Zahir and even Mullah Nasruddin jokes that no U.S. student will find funny (humor definitely is cultural). However, the historical information is one sided and has not been updated recently. This site also has ads for eligible mates, so it is better suited for teachers than for students to access.

Afghanistan’s constitutions: It’s probably too much for students to plod through, but it might be interesting for the teacher to note some substantive difference among the Afghan constitutions and between the Afghan and U.S. constitutions. They very much reflect the viewpoints of the governments in power. They also offer stark comparisons between the integral role religion plays in both countries, their priorities and each views society.

<http://www.afghan-web.com/history/const/const1923.html>

<http://www.afghan-web.com/history/const/const1964.html>

<http://www.afghan-web.com/history/const/const1976.html>

<http://www.afghan-web.com/history/const/const1987.html>

<http://www.afghan-web.com/history/const/const1990.html>

<http://www.nps.edu/programs/ccs/docs/pubs/constitution.pdf> (2004)

Call to prayer: Although this call to prayer (*adhan*) takes place in Malaysia, the *muezzin* prays in Arabic and sounds the same from country to country. A very short version (a little over a minute) is at

<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/multimedia/4569>. A three-minute version that includes a video of a mosque and the words of the prayer in both Arabic and English is at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UILaUCAQIQQ> (January 29, 2007:)

National Geographic: This tells the story of some of the priceless artifacts in the Kabul Museum and how they were recovered, along with a companion video. <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2008/06/afghan-treasures/atwood-text>
<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/video/player?titleID=1539905967>

Videos

“Inside the Taliban”: This 2007 National Geographic documentary is somewhat superficial, but comprehensive. It is available at <http://channel.nationalgeographic.com/episode/inside-the-taliban-3274/Overview#ixzz10BttC9WK>, as well as in 10 segments of about 9 minutes each on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xpQI6HKV-ZY&feature=related>. It has a short section on the monarchy and Soviet invasion and longer section on the civil war. About half focuses on the rise, fall and resurgence of the Taliban.

Photographs

Historical photos, pre-1930s: <http://www.afghanistan-photos.com/>

Current (2010) photos from the BBC of a rebuilt Kabul:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8676087.stm. The contrast between the sleek modern buildings and traditional dress of the people is striking.

People: Beautiful pictures by Vincent Thian from 2003 of the people of Kabul, including fruit merchants, burqa-clad women, children and the war victims in the hospitals. <http://www.pbase.com/vthian/afghanistan&page=all>

Poetry books

Poems by Rumi: Jelaluddin Balkhi is another name for the Persian poet Rumi. Like most Afghan poetry, *The Essential Rumi* primarily focuses on the topics of love (often erotic) and war.

Poems by Pashtun women: Sayd Bahodine Majrouh talked with Pashtun women and collected their poetry. The result was *Songs of Love and War*. True to form, love and war are the main topics.

APPENDIX C

GLOSSARY

A

AK47: Soviet Union-made Kalashnikov automatic rifle

Allah: God

Azan: call to prayer, usually broadcast from the top of mosques, either by a muezzin or by a recording of a muezzin

B

Buzkashi: the national sport of Afghanistan in which players on horseback try to get the carcass of a gutted goat or calf with its head and legs cut off across a goal line

C

Chapan: traditional Afghan coat

D

Dastarkhan: covering for the floor similar to a table cloth that is put down for meals

Dostum, Abdul Rashid: Uzbek commander of Junbish-i Milli-yi Islami who continually changed sides during the civil war

Dua: Muslim prayer asking for God's help

H

Harakat-i Inqilab-i Islami: – a moderate Islamist group led by Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi

Hekmatyar, Gulbuddin: Pashtun leader of the Hezb-e Islami political party, a radical Islamist, who was both the bitter enemy of and prime minister under Burhanuddin Rabbani when he was president during the civil war

Hijab: headscarf

Hizb-i Islami: Radical Islamist group led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar

Hizb-i Islami Khali: a splinter group of Hekmatyar's Hizb-i Islami led by Younas Khalis

I

Infidel: unbeliever

Inshallah: God willing

Islam: one of the world's major religions whose practitioners believe in one God and that God's greatest prophet was Mohammad, who received the word of God in the Qur'an, the Muslim holy book

Ittehad-i Islami: a Wahabi (pure Islamic) group led by Abdurrab Rasul Sayyaf with close ties to Saudi Arabia

J

Jabha-e nejat-e-milli: a moderate Islamist group led by Sibghatullah Mojaddidi, a former Kabul University professor

Jamaat-i Islami: Islamist group led by Burhanuddin Rabbani and Ahmed Shah Massoud, the military commander

Jan as a suffix: sign of affection, like “dear”

Jihad:

Jirga: representative council made up of any males in a region who want to make their voices heard. The council makes decisions by consensus by which all members are then bound. There is no leader or chairman; people sit in a circle to emphasize the equality of the opinions of all attendees. A *loya jirga* is a grand council called for issues of larger or national importance. Because it covers a wider geographical territory, each region sends representatives.

K

Kalashnikov: Soviet Union-made automatic rifle

Kamiz: loose three-quarters length pullover shirt

L

Loya jirga (see *jirga*): a grand council that is called for issues of national importance and to which each region of the country sends representatives.

M

Madar: mother

Madrasa: religious school

Mahaz-e Melli-ye Islami-ye: a pro-West moderate Islamist group led by Pir Sayyed Gailaini

Massoud, Ahmad Shah: Tajik commander in the Jamaat-i Islami party

Mohammadi, Mohammad Nabi: a theologian who led the Harakat-i Inqilab-i Islamist faction

Mojaddidi, Sibghatullah: former Kabul University professor, who led the Jabha-e nejat-e-milli Islamist faction and was president of Afghanistan for two months in 1992

Muezzin: a person who leads the five-times daily call to prayer

Mujahid: “holy warrior”

Mujahideen: group of people who carry out a jihad or “holy war”

Mullah: teacher, particularly a religious teacher, also a title of respect for someone who is considered learned

Muslim: people who practice Islam, one of the world’s major religions

N

Naan: puffy, chewy flat bread that's a staple of Afghan meals

Najibullah, Mohammad: communist president of Afghanistan, 1986-1992, whose term was half during the Soviet occupation and half after they left before the mujahideen took over the country and the civil war began

Naswah: snuff or chewing tobacco

P

Pakol: wide, flat woolen cap particularly favored by Tajiks and worn by Tajik guerilla leader Ahmad Shah Massoud

Pashtun: largest tribe in Afghanistan that, except for nine months in 1929 and during the civil war, 1992-1996, ruled Afghanistan since Ahmad Shah Durrani became the ruler in 1747

Q

Qaum: Afghan group with a common bond, possibly members of the same tribe, same community or same region

Qazi: Islamic court

Qur'an: also spelled Koran, the book that Muslims believe to be the revealed word of God that God gave to the Prophet Mohammad

R

Rabbani, Burhanuddin: leader of the Jamaat-i Islami party and president of Afghanistan, 1992-1996, during the civil war

Rafiq: friend

Rubab: stringed instrument similar to a guitar

S

Salaat: formal Muslim prayer said five times each day

Sayyaf, Abdurrah Rasul: leader of Ittehad-i Islami, an extreme Islamist group

Shabnama: "night letters," warning citizens of impending attacks

Shalwar: loose-fitting drawstring pants

Shi'a (pl. Shiites): Muslim minority who follow the basic beliefs of Islam, but who believe Muslim leadership should be hereditary, stemming from the Prophet Mohammad, the first being his cousin and son-in-law Ali

Sharia: Law that those instituting it believe is consistent with the Muslim holy book, the Qur'an (also spelled Koran). The Taliban based their extremely conservative interpretation of Sharia law more on the Pashtun code of conduct, Pashtunwali, than on the Qur'an, although they said it was based on the holy book.

Shura: a large council convened for special discussions on major national issues.

Representatives debate issues until consensus is reached, and all attendees are bound by the shura's decision. They are more likely to include religious leaders than a jirga is.

Sunni: Muslim majority who follow the basic beliefs of Islam, but who believe Muslim leadership should be given to the most capable, worthy person

T

Tajik: second largest tribe in Afghanistan

Tabla: drum

Tahamul: endure

Talib: student of Islam

U

Ulema: group of religious scholars

Uzbek: one of the major tribes of Afghanistan