

# Home Fire



## INTRODUCTION

### BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF KAMILA SHAMSIE

Kamila Shamsie was born in 1973 in Pakistan, the daughter of journalist and editor Muneeza Shamsie. Shamsie was brought up in Karachi before attending Hamilton College in New York, and then she received an MFA from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Shamsie wrote her first novel, *In the City by the Sea*, while she was still in college, and it was published when she was 25 years old. Between 2000 and 2014, Shamsie wrote five additional novels. Her novels have won the Patras Bokhari Award, a prestigious literary award in Pakistan. *Home Fire*, her seventh novel, won the 2018 Women's Prize for Fiction. Shamsie moved to London in 2007 and is a dual citizen of the UK and Pakistan.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Shamsie wrote *Home Fire* in the wake of the rise of ISIS (also known as ISIL, or the Islamic State), a terrorist militant group that follows a fundamentalist jihadist doctrine of Sunni Islam. ISIS gained global prominence in 2014 when it drove Iraqi government forces out of key cities in Iraq, then captured Mosul. Since then, ISIS has carried out attacks on government forces in Syria, and by December 2015 (around the time in which the book takes place), it held a large area from western Iraq to eastern Syria, enforcing sharia law there. At the time, many stories sprang up of young people leaving their families from Britain, the United States, and France to join ISIS; between 2012 and 2019, it is estimated that 900 British citizens left the country to join ISIS—just as Parvaiz does in *Home Fire*. Shamsie likely also drew inspiration for part of her plot from the fact that the British Home Secretary can withdraw citizenship from dual nationals, under the Immigration, Asylum, and Nationality Act of 2006, as long as that withdrawal is “conducive to the public good.” Additionally, although this appointment did not come to pass until after the novel's publication, there are parallels between Karamat Lone in the novel and real-life Home Secretary Sajid Javid, who served in office from 2018-2019. Like Karamat, Javid is British Pakistani and from a Muslim background, but also like Karamat, he is not religious. Javid is also a member of the Conservative Party, and, like Karamat, he has both been targeted for his Muslim background and been accused of turning his back on the Muslim community.

### RELATED LITERARY WORKS

*Home Fire* is a modern retelling of Sophocles's play [Antigone](#),

with characters in the novel directly correlating to characters in the play (Isma to Ismene, Aneeka to Antigone, Eamonn to Haemon, Karamat to Creon, and Parvaiz to Polynices). The major plot points of the novel also follow the developments of the play closely. Shamsie has also credited the documentary play *Another World: Losing Our Children to Islamic State* as a major source of inspiration and research for her novel. Shamsie has written several other books on similar subjects, including *Burnt Shadows*, *Kartography*, *Broken Verses*, *In the City by the Sea*, *Salt and Saffron*, and *A God in Every Stone*. For another reinterpretation of a classic told through the lens of contemporary Muslim families, Uzma Jalaluddin's *Ayesha at Last* is a modern retelling of [Pride and Prejudice](#).

### KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Home Fire
- **When Written:** 2014-2017
- **Where Written:** London, England
- **When Published:** August 15, 2017
- **Literary Period:** Contemporary
- **Genre:** Novel, Political Fiction
- **Setting:** London, England; Amherst, Massachusetts; Istanbul, Turkey; Raqqa, Syria; and Karachi, Pakistan.
- **Climax:** Men strap bombs to Eamonn and Aneeka runs into his arms.
- **Antagonist:** ISIS; xenophobia and racism
- **Point of View:** Third-person limited omniscient; each of the five sections focuses on one of the five main characters' point of view.

### EXTRA CREDIT

**The play's the thing.** Originally, Shamsie intended to write *Home Fire* as a play, but she realized shortly after beginning the project that she wanted to tell the story as a novel.

**Googling While Muslim.** In the book, Aneeka uses the term “Googling while Muslim” to note that if she—as a Muslim person—were to look up information about a bombing, the government would become suspicious. Shamsie notes that she, too, felt she could not do a lot of research for her novel because of her identity as a Muslim woman and the flags that might be raised if she started looking up information about ISIS. Instead, she notes that she owes a debt to Gillian Slovo, who was working on a play about British recruits to ISIS at the time and from whom she drew a lot of research.



## PLOT SUMMARY

Twenty-eight-year-old Isma Pasha is detained at Heathrow Airport, where she is held and interrogated for two hours, singled out specifically for her **hijab** and her Muslim background even though she is a British citizen. After officers question her on whether she considers herself British, she is allowed to board the plane to Boston, where she will be pursuing a PhD in sociology under an old professor of hers, Hira Shah.

Isma spends her days working and reading in a coffee shop, where she befriends 24-year-old Eamonn Lone, who is also from London. Isma recognizes Eamonn as the son of Karamat Lone, a British politician who, though he is Muslim and has a Pakistani background, has largely made British Muslims feel like he has turned his back on them in order to gain support of the wider British public. Eamonn and Isma become friends over the next few weeks, and Isma grows romantically interested in Eamonn as well, even though Isma quickly realizes that Eamonn has little understanding of his Muslim or Pakistani heritage. When Karamat is appointed Home Secretary of the U.K., Isma admits that she knows who Eamonn's father is, and that she is critical of his treatment of his Muslim constituents. As a person who looks up to his father a great deal, Eamonn grows cold toward her as a result.

That night, Isma is woken by a call from her 19-year-old sister, Aneeka, who is extremely upset after finding out that Isma was the one to report their brother, Parvaiz, to the police. Aneeka feels completely betrayed, even though Isma assures her that the police would have found out about what Parvaiz had done anyway and that she was trying to protect Aneeka. Aneeka says that Isma has made Parvaiz unable to come home, and she tells Isma not to contact her anymore. Upset, Isma texts Eamonn, wanting comfort and to explain her perspective more fully. Isma tells him that her father, Adil, left her family to become a jihadi in Bosnia. He was imprisoned in Bagram and then died while being transported to Guantánamo. When her family tried to approach Karamat, a new Member of Parliament at the time, to find out more information about Adil's death, Karamat said that they were "better off without him." In the present, Eamonn apologizes to Isma, but he still defends his father's actions. As they part, Eamonn tells Isma that he is returning to London and offers to deliver M&Ms that Isma was planning to send to Aunty Naseem, a neighbor with whom Aneeka is currently staying.

Back in London, Eamonn delivers the M&Ms to Aunty Naseem and meets Aneeka, who is instantly suspicious of him because of his father. But when he leaves, Aneeka follows him and asks him to take her to his apartment. Eamonn does so, and when they arrive, Aneeka takes off her hijab and the two have sex. The next morning, Aneeka tells him that she wants to keep their relationship a secret, and he agrees. This also means that

Aneeka will not give Eamonn her cell phone number, nor can he find her online.

A few weeks pass, and their relationship deepens, though occasionally they also butt heads over Karamat's attitudes towards Muslims. Eamonn gives her keys to his apartment, and they get to know each other better. Eamonn is amazed at the fact that Aneeka can be so devoted in her prayer and yet still have so much control over and freedom in her own sexuality. Eamonn even suggests to Aneeka that he wants to propose to her. Aneeka then admits to Eamonn that her twin brother Parvaiz left to go to Raqqa, Syria, the previous year, to join ISIS's media unit. At first Eamonn is extremely hurt, particularly after realizing that this is why she pursued him in the first place, but Aneeka assures Eamonn that she truly loves him, and that she just wants to get her brother home.

Eamonn approaches his father, telling him about Aneeka and then about Parvaiz. Karamat immediately grows furious with how Eamonn has been completely blinded by Aneeka, and he tells Eamonn that he cannot see Aneeka again.

The perspective then shifts to Parvaiz, hopping between the present and the events that led to his leaving for ISIS. The previous fall, he was approached by a man named Farooq, who told him that he had heard stories of heroism about Adil. Parvaiz eagerly listens to Farooq, excited to hear about his father as a hero rather than as a "feckless husband," as his mother, Zainab, and grandmother always told him before their deaths when he and Aneeka were 12 years old. Farooq teaches him about the conflict between Islam and Christianity, and he often talks about how to be a man. One day, Farooq invites Parvaiz over to his flat, and two cousins chain Parvaiz to the floor in a squatting position for hours before waterboarding him. Parvaiz is at first horrified, but then he realizes that this torture makes him feel connected to his father for the first time, and so he asks to be tortured again. Over time, Farooq convinces Parvaiz to come to Syria with him to find more people who knew his father.

Parvaiz creates a cover story about getting a job on a popular music show in Pakistan, then leaves for Syria. When he arrives, Farooq takes his passport and leaves for the front lines before Parvaiz realizes how little information he's been given. He undergoes months of training, then joins the media unit of ISIS. He also learns that Aneeka and Isma know where he has gone, and that MI5 is now monitoring them. Parvaiz recognizes that he has become like his father only in his "abandonment of a family who had always deserved better than him." Parvaiz is taken out for a field recording, but when he realizes this means filming an execution, he grows queasy and cannot watch. In another incident, Parvaiz sees a woman pinned underneath a wall that has been bombed, but because she is not wearing a face veil, he is not allowed to approach her even as she begs for help. This is a turning point, as he realizes the horrible mistake he has made. He calls Aneeka, who tells him to get to Istanbul,

Turkey, to go to the British consulate.

A few weeks later, he and Farooq take a trip to Istanbul to pick up new recruits and to buy media equipment. When Farooq leaves Parvaiz alone in the electronics store, Parvaiz runs out and takes a cab to try to get to the British consulate. He calls Aneeka, who says that she will fly to Turkey and tells him to wait for her. He also receives a text from Farooq, implying that Farooq is coming after him. Realizing that it is unlikely that they will let Aneeka onto a plane, he approaches the British consulate alone, desperate to get home. Before he steps inside, he is shot and killed by Farooq.

Aneeka is overwhelmed with grief after learning of Parvaiz's death, and she refuses to be comforted by Isma, who flies home immediately. They watch stories mount about Parvaiz, calling him "the latest name in the string of Muslims from Britain who have joined ISIS." The news then shows a clip of Karamat, who says that he has revoked the citizenship of all dual nationals who have left Britain to "join our enemies." He says that Parvaiz's British citizenship has been revoked and that he will be buried in Pakistan. Policemen then come to interview Aneeka about her relationship with Eamonn. She admits she pursued him because she thought he could help get her brother home. Isma is appalled to learn of the relationship and the reason for it. Despite Isma's attempts to reconcile with Aneeka, Aneeka refuses to be comforted because she believes that Isma is the reason that Parvaiz could not come home and is now dead.

More articles come out about the story: one quotes Isma, who says that she and Aneeka were shocked and horrified to learn that Parvaiz had joined ISIS, and that she immediately informed the Counter Terrorism Command. Another article centers on the fact that Parvaiz's father also fought with jihadi groups. A third article comes out, explaining that Karamat's office revealed Aneeka and Eamonn's affair in the name of transparency. The article describes Aneeka as Parvaiz's accomplice, having hunted down Eamonn to try and convince Karamat to return her brother to Britain. Meanwhile, Aneeka applies for a Pakistani passport and goes to Karachi to retrieve Parvaiz's body.

The story shifts perspective once more, to Karamat. Eamonn, who is now staying with friends, calls Karamat and tells him that his actions do not look good from the outside. Eamonn continues to try to talk through the politics, but Karamat dismisses him, telling him not to try to "develop a spine," and he also denigrates Aneeka. After the call, Karamat watches the Pakistani news, and he sees that Parvaiz's body is delivered to a park near the British Deputy High Commission, where Aneeka is holding vigil. She implores Karamat and the Prime Minister for justice. The Prime Minister and Karamat refuse to allow Parvaiz's body to return, a decision which is supported by Parliament.

The next morning, Eamonn arrives in Pakistan. Eamonn has also

released a video, criticizing Karamat's decision and supporting Aneeka, whom he describes as his fiancée. He says that Karamat's actions are due to his own "personal animus"—a phrase which deeply hurts Karamat. Articles are released in the morning papers, painting Karamat as an ambitious son of immigrants who married into wealth, used his identity as a Muslim to win elections, and then left it behind when it was no longer valuable.

Karamat returns home to be with his wife, Terry, and his daughter, Emily. After talking through the situation with Terry, he comes to the realization that he should allow Aneeka to bring Parvaiz's body back to Britain. Soon after, his security detail receives word of a threat. Karamat, Terry, and Emily are taken to the safe room in his house, then released when they find out that the threat wasn't intended for them.

In Pakistan, news outlets capture Eamonn's arrival in the park. When he approaches Aneeka, two men run up to him and lock a belt of explosives around his waist. Everyone else starts to flee, but Aneeka approaches him and holds him. For a moment they are "two lovers in a park, [...] at peace."



## CHARACTERS

### MAJOR CHARACTERS

**Aneeka Pasha** – Aneeka is Isma's younger sister and Parvaiz's twin, and one of the five protagonists of the novel. Aneeka's character parallels that of Antigone, the heroine of Sophocles's play *Antigone*. At the beginning of the novel, Aneeka is 19 years old and is pursuing a law degree. Like her sister, she is a practicing Muslim and wears a **hijab**. Many characters note that Aneeka is beautiful, and she also wears makeup and invites sexual advances from boys, unlike Isma. For this reason, people later judge her for not fully adhering to their idea of the conservative Muslim woman. Aneeka is fiercely loyal to her brother Parvaiz, even after he goes to join ISIS. She spends much of the book trying to find a way to make sure that her brother can return safely to Britain, once he realizes that he has made a horrible mistake. When she discovers that Isma has told the police about what Parvaiz has done, Aneeka feels incredibly betrayed and refuses to speak with her sister. Aneeka then in turn perpetrates her own betrayal: after learning that Isma has befriended Eamonn Lone, the son of Home Secretary Karamat Lone, Aneeka immediately begins a relationship with Eamonn in the hopes that he might be able to persuade his father to allow Parvaiz to return. Gradually, however, Aneeka truly falls in love with Eamonn, to the point where she thinks about marrying him. When her brother finally expresses a desire to return home, she asks Eamonn to talk to his father for her, to no avail. When Parvaiz is then killed before he can reach the British consulate, she goes to retrieve his body from Pakistan and demands that she be allowed to bring him

home to Britain. This leads to her own death, however; when Eamonn meets her there, he is targeted by terrorists and a bomb is strapped to him, and her death is implied as well. Aneeka underscores some of the novel's primary themes: Aneeka doesn't fit neatly within a stereotype, and she betrays people she loves in order to protect her family.

**Eamonn Lone** – Eamonn is Karamat and Terry Lone's son, and one of the five protagonists of the novel. Eamonn mirrors the character of Haemon in *Antigone*. At the beginning of the novel, Eamonn is in Amherst, Massachusetts visiting Terry's parents. He is taking time off from work and trying to find some greater purpose in his life when he meets Isma and develops a friendship with her at a coffee shop. Although Karamat is Muslim and of Pakistani descent, Eamonn has inherited little of this culture or faith. He and Isma are often divided on issues of Muslim identity and whether Karamat cares about the Muslim community, particularly when Karamat is appointed Home Secretary. Eamonn also has a complicated relationship with Karamat, feeling that his father doesn't expect anything from him. And because he has been born into so much privilege due to his mother's wealth and his father's political power, Eamonn recognizes that it is impossible for him to ever really outshine his father's accomplishments on his own terms. When Eamonn returns to London and delivers a package for Isma to Aunt Naseem, he immediately falls for Aneeka and the two begin a furtive relationship. He is astounded by her devotion to Islam, but also that she is still her own person with her own way of expressing her modesty and practicing her religion. As their relationship grows more serious, he is thinking about proposing to Aneeka when he finds out that her brother, Parvaiz, has joined ISIS. When he approaches his father about the issue, Karamat forbids him from seeing Aneeka and denigrates his ambition, work ethic, and intelligence. Eamonn, to prove that he has the strength to disobey his father, records a video criticizing Karamat's treatment of Parvaiz's body following his death and goes to join Aneeka in Pakistan as she tries to bring her brother home. This serves as Eamonn's downfall, however, as terrorists then attack him for his father's discriminatory policies. Eamonn's fate illustrates how the inheritance from father to son, and the pressure to live up to a legacy, can become a crushing burden on the son.

**Parvaiz Pasha** – Parvaiz is Aneeka's twin brother, Isma's younger brother, and one of the five protagonists of the novel. Parvaiz is a stand-in for the character of Polynices in Sophocles's *Antigone*, but in the play, Polynices has already died when the story begins and much of the action focuses on his sister Antigone's attempts to bury him. In the novel, Parvaiz's chapter begins when he is 19 and Isma is set to leave for the United States in a few months. While Aneeka is about to start university, Parvaiz feels that his options are limited, as he has not received any scholarships, and on top of that he and Aneeka now have to move out of their home because Isma is leaving.

Parvaiz is very interested in sound design, but there are few avenues that allow him to pursue this. Just before Isma leaves, Parvaiz is approached by a man named Farooq, who claims to know other jihadis who knew Parvaiz's father, Adil. Parvaiz is instantly intrigued, and he devours all of the heroic stories that Farooq has to tell about Adil. His relationship with Farooq, which also makes him feel connected to his father, eventually leads him to leave for Raqqa, Syria, to join the cause that his father supported. But when he sees the violence that ISIS is perpetrating and that he is filming as a part of their media unit, he quickly realizes his mistake and begs Aneeka to find a way to get him home. But before he can reach the British consulate in Turkey, he is shot and killed by Farooq for betraying them. His story illustrates two major themes in Shamsie's story. First, Parvaiz's actions show how sons are often affected—to their detriment—by the paths of their fathers. Second, Parvaiz is bound by stereotypes: after his death, people assume that Parvaiz is a violent terrorist who does not deserve to be buried in Britain, despite his remorse and the fact that he never perpetrated an attack. Thus, Shamsie asks readers not to rely on stereotypes in evaluating characters like Parvaiz, and instead argues for recognizing the nuances of their lives.

**Isma Pasha** – Isma is Aneeka and Parvaiz's older sister, and one of the five protagonists of the novel. Her character parallels the character of Ismene in *Antigone*. At the beginning of the novel, Isma is 28 years old and has been taking care of her younger twin siblings for seven years, following the deaths of their grandmother and their mother, Zainab, within a year of one another. Following their graduation, Isma returns to her own education and goes to America to pursue a PhD in sociology. Isma is the only one of the siblings who remembers their father, Adil, and the pain that he caused their mother and the rest of the family in joining ISIS, which is why Parvaiz's decision to abandon their family and follow in Adil's footsteps feels particularly upsetting for Isma. Isma chooses to tell the police about Parvaiz's decision to join ISIS, because she wants to protect the only member of the family that she has left—Aneeka. When Aneeka discovers that Isma had done this, however, she feels betrayed by the secrecy and by the fact that Isma has now made it more difficult for Parvaiz to return home, which drives a wedge between the sisters. Isma is a practicing Muslim, and in her first chapter it becomes clear when she is detained and interrogated at Heathrow Airport that this fact causes many people to believe that she is not fully British, and that she is more loyal to her faith than to her nationality. Like Aneeka, she is also forced to face stereotypes of Muslim women, as people assume that she is overly conservative (she wears a **hijab**) and has no interest in sex, which, when she meets Eamonn, proves to be untrue.

**Karamat Lone** – Karamat is Eamonn and Emily's father, and Terry's husband. Karamat's character matches that of King Creon in Sophocles's *Antigone*. Throughout the novel, Shamsie

gradually reveals information about Karamat's life before he is appointed as the Home Secretary for Britain. Karamat grew up as the son of Pakistani immigrants and was a practicing Muslim. He then married Terry, a wealthy Irish-American woman. Isma implies that money was a large factor in his marriage, as was a desire to integrate with the white British majority, which is one of the reasons for Eamonn's Irish name. Karamat was a Member of Parliament when criticism emerged following the publication of a picture of him entering a mosque. When Karamat protested that he was just going for funeral prayers and would otherwise never enter a "gender-segregated space," his Muslim constituency voted him out and he was re-elected in a district with a primarily white constituency. Many characters view Karamat as a politician who is willing to turn his back on Muslims for political gain, but Shamsie reveals in Karamat's chapters that the reality is more complicated: he truly believes in Islam but also sees that Britain has given his parents and himself far more opportunity than Pakistan ever could. Additionally, because of discrimination in Britain, he often felt that he had to distance himself from his faith in order to be accepted as a British person—in contrast to people like Isma and Aneeka, who choose to adhere to their faith at the cost of facing the same discrimination. Karamat also has a complicated relationship with Eamonn, whom he feels is entitled and lacks ambition, even though he recognizes that Karamat's own hard work and Terry's wealth are things that made Eamonn this way.

**Adil Pasha** – Adil was Isma, Aneeka, and Parvaiz's father, and Zainab's husband. Isma describes him as a charming man who tried to be many things: "guitarist, salesman, gambler, con man, jihadi." When he first abandons their family, Isma is too young to remember, but he returns when she is eight years old and repairs his relationship with Zainab long enough for her to become pregnant with the twins, then leaves again to fight in Bosnia. Isma never sees him again. They hear from him occasionally, until they receive word in 2004 that he had been imprisoned in Bagram, Afghanistan, and had died on the way to Guantánamo from a stroke. Even though Parvaiz never knew his father, as he grows up he yearns to know more about Adil's path, and he ends up following in his footsteps by joining ISIS to find out more about him.

**Farooq** – Farooq is a cousin of Parvaiz's friend, and he becomes Parvaiz's mentor and recruiter to ISIS. Farooq is in his thirties and is described as a "compact but powerfully built man." Farooq seeks out Parvaiz after learning that his father is Adil Pasha. He lures Parvaiz in by telling him stories of his father as a hero, and he becomes a sort of father figure for Parvaiz in training him to endure pain (which he frames as experiencing what his father experienced) and in teaching him "how to be a man." Farooq ultimately convinces Parvaiz to join ISIS, but he disappears from Parvaiz's life quickly after they arrive in Syria. When Parvaiz tries to escape in Turkey, Farooq tracks him down and kills him outside the British consulate.

**Terry Lone** – Terry is Karamat's wife and Eamonn and Emily's mother. Terry is Irish-American and independently wealthy as an interior designer. Karamat's marriage to her is seen by many as a way for him to both "integrate" into white British society and get funding for his political ambitions. Eamonn notes that Terry believes one should find meaning in more than just work and paychecks, and for this reason she helps fund his time off of work—something for which Eamonn is grateful, but which also adds to his feelings of being inadequate in his father's eyes. Terry is also a stand-in for the character Tiresias the prophet in Sophocles's *Antigone*, although the parallel is somewhat less direct than the other parallels between the novel and the play. In the play, Tiresias is a blind man who foretells Haemon's death to his father, King Creon, and convinces Creon (too late) not to have Antigone killed.

**Zainab Pasha** – Zainab was Isma, Aneeka, and Parvaiz's mother. Zainab and her mother-in-law (Isma's grandmother) are the primary caretakers of all three children until both women die within a year of each other, when Isma is 21 and Aneeka and Parvaiz are 12 years old. Prior to her death, Zainab was largely resentful of the turmoil Adil brought into their family, and Isma picks up these same biases and resentments when dealing with Parvaiz's abandonment.

**Hira Shah** – Hira is a professor of Isma's. Hira and Isma met when Isma was at the London School of Economics for her undergraduate studies, and Hira later helps Isma pursue her postgraduate studies at Amherst. Hira serves as a kind of mother figure for Isma, discussing British politics with her, helping her sort through her feelings about Eamonn, and caring for her following the deaths of Zainab and Isma's grandmother.

**Isma's grandmother** – Isma, Aneeka, and Parvaiz's grandmother was Adil's mother. Isma's grandmother, along with Isma's mother Zainab, were the primary caretakers of Isma, Aneeka, and Parvaiz—until she passed away when they were 12 and Isma was 21, just a few months prior to Zainab's death. Isma suggests that she was very close to her grandmother, and she often recites the same prayers her grandmother recited for comfort.

**Emily Lone** – Emily is Eamonn's younger sister and Karamat and Terry's daughter. Emily is described as the person who earns all of Karamat's expectation, while Eamonn only receives his indulgence. Little detail is revealed about Emily's life and personality, but Shamsie suggests that she is conventionally successful and respected by her parents. This difference underscores Eamonn's frustration with his own lack of achievement.

**Gladys** – Gladys is a neighbor of Isma, Parvaiz, and Aneeka and an old friend of Zainab. Gladys verbally attacks Karamat on national television in defense of Parvaiz following his death. Though the sisters are grateful for her words, they know that Gladys, as a white woman, has the social standing to speak out

in a way that they themselves cannot.

## MINOR CHARACTERS

**Aunty Naseem** – Aunty Naseem is an old friend of Zainab and a neighbor of Isma, Aneeka, and Parvaiz. When Isma goes to the United States, Aneeka stays with Aunty Naseem while she is attending university.

**Abu Raees** – Abu Raees is the head of the ISIS media unit that Parvaiz joins.

**James** – James is Karamat’s assistant.

## TERMS

**ISIS/The Islamic State** – ISIS (also known as ISIL) is a terrorist militant group that follows a fundamentalist jihadist doctrine of Sunni Islam. ISIS gained global prominence in 2014 when it drove Iraqi government forces out of key cities, then captured Mosul. Since then, it has conducted attacks on government forces in Syria, and by December 2015, it held a large area from western Iraq to eastern Syria, enforcing sharia law there. In *Home Fire*, **Parvaiz** leaves to join ISIS in Syria.

**Home Secretary** – The Home Secretary is head of the Home Office and a senior cabinet member in Britain. The Home Secretary is largely responsible for national security and immigration in the United Kingdom. In *Home Fire*, **Karamat Lone** is appointed Home Secretary at the beginning of the novel.

**MI5** – MI5 is Britain’s domestic counter-intelligence and security agency, the equivalent of the Homeland Security department in the United States. In the book, agents from MI5 come to **Isma**, **Aneeka**, and **Parvaiz**’s home after **Adil** leaves to become a jihadi in Bosnia.

**Jihadi** – A jihadi is an Islamic militant. In *Home Fire*, **Adil** is a jihadi fighter in Bosnia in the 1990s. ISIS is a group that is comprised of jihadis, and the women they recruit to marry male soldiers (whom **Parvaiz** is involved in recruiting) are known as “jihadi brides.”

Muslim families in contemporary England. The first family is the Pashas: 28-year-old Isma and her 19-year-old twin siblings, Aneeka and Parvaiz. The second family central to the story is the Lones: Karamat Lone, his Irish-American wife, Terry, and their 24-year-old son, Eammon. While both families have roots in Pakistan and both consider themselves to be fully British, the fact that the Pashas adhere to more conservative Muslim practices makes them feel like outsiders, while the Lones are more assimilated into non-Muslim British society. Shamsie thus highlights the conflict between what it means to be Muslim and what it means to be British, using the differences and similarities between the two families to examine how conservative Muslims are disproportionately subjected to racism and Islamophobia (particularly following the rise of the Islamic State). Shamsie suggests that despite Muslim people’s efforts to simultaneously honor their religious and cultural traditions and be accepted by the Western society they call home, discrimination often forces them to choose one aspect of their identity over the other.

Shamsie uses the Pashas to illustrate how practicing Muslims are often targeted in Britain; they are made to feel as though they are not British because of their faith. When Isma boards a plane to the U.S., she makes sure not to bring anything on the plane that could draw attention to her: “no Quran, no family pictures, no books on her area of academic interest.” But because of Isma’s **hijab**, she is still interrogated for two hours and she misses her flight. One of the questions the security officer explicitly asks is, “Do you consider yourself British?” This incident and the officer’s questions imply that something about Isma’s faith makes her untrustworthy and less British than a non-Muslim person, even though Isma is a British citizen. This idea becomes far more concrete and personal when Isma and Aneeka’s brother, Parvaiz, is killed after joining and then attempting to escape ISIS. His body is brought to Pakistan rather than England, because Karamat Lone, who is the British Home Secretary, enacts policies revoking the citizenship of dual nationals who “left Britain to join our enemies.” Despite the fact that England is the only place that Parvaiz ever called home, he isn’t granted forgiveness on the basis of trying to escape ISIS. Rather, Lone’s policy demonstrates that Britain is staunchly opposed to Islamic fundamentalism, to the point that even those who attempt to desert ISIS can never be considered British again. Notably, Parvaiz never committed any violence while he was a part of ISIS, yet his loss of citizenship is a harsher punishment than non-Muslim violent criminals are likely to receive in Britain. This law has far-reaching consequences beyond punishing those who are affiliated with ISIS: Aneeka, a practicing Muslim, also has her British citizenship revoked when she tries to retrieve her brother’s body from Pakistan and bring it back to London, emphasizing the injustice and cruelty of the law that Lone had created. When she arrives in Pakistan, her British passport is confiscated by the security services and she is unable to apply



## THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don’t have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



### ISLAM, NATIONALITY, AND IDENTITY.

*Home Fire* is a contemporary retelling of Sophocles’s [Antigone](#), focusing on two British

for a new one. Lone thinks to himself when hearing of this development, “Let her continue to be British; but let her be British outside Britain.” Even Lone recognizes that this statement is absurd: to be of a nation but not to be allowed within that nation leaves Aneeka without a homeland. Thus, even though she has committed no crimes, Aneeka’s Muslim faith and affiliation with Pakistan are deemed fundamentally incompatible with her nationality as a British person.

The Lones (particularly Karamat and Eamonn), on the other hand, represent the opposite side of the spectrum. While Karamat is of Pakistani descent, he renounces his faith and his Muslim identity in order to be accepted by the broader British population, indicating that he, too, feels he cannot be both British and Muslim at the same time. Early on, Isma reads an article that describes Karamat as “a man ‘from a Muslim background,’ which is what they always said about him, as though Muslim-ness was something he had boldly stridden away from.” This sets up Karamat as a man who has foregone his faith in order to be accepted by the British people. Eamonn also notes how his father was demonized for his faith in the past and was thus forced to separate himself from it. During Karamat’s first term as a Member of Parliament, a picture of him entering a mosque surfaced and it was published with the headline, “Lone Wolf’s Pack Revealed.” Karamat pointed out that the picture was several years old and that he had only been in the mosque for a funeral and “would otherwise never enter a gender-segregated space.” Karamat was essentially forced to renounce these religious customs, demonstrating the need for Muslim people to separate themselves from their faith in order to gain wide political support. Karamat acknowledges this idea and doubles down on his actions in a speech to his own former school, where the student body is predominantly Muslim. Though he acknowledges that the students are British, he argues, “Don’t set yourself apart in the way you dress, the way you think, the outdated codes of behavior you cling to, the ideologies to which you attach your loyalties. Because if you do, you will be treated differently.” Essentially, Lone argues that the things that make the students Muslim are the things that separate them from British people as a whole—and so they should choose being British over being Muslim.

Ultimately, the story ends with the implied deaths of Aneeka and Eamonn in a terrorist attack as they try to return Parvaiz’s body to Britain. Their tragic story is meant as a lesson for society: to be Muslim and to be British are simply aspects of a person’s identity, rather than the diametrically opposed forces that many people think they are. And had these two aspects not been considered mutually exclusive by society at large—if Aneeka, Eamonn, and Parvaiz had simply been allowed to embrace their British identities *and* their Muslim identities—then perhaps all three of these young people might still be alive.



## FAMILIAL LOVE, PROTECTION, AND BETRAYAL

In *Home Fire*, family members deeply love one another and they often go to extreme lengths to ensure their loved ones are protected. Karamat Lone, the father of one of the central families, ensures this for his son, Eamonn; Isma Pasha (the head of the other central family) does the same for her younger sister, Aneeka; and Aneeka looks out for her twin brother, Parvaiz. Yet frequently, what characters covertly do to protect their family members is not always what those family members believe to be best, and thus their actions often feel like betrayals. Shamsie therefore argues that even the tightest family bonds can be broken when individuals’ strategies for protecting their loved ones differ and are mired in secrecy.

Twenty-eight-year-old Isma and her nineteen-year-old sister, Aneeka, share a very close relationship, yet their differing strategies in attempting to protect their family create a deep rift between them that remains unresolved by the end of the novel. Isma is fiercely loyal to her twin siblings, Aneeka and Parvaiz, having cared for them after their mother, Zainab, died when the twins were 12 and Isma was 19. Isma frequently describes the strength of the love between herself and her sister in particular, which allowed them to care for each other through the deaths of their parents and grandmother. But when Parvaiz abandons their family to join ISIS, Isma in turn tries to protect what remains of her family by informing the police of his actions. Aneeka views this action as a betrayal of her brother, arguing that Parvaiz can no longer return home if he wants to. Isma tries to explain to Aneeka that the police would have found out about Parvaiz anyway, and that they can’t afford to “let the state question [their] loyalties,” but Aneeka refuses to hear this and she is exceptionally hurt. She subsequently refuses to talk to Isma, illustrating how even the best of intentions can be viewed as a betrayal and how such actions can split a family up. Aneeka, in turn, feels a deep love for Isma, but an even deeper love for Parvaiz. Eamonn notes that “In [Aneeka’s] tales of growing up, [Parvaiz] was her ever-present partner in crime, the shadow who sometimes strode ahead, sometimes followed behind, without ever becoming detached from their twinning.” But Aneeka’s attempts to rescue Parvaiz lead to her own betrayals, which create an even deeper rift between her and Isma. Whereas Isma relinquishes hope that her brother could ever return, Aneeka attempts to find a way to get him home. Aneeka starts a relationship with Eamonn Lone in the hopes that she can one day get his father, Home Secretary Karamat Lone, to help return Parvaiz to Britain. Ultimately, Aneeka also falls in love with Eamonn as their relationship develops, but when Isma discovers the motivations behind Aneeka’s actions, she is appalled and betrayed. Isma tries to reconcile with Aneeka, but her attempts to connect with her sister only drive Aneeka to more extreme actions: she

goes to Pakistan to retrieve Parvaiz's body. This results in Aneeka's death, as she killed in a terrorist attack in Pakistan. Throughout, Isma and Aneeka are driven by a shared desire to protect their family, but they can never agree about the best way to do so. Thus, Shamsie illustrates how family can be torn apart by perceived betrayals that are borne of different ideas about what protecting a family really means.

Karamat, too, tries to protect his son from being taken advantage of or used for political gain, but like Isma and Aneeka's story, his strategy to prevent Eamonn from making senseless decisions only drives him further away from the family. Once Eamonn realizes that he wants to marry Aneeka and he learns of her brother's past, he approaches his father to tell him the full story and to ask whether he can help return Parvaiz to Britain. Karamat instead calls him a "stupid boy" for letting Aneeka take advantage of him. He calls Aneeka the "nexus of al-Qaeda and the Islamic State" and he insists that Eamonn not have any further contact with Aneeka. In a later conversation in which Eamonn once again tries to plea for Aneeka, Karamat mocks Eamonn, asking, "did she give you your first really great blow job, Eamonn?" Karamat is attempting to show the degree to which Eamonn has been manipulated and to prevent the inevitable media frenzy to follow. However, these comments come as a complete betrayal to Eamonn, who has truly fallen in love with Aneeka, and they drive him to join her in Pakistan. This ultimately leads to both their deaths, when terrorists target Eamonn in retribution for Karamat's discriminatory policies. Thus, Karamat's actions only serve to further divide his family rather than to protect it as he intended, because Eamonn perceives those actions as betrayal rather than protection.

The story leaves the two families in a mountain of grief. The tragedy of Aneeka and Eamonn's deaths is highlighted by the fact that they both go to Pakistan in defiance of their families, whom they felt had completely betrayed them. Without that sense of betrayal, the families might have been able to keep their bonds strong and keep their members out of danger. Thus, Shamsie argues that no one person in a family can carry out a unilateral strategy for its protection: the only way that these families could have remained intact is by foregoing the secrecy and instead trying to maintain their families in an open and honest manner.



### FATHERS, SONS, AND INHERITANCE

*Home Fire* includes two very different father-son relationships: the relationship between British politician Karamat Lone and his son, Eamonn, and the relationship between jihadi Adil Pasha and his son, Parvaiz. Eamonn and Parvaiz both walk in the shadows of their fathers' legacies as they wonder how to carve their own paths in the world. Eamonn tries to live up to his father's expectations of strength and determination despite the fact that he lives in a

world of privilege that his father never had. Parvaiz, on the other hand, abandons the life that his sisters have created for him in order to follow in his father's footsteps. Shamsie thus illustrates how a son's sense of inheritance from his father can become an inescapable burden as the son tries to define his own individual life.

Parvaiz, who never knew his father, ends up trying to recreate his Adil's life in order to better understand his own purpose. Parvaiz meets Farooq, a cousin of one of Parvaiz's friends in the neighborhood. Farooq tells stories about Adil that Parvaiz has never known, because Adil was arrested in Afghanistan and then died of a seizure while being transported to Guantánamo. These are "stories of his father for which he'd always yearned—not a footloose boy or feckless husband but a man of courage who fought injustice, saw beyond the lie of national boundaries, kept his comrades' spirits up through times of darkness." Parvaiz digests these stories readily, eager to see his father as a hero rather than a villain—someone he can then emulate. This eagerness demonstrates Parvaiz's need to define himself through his father's life.

Parvaiz's desire to connect with his father grows when Farooq has several of his cousins chain Parvaiz to the floor in an unbearable crouch for hours and then waterboard him. At first Parvaiz is traumatized and upset, but then he thinks that he is becoming more and more like his father. Later, he asks to have the torture repeated, saying, "I want to feel my father's pain." This statement again reinforces the idea that Parvaiz feels the burden of his father's absence and that he wants to experience the same things in order to define himself. Parvaiz finally goes to Raqqa, Syria to try and meet other men who might have known his father and to aid in the effort for which his father fought: Islamic supremacy. Yet it is during this time that Parvaiz recognizes the folly of his actions in trying to become like his father. He learns that the men of his father's generation who fought jihad in Bosnia, Chechnya, or Kashmir all went home to their families in the winter. This information makes Parvaiz "blubber into his pillow at night, not because it makes him understand that his father never loved him (though he does understand that), but because he finally sees that he's becoming his father in negative ways rather than positive ones. Too late, Parvaiz recognizes the harm in defining himself through a man who abandoned him: by running away from his sisters, Parvaiz is repeating the same betrayal.

Eamonn, too, feels the burden of his father's legacy on his shoulders, particularly because Karamat doesn't believe that Eamonn can live up to it. This causes Eamonn to try instead to prove that he can be his own person and step outside of his father's shadow—an action which ultimately causes his own downfall. Initially, Eamonn conveys the love and admiration he has for his father to Isma, saying that fathers are "guides into manhood" for sons. He describes the relationship further: "We want to be like them, we want to be better than them. We want

to be the only people in the world who are allowed to be better than them." Eamonn thus illustrates his own deep-seated need to live up to his father's legacy—and to outshine it. Yet Eamonn also sees how his identity is complicated by his father's perception of him. Growing up, Karamat would say to Eamonn, "Who is this posh English boy with my face, [...] sometimes with disappointment, sometimes with pride. Who you made me, so blame yourself, the son would reply, and his father would respond with either *There is no blame, my jaan, my life* or *That was your mother's doing, not mine.*" Eamonn thus understands that he has a privilege his father did not have; he has grown up in comfort in Britain, cushioned by his mother's family's wealth, so he'll never really be able to work as hard as Karamat did. Therefore, it is impossible to walk completely in Karamat's footsteps or gain the resilience that he had. After Parvaiz dies and Karamat refuses to allow Aneeka to bring her brother's body home to Britain, Eamonn is determined to defy Karamat in order to stand up for himself. He posts a video message online, imploring his father to see reason, and then he travels to Pakistan in order to (as Karamat puts it) "prove to his father he [has] a spine." His actions are intended to support Aneeka, but perhaps more importantly, they're intended to defy Karamat, highlighting again how the weight of a father's legacy can drive a son to extreme measures.

Through Parvaiz and Eamonn, Shamsie illustrates how the legacy of a father to a son becomes inescapable. It is Isma who connects the two characters when she hears Eamonn defend his father's actions early in the book: "It didn't matter if they were on this or that side of the political spectrum, or whether the fathers were absent or present, or if someone else had loved them better, loved them more: in the end they were always their fathers' sons." Ultimately, for both men, the attempts to escape their father's shadows results in their own deaths—deaths borne of their fathers' actions. Parvaiz is killed while trying to escape the organization that his father fought for; Eamonn killed in retribution for his father's discriminatory policies. These endings argue that the cycle of sons measuring themselves against their fathers can lead to fatal consequences.



### STEREOTYPES VS. INDIVIDUALITY

Each of the characters in *Home Fire* has a unique perspective—a different way of engaging with their faith or race as well as different key experiences that shaped them growing up. Yet Shamsie illustrates how her characters are often viewed by the public and by each other not as individuals, but as representatives of their religion, gender, race, nationality, or some combination thereof: Karamat as a politically calculating "traitor" of his faith; Parvaiz as a terrorist; Aneeka and Isma as either too conservative or too immodest about their sexuality. Yet in providing backstory on each of those characters, Shamsie argues that the complexity and

nuances of people's individual experiences should be considered in understanding them, rather than just the assumptions and stereotypes others make about them.

While Karamat is understood by the public as a man who has turned his back on his community, his political philosophy and policies actually have deeply personal underpinnings. When Karamat is promoted to Home Secretary, Isma views his promotion with dismay. She receives several messages on her phone from Aneeka, including "It's all going to get worse. He has to prove he's one of them, not one of us, doesn't he? As if he hasn't already." To outside eyes, Karamat's tough positions are viewed as a betrayal of people like him—he is viewed as someone who has abandoned his Muslim identity for political gain. Yet throughout later chapters, particularly the one from Karamat's perspective, Shamsie provides nuance for his stances: he has deep care for British values because his parents worked so hard to provide him opportunity there. Shamsie describes him as "a child of migrants who understands how much his Parents gave up—family, context, language, familiarity—because the nation to which they first belonged had proven itself inadequate to the task of allowing them to live with dignity." And even though most people—including Karamat's son, Eamonn—believe that Karamat has completely abandoned his religion, this is also untrue. Karamat confesses to his son that he really believes in Islam and that "There are still moments of stress when [he'll] recite Ayat al-Kursi as a kind of reflex." Yet Karamat has had to give up this identity out of pragmatism in order to distance himself from those he believes to still be in "the Dark Ages." When asked if he hates Muslims, he replies, "I hate the Muslims who make people hate Muslims." This statement provides more individual nuance to Karamat's persona—his actions are not simply motivated by a hatred for those like him, but instead for those who make it more difficult him to identify with his own faith.

Parvaiz is similarly stereotyped—on the surface, he embodies a young Muslim man who has forsaken his own country and turned to terrorism. Yet he, too, is revealed to be acting on personal motivations rather than a desire to bring down British democracy. When Parvaiz's death is first reported by British news networks, he is immediately placed in a category of people rather than being understood as an individual story: "the latest name in the string of Muslims from Britain who have joined ISIS." He is immediately understood only as a terrorist, and all the narratives that the media accumulates support this idea. Thus, Shamsie illustrates how the public and the media not only form these ideas—the media actively feeds what the public already believes. Yet in the chapter from Parvaiz's own perspective, Shamsie again shows the personal motivations behind Parvaiz's seemingly political decisions. His choice to join ISIS is due to a desire find out more about his father, Adil, who was a jihadi. Further, although Parvaiz is a part of ISIS's media unit, he never takes part in its violence. Instead, Parvaiz quickly

realizes that he has made a horrific mistake in joining the organization and he wishes to escape it. While the details of his story don't mitigate his involvement with violent war crimes, they do provide much more nuance to a story that the public (and readers) might assume they already know.

For Isma and Aneeka, their choices and their faith are also viewed through the lens of their gender. How they engage (or don't engage) with their sexuality causes others to put them into a category based on that fact, despite the fact that each person has their own "versions of selective reading when it comes to the Holy Book," as one of Isma's professors puts it. Both Isma and Aneeka choose to wear **hijabs** and protect their sexuality to a degree. Isma is insistent on abstaining from sex until she is at least "able to imagine marrying someone," even when she falls in love with Eamonn as their friendship develops. She is both teased by her professor and judged by strangers for this: when Isma meets Karamat for the first time at the end of the novel, he notes that Isma makes "no effort to look anything but plain" and is "probably a virgin." Instead of viewing her as an individual, he sees her as someone who is simply a type. Aneeka receives the opposite treatment: she is repeatedly described in the text as beautiful, and unlike Isma, she chooses to wear makeup. According to Isma, "Aneeka had always been someone boys looked at—and someone who looked back." She has no reservations about having sex with Eamonn but she does note to him that she wears a hijab for reasons of modesty: "I get to choose which parts of me I want strangers to look at, and which are for you," she tells him. Yet her individual beliefs are misinterpreted when the story about her and Eamonn breaks. An article that starts with the words "Ho-jabi" carries this passage: "[Aneeka] hunted down the Home Secretary's son, Eamonn, 24, and, used sex to try and brainwash him into convincing his father to allow her terrorist brother back into England." Though the passage carries blatant lies about what happened between them, it reveals how public perception can turn on someone based on how well they do or do not fit into expectation. This is true of most of the characters: they are unfairly judged based on the categories to which they belong, even though the underlying reality is often much more complicated and individualized. By illustrating these characters' unique complexities, Shamsie argues that stereotypes erase the truths of individual stories and cause needless harm by lumping people into broad, inaccurate categories.



## SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



## HIJAB

While the word hijab has a range of meanings, it is most often used to describe the head covering or headscarf worn in public by some Muslim women to cover their hair. It is used to maintain modesty and privacy, primarily from men who are not family members. Characters like Hira, Karamat, and Eamonn view the hijab as a symbol of female oppression—of men dictating the dress and modesty of women. But for Isma and Aneeka, both of whom wear hijabs, the hijab becomes something different: a symbol of pride in one's faith, and a symbol of female empowerment. As Aneeka says to Eamonn, "I get to choose which parts of me I want strangers to look at, and which are for you." Thus, the hijab represents the way that Muslim people (especially women) are often stereotyped as a homogenous group, when in reality they are all individuals with their own views and beliefs. From the outside, the hijab might seem like a simple emblem of Muslim conservatism, but to specific women like Aneeka and Isma, it's a way to express their unique interpretations of their faith and claim ownership over their own sexuality.



## THE PARACHUTIST

The parachutist represents both Eamonn and Parvaiz's failed attempts to live up to or outshine their fathers. The morning that Isma meets Eamonn, she looks through her skylight and notices a parachutist descending through the sky. Isma notes that the image reminds her of Icarus, "hurtling down, his father, Daedalus, following too slowly to catch the vainglorious boy." This is a nod to *Home Fire's* roots in ancient Greek mythology: in the myth, Icarus is the headstrong son of the brilliant inventor Daedalus, who builds wax wings for himself and his son so that they can fly. But when Icarus flies higher and higher out of pride, he flies too close to the sun, his wings melt, and he falls to his death. Both Eamonn and Parvaiz are analogues of Icarus, as they take desperate actions to try and live up to the legacies their fathers, Karamat and Adil, have laid out for them. In each son's case, these attempts ultimately lead to their deaths.



## QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Riverhead edition of *Home Fire* published in 2017.

## Chapter 1 – Isma Quotes

☞ “Do you consider yourself British?” the man said. “I am British.”

☞ “But do you consider yourself British?”

☞ “I’ve lived here all my life.” She meant there was no other country of which she could feel herself a part, but the words came out sounding evasive.

**Related Characters:** Isma Pasha (speaker), Parvaiz Pasha, Adil Pasha

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 5

### Explanation and Analysis

In the opening pages of *Home Fire*, Isma is traveling to the United States to begin a PhD program. But when she goes through the security checks, despite the fact that she makes a conscious effort not to bring anything that could raise flags, she is detained for two hours and receives an extensive check of her bag and an interview—she is targeted for her hijab and perhaps, as readers later discover, because her father and brother had both joined terrorist organizations.

In instigating the interview, the security officer is viewing Isma through the lens of a stereotype, ignoring her individuality and making assumptions based on her appearance, her race, and her family. This pointed question about her identity and her nationality illustrates the fact that a Muslim person’s faith is often set against their nationality in Britain. Even though Isma knows that there is no other place that she could call home, her loyalty is called into question specifically because of her faith. Shamsie uses this scene to point out how Muslims are often forced to assimilate and shed the markers of their faith, which can turn them into outsiders in their own country.

☞ Parvaiz was the person Aneeka talked to about all her griefs and worries, but it was Isma she came to for an embrace, or a hand to rub her back, or a body to curl up against on the sofa. And when the burden of the universe seemed too great for Isma to bear—particularly in those early days after their grandmother and mother had died within the space of a year, leaving Isma to parent and provide for two grief-struck twelve-year-olds—it was Aneeka who would place her hands on her sister’s shoulders and massage away the ache.

**Related Characters:** Adil Pasha, Parvaiz Pasha, Aneeka Pasha, Isma Pasha

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 14

### Explanation and Analysis

In this first chapter, Isma’s thoughts about her sister Aneeka establish the love and familial bonds between all three of the central siblings. First, this passage conveys how much the siblings rely on one another and emphasizes the responsibility of a parent that Isma has had to take on—part of the reason that she so despises the father who walked out on them. But the physical closeness between the two women described here later becomes contrasted with the deep hurt and betrayal that Aneeka feels about Isma’s choice to report Parvaiz to the police. They provide a comfort for one another that no one else is able to, and it is this relationship that Isma thinks she is protecting when she reports that Parvaiz has joined ISIS. To her, salvaging the family that she has left is more important to her than trying to rescue her brother, whereas Aneeka feels the opposite.

## Chapter 2 – Isma Quotes

☞ All the old muck. He meant the picture of Karamat Lone entering a mosque that had been in the news for its “hate preacher.” LONE WOLF’S PACK REVEALED, the headlines screamed when a tabloid got hold of it, near the end of his first term as an MP. The Lone Wolf’s response had been to point out that the picture was several years old, he had been there only for his uncle’s funeral prayers and would otherwise never enter a gender-segregated space. This was followed by pictures of him and his wife walking hand in hand into a church.

**Related Characters:** Aneeka Pasha, Terry Lone, Karamat Lone, Eamonn Lone, Isma Pasha

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 35

### Explanation and Analysis

After Isma has become closer with Eamonn, she finds out that his father Karamat is being promoted to Home Secretary—a move which surely means more restrictive policies that will harm Muslims, as Aneeka speculates in

texts to Isma. When Eamonn meets up with Isma after the announcement, he says that he wants to avoid reading “all the old muck” about him. Isma’s elaboration on what that means establishes a duality between a family like Isma’s and a family like the Lones. She embraces Islam and is an active practitioner, as demonstrated by her hijab and her regular prayers. But, as was shown in the first chapter, this makes it harder for Isma in the eyes of the general public to be considered British because of their Islamophobia. On the other side is Karamat Lone, who is similarly criticized for his faith. Yet Karamat’s response, by contrast, is to abandon that faith in order to be considered British and win the support of the wider British public. The nuance of this stance is only revealed later, when Karamat reveals that he does believe in Islam but feels that he has been forced to choose between two aspects of his identity.

☞ Yes, Dr. Shah, if you look at colonial laws you’ll see plenty of precedent for depriving people of their rights; the only difference is this time it’s applied to British citizens, and even that’s not as much of a change as you might think, because they’re rhetorically being made un-British [...] The 7/7 terrorists were never described by the media as “British terrorists.” Even when the word “British” was used, it was always “British of Pakistani descent” or “British Muslim” or, my favorite, “British passport holders,” always something interposed between their Britishness and terrorism.

**Related Characters:** Isma Pasha (speaker), Parvaiz Pasha, Hira Shah

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 40

### Explanation and Analysis

This quote comes out of a flashback that Isma has while she is visiting her mentor, Dr. Hira Shah. When Isma attended the London School of Economics, Shah is discussing the curtailing of freedoms in Britain, but Isma points out that many British citizens’ rights have been curtailed for a long time—by casting them as something other than British. This again illustrates the separation of Muslims from their British nationality. Even among those who commit crimes, Muslims are often uniquely alienated from their nationality simply because the broader public thinks that their faith somehow makes them less British. The idea that Isma argues for here also becomes far less abstract when, later, Parvaiz is assumed to be a dangerous terrorist and both he

and Aneeka have their British citizenship stripped from them because of their adherence to Islam and the fact that they are dual nationals with Pakistan—despite the fact that neither has ever been to Pakistan.

☞ “Parvaiz is not our father. He’s my twin. He’s me. But you, you’re not our sister anymore.”

“Aneeka...”

“I mean it. You betrayed us, both of us. And then you tried to hide it from me. Don’t call, don’t text, don’t send me pictures, don’t fly across the ocean and expect me to ever agree to see your face again. We have no sister.”

**Related Characters:** Isma Pasha, Aneeka Pasha (speaker), Adil Pasha, Parvaiz Pasha

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 44

### Explanation and Analysis

When Aneeka discovers that Isma is the one who turned their brother Parvaiz in to the authorities following his decision to join ISIS in Raqqa, Aneeka calls her sister in outrage, thinking that this means that Parvaiz can never return home to them, even if he realizes that he has made a mistake. This moment closely parallels Sophocles’s *Antigone*, in which the protagonist disowns her sister Ismene after Ismene refuses to fight against the government on their brother’s behalf.

Aneeka’s statement illuminates several major themes at play over the course of the novel. First, Aneeka’s first statement here, that Parvaiz is not their father, foreshadows the relationship between Parvaiz and Adil. Despite Aneeka’s protests that they are not the same person, Shamsie eventually reveals how much Parvaiz’s journey is inspired by his father’s as he searches for answers about his identity. Parvaiz even acknowledges how much he wants to be like his father before understanding that this is, in fact, to his detriment.

Isma, on the other hand, realizes this much sooner. Having experienced the same kind of abandonment earlier in her life, she understands how much Parvaiz has threatened what little family that she has left in the world, and she sees this as a major betrayal. Thus, she decided instead to protect Aneeka over Parvaiz in reporting him and letting them remain in the authorities’ good graces. Yet even though Isma is acting with the best intentions, Aneeka views

this as a betrayal, particularly due to Isma's secrecy, and this only serves to drive another wedge within the family they are all trying to save.

“It's harder for him,” he said. “Because of his background. Early on, in particular, he had to be more careful than any other MP, and at times that meant doing things he regretted. But everything he did, even the wrong choices, were because he had a sense of purpose. Public service, national good, British values [...]”

There he sat, his father's son. It didn't matter if they were on this or that side of the political spectrum, or whether the fathers were absent or present, or if someone else had loved them better, loved them more: in the end they were always their fathers' sons.

**Related Characters:** Eamonn Lone (speaker), Adil Pasha, Parvaiz Pasha, Karamat Lone, Isma Pasha

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 44

### Explanation and Analysis

When Isma and Eamonn meet late at night and Isma gives Eamonn an opportunity to talk about his father, Eamonn tries to justify some of the ways Karamat has been less than supportive of his Muslim constituents. Again, with Eamonn emphasizing his adherence to “British values,” Shamsie illustrates the perceived divide between being Muslim and being British, and how people like Karamat are forced to choose between these two segments of their identity. But this statement by Eamonn also illustrates how Karamat actually reinforces the division between these two identities: he expects others to follow his example by distancing themselves from their faith in favor of their nationality, and this in turn forces Muslims like Isma to prioritize their faith above their nationality—instead of being able to embrace both sides of their identity.

The second part of this quote, revealing Isma's thoughts, highlights another important theme: fathers' legacies and impacts on their sons. Eamonn feels indebted to his father and ardently defends him, allowing Karamat's choices to shape his life and his own viewpoints—until he chooses to rebel later. And though Isma is referring directly to Eamonn here, she is also making a connection between him and Parvaiz, who also walks in the shadow of his father and whose path is deeply shaped by the man that he never knew.

## Chapter 3 – Eamonn Quotes

“Especially not him. He says you are what you make of yourself.” He raised and lowered his shoulders. “Unless you're his son. Then he indulges you even if you don't make anything of yourself.”

“He indulges you?”

“Yes. My sister's like him, so she gets all the expectation. I get the pampering and the free passes.”

“Do you mind that?”

“I mind a lot. And you're the first person to ever guess that might be the case.”

**Related Characters:** Aneeka Pasha, Eamonn Lone (speaker), Emily Lone, Karamat Lone

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 81

### Explanation and Analysis

Shortly after Aneeka and Eamonn begin their romantic involvement, they discuss what Karamat's attitudes might be concerning Adil, and Eamonn assures Aneeka that she would never be judged for the actions of her father; Karamat believes that people are what they make of themselves, with one exception. Eamonn's understanding of his father's views on him, and his frustration with Karamat's lack of expectations for him, again sheds some light on their relationship and how it shapes Eamonn's arc through the book.

In contrast to Parvaiz, Eamonn has a solid relationship with his father and is all too aware of what he has achieved. Yet Eamonn still feels pressure to try to live up to his father's legacy or surpass it. And because his father doesn't expect much of him, he feels that he has even more to prove. This is one of the reasons that Eamonn's path takes the course that it does: when he sides with Aneeka over Karamat and records a video criticizing his father's policies, it is in order to prove to his father that he has the strength to make his own decisions. Even though Eamonn loses his life by following Aneeka to Pakistan, he feels the need to defy his father in order to make a point and step out from his father's shadow.

## Chapter 4 – Eamonn Quotes

☞ You are, we are, British. Britain accepts this. So do most of you. But for those of you who are in some doubt about it, let me say this: Don't set yourself apart in the way you dress, the way you think, the outdated codes of behavior you cling to, the ideologies to which you attach your loyalties. Because if you do, you will be treated differently—not because of racism, though that does still exist, but because you insist on your difference from everyone else in this multiethnic, multireligious, multitudinous United Kingdom of ours. And look at all you miss out on because of it.

**Related Characters:** Karamat Lone (speaker), Isma Pasha, Aneeka Pasha, Eamonn Lone

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 90

**Explanation and Analysis**

When Eamon and Aneeka are in the midst of their relationship, Karamat gives a speech to his alma mater, which has a majority Muslim student body. In the speech, quoted here, he advises the students not to set themselves apart from other British citizens. This is one of the more prominent moments in which Karamat's character mirrors that of King Creon from Sophocles's *Antigone*: both men are explicitly devoted to their nations at the expense of all else, including their own families.

This statement exemplifies the way that British Muslims must choose one aspect of their identity over another, and illustrates Karamat's own belief that one should choose nationality over faith. Because following more conservative Muslim practices, as Aneeka and Isma do, involves dressing and behaving differently than the white British majority, Karamat views those behaviors as essentially un-British. The irony in Karamat's statement is that Britain would not be a country of multiple ethnicities or faiths without having difference, and so his argument is a paradox. He counsels people to be different, but to do so without looking or acting different, and the illogical nature of this advice highlights how impossible society makes it for British Muslims to reconcile their conflicting identities.

☞ The video wouldn't reveal the things that were most striking about her in those moments: the intensity of her concentration, how completely it could swerve from her God to him in the time she took those few footsteps, or her total lack of self-consciousness in everything she did—love and prayer, the covered head and the naked body.

**Related Characters:** Karamat Lone, Aneeka Pasha, Eamonn Lone

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 90-91

**Explanation and Analysis**

After Eamonn watches the video of his father giving a speech at his old school in which he counsels the predominantly Muslim student body not to differentiate themselves in behavior or dress, Eamonn compares this to a hypothetical video of Aneeka. First, Eamonn acknowledges that Aneeka and Isma are exactly the people at whom Karamat's message is directed, as they wear hijabs, regularly pray, and observe major Muslim holidays. His reflections again reinforce the differences between the Lones' choice of nationality over faith and the Pashas' emphasis on faith over nationality, as each family is forced to choose an aspect of their identity.

But Eamonn's thoughts also touch on another theme: the stereotypes that people like Aneeka face. He notes the assumptions that many people would make about her given her conservative dress, then illustrates the nuance in her beliefs by highlighting her choice to cover her head even while embracing her sexuality. Eamonn's statement that this is the most remarkable thing about her emphasizes how much is lost when people make these blanket assumptions rather than understanding people as individuals with unique beliefs.

☞ “That's my twin. I've spent every day the last six months sick with worry about him. Now he wants to come home. But your father is unforgiving, particularly about people like him. So I'm not going to get my brother back. [...] half of me is always there, wondering if he's alive, what he's doing, what he's done. I'm so tired of it. I want to be here, completely. With you.”  
It was what she'd say if she were still only trying to manipulate him. It was what she'd say if she'd really fallen in love with him.

**Related Characters:** Aneeka Pasha (speaker), Karamat Lone, Parvaiz Pasha, Eamonn Lone

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 102

### Explanation and Analysis

When Aneeka finally reveals the whereabouts of her brother, Parvaiz, to Eamonn and admits that she was initially only interested in Eamonn for his connection to his father, Eamonn is devastated. Shamsie uses the chapter's perspective, which comes solely from Eamonn, to manipulate readers' beliefs that the relationship had been purely genuine—which is exactly what Eamonn has thought up to this point. And so here, readers understand his betrayal in the same immediate, agonizing way that Eamonn himself confronts it.

In this quote, Aneeka affirms her love for her brother and makes it clear that she would do anything to protect him—even if it means hurting her sister, who had also been in love with Eamonn, and also hurting the man with whom she may have fallen in love. The fact that her motivations have been a secret until now makes her actions seem unfaithful, even though Aneeka is acting in the interest of keeping her family together. Yet ultimately, like others' perceived betrayals, these apparent acts of manipulation drive a further wedge between Aneeka and the people that she loves.

☛ *Who is this posh English boy with my face*, the father would say, sometimes with disappointment, sometimes with pride. *Who you made me, so blame yourself* the son would reply, and his father would respond with either *There is no blame, my jaan, my life* or *That was your mother's doing, not mine*.

**Related Characters:** Eamonn Lone, Karamat Lone (speaker), Parvaiz Pasha, Aneeka Pasha, Isma Pasha

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 107

### Explanation and Analysis

When Eamonn approaches Karamat to talk to him about Aneeka and Parvaiz, Eamonn describes some of the complicated tension in their relationship. Eamonn looks like his father and is like him in many ways, but the simple fact of being his father's son puts him in very different circumstances from his father's. Being born into privilege, Eamonn doesn't have to work hard in the way that Karamat did—a fact that Eamonn understands and enjoys but in some ways also resents, as he hopes to outdo his father or at least live up to his legacy. For Karamat, as well, their relationship becomes difficult, because he is proud of the

life that he has been able to give his son but also disappointed in his belief that this privilege is what makes Eamonn entitled and lazy. Karamat's disappointment is part of what drives Eamonn's decisions, both in connecting with the life his father once had through getting to know Isma and Aneeka, and in ultimately trying to prove his strength to his father by defying him.

☛ “There are still moments of stress when I'll recite Ayat al-Kursi as a kind of reflex.”

“Is that a prayer?”

“Yes. Ask your girlfriend about it. Actually, no, I'd prefer it if you didn't mention it to anyone.”

“You shouldn't have to hide that kind of thing.”

“I'd be nervous about a home secretary who's spoken openly about his atheism but secretly recites Muslim prayers. Wouldn't you?”

**Related Characters:** Eamonn Lone, Karamat Lone (speaker), Aneeka Pasha

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 110

### Explanation and Analysis

When Eamonn confesses his relationship with Aneeka to his father, he is surprised to learn that his father grew up as an observant Muslim and still does believe, despite the fact that he hides this part of his identity. This revelation again reinforces the idea that in order to be palatable as a representative of the British public, Karamat has had to forego his faith and prioritize his British identity instead.

Additionally, Karamat's statement illustrates the idea that people like Karamat are frequently stereotyped, and that he has to work to actively avoid those stereotypes. As a Muslim person who has declared he is an atheist, he recognizes that if people were to find out about his prayers, they would become instantly suspicious of him. But for the Muslim community, who understand that tension, knowing this would add nuance to his identity and perhaps help them see who Karamat really is: he is not simply a person who has given up faith for political gain. He still has belief; he is just feels that he's forced to hide it.

## Chapter 5 – Parvaiz Quotes

●● They'd returned most of the items they took, but not the pictures of Adil Pasha climbing a mountain, sitting beside a campfire, wading across a stream—sometimes alone, sometimes in the company of other men, always smiling, always with a gun slung over his shoulder or cradled in his lap. *When you're old enough, my son*, his father had inscribed inside it, which made Parvaiz's mother furious for reasons he didn't then understand.

**Related Characters:** Farooq, Zainab Pasha, Adil Pasha, Parvaiz Pasha

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 126

### Explanation and Analysis

When Parvaiz is first approached by Farooq, he wonders if the man might be a part of MI5, since that could be how Farooq knows information about Adil. Parvaiz then recalls an old album that the men from MI5 took away that contained pictures Adil, along with a message that implied that he expected Parvaiz to one day join him. Even though Parvaiz no longer has the album, the memory of it is enough to set him on the path to follow in his father's footsteps—perhaps this is especially because these things were taken away from him and discouraged by his mother. Without a father figure, Parvaiz eventually realizes that the only way to find out information about Adil is to seek out the people and the organization in which he'd been involved. Thus, even though Parvaiz has never known his father, the course of his life is deeply altered by his father's own choices—and not for the better.

●● Or Farooq would talk and Parvaiz would listen to those stories of his father for which he'd always yearned—not a footloose boy or feckless husband but a man of courage who fought injustice, saw beyond the lie of national boundaries, kept his comrades' spirits up through times of darkness.

**Related Characters:** Isma's grandmother, Isma Pasha, Zainab Pasha, Adil Pasha, Farooq, Parvaiz Pasha

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 130

### Explanation and Analysis

When Parvaiz meets Farooq, the cousin of a friend, Parvaiz is drawn in by the stories that Farooq is able to tell about Parvaiz's father. Parvaiz is so drawn to them because he has so little information about his father; he feels lost in terms of his own direction in life because he has nothing to model himself on. But hearing his father described as a hero, rather than as a selfish traitor as his mother, grandmother, and Isma had always done, starts to provide Parvaiz with a legacy that he wants to live up to. Additionally, the more that Parvaiz and Farooq talk and get to know each other, the more Farooq starts to become a father figure for Parvaiz, providing Parvaiz with a second example of the path he could be taking. However, following these examples is what ultimately leads Parvaiz to ISIS and his downfall, illustrating how dangerous it can become when sons seek to define themselves in terms of their fathers.

●● The ache in his back had begun to recede and he remembered how, before the pain had become too unbearable for any thought beyond his own suffering, he had turned his head toward the wall, toward the photograph of his father, and there was this understanding, *I am you, for the first time*.

**Related Characters:** Adil Pasha, Farooq, Parvaiz Pasha

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 142

### Explanation and Analysis

As Parvaiz becomes closer and closer to Farooq and hungrier and hungrier for stories of his father, Farooq one day invites him over and has two young men chain Parvaiz to the floor for hours in a squatting position until he is begging for mercy. In hindsight, Parvaiz recognizes that while he was being tortured, he felt closer to his father than ever before. In this passage, Parvaiz reveals his desire to be like his father and how deeply he is influenced by the choices that his father—particularly the choice to be a jihadi. But the fact that this all comes at the cost of enduring torture hints at the path that Parvaiz will eventually choose for himself—joining ISIS in order to further connect with his father. By connecting Parvaiz's identification with horrifying torture even at this early phase of Parvaiz's journey, Shamsie makes it clear that trying to follow in his father's legacy will ultimately end up destroying Parvaiz.

## Chapter 6 – Parvaiz Quotes

☝☝ He had survived military training, during which he learned that fear can drive your body to impossible feats, and that the men of his father’s generation who fought jihad in Bosnia, Chechnya, Kashmir, all went home to their families for the winter months. That piece of information had made him blubber into his pillow at night, not because it made him understand that his father had never loved him (though he did understand that) but because he finally saw that he was his father’s son in his abandonment of a family who had always deserved better than him.

**Related Characters:** Isma Pasha, Adil Pasha, Parvaiz Pasha

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 170-171

### Explanation and Analysis

Several months into Parvaiz’s time with ISIS, he recognizes the enormity of his mistake. Discovering that his father could have returned home to visit his family, Parvaiz finally understands how completely his father abandoned the family; Adil didn’t have to leave them entirely, but he chose to do so. Parvaiz recognizes that, consequently, following in his father’s footsteps has not given him a path at all, nor is it a way to accomplish anything meaningful. Instead, it has just made him repeat the same terrible mistake that Adil made before him. That is, in going to Syria, he has completely betrayed the family that gave him everything, particularly Isma. He thought that he was trying to protect the memory of his father and perhaps the religious causes of his father’s generation, but instead his actions have only left him trapped without a homeland. Through Parvaiz’s realization here, Shamsie again illustrates how clinging to a father’s legacy can make a son repeat the mistakes of the past rather than remedying them.

☝☝ The things you forget. How it feels to hear someone speak to you with love.

“No, I just. I can’t stay here. I can’t do it. They’ve taken my passport so I have to but I can’t. I thought if I learned the rules... but I can’t. I can’t. I just want to come home.”

**Related Characters:** Parvaiz Pasha (speaker), Aneeka Pasha

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 178

### Explanation and Analysis

Once Parvaiz is able to contact Aneeka and she explains that she has a plan to get him home, he breaks down and begs to come home. This change of heart illustrates two major themes of the novel. First, it again emphasizes the deep love between Aneeka and Parvaiz, and the fact that she is willing to do anything to protect him—even if it means betraying others. Additionally, it shows the nuance in Parvaiz’s story—which will soon be lost following his death. Parvaiz never committed a violent crime, he is deeply sorry over his mistakes, and he wants to make a complete reversal. But ultimately the British public will only be able to see him as a terrorist who is dangerous to the United Kingdom. Shamsie uses this conversation with Aneeka to emphasize that even though Parvaiz’s ties to those who committed war crimes is inexcusable, there is more to his individual circumstance than one might expect at first blush.

## Chapter 7 – Aneeka Quotes

☝☝ The Turkish government confirmed this morning that the man killed in a drive-by shooting outside the British consulate in Istanbul yesterday was Wembley-born Pervys Pasha, the latest name in the string of Muslims from Britain who have joined ISIS. Intelligence officials were aware that Pasha crossed into Syria last December, but as yet have no information about why he was approaching the British consulate. A terror attack has not been ruled out.

**Related Characters:** Hira Shah, Isma Pasha, Aneeka Pasha, Parvaiz Pasha

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 192

### Explanation and Analysis

After Parvaiz’s death, the media begins to report on the story. In these passages, Shamsie confirms the way in which the public relies on stereotypes in its descriptions, particularly when they don’t fully understand what is happening. Getting this reporting after the chapter from Parvaiz’s perspective raises readers’ awareness of the dissonance between these two perspectives, as Shamsie has already provided a picture of this young man that is much more nuanced than the picture of the terrorist that the news paints. This is directly alluded to in the misspelling of Parvaiz’s name; it’s clear that the media only cares about Parvaiz’s identity as a Muslim and not at all about the details

of his unique identity.

Additionally, this news story supports an argument of Isma's earlier in the book, when she described to Dr. Shah how British Muslims are rarely described as such, with their faith taking precedence over their nationality in the public eye. Her claim comes true here, as Parvaiz is described as a "Muslim from Britain" rather than a British person—which, of course, he was. Parvaiz's death also directly parallels the death of Polynices in Sophocles's *Antigone*. In the play, Polynices is approaching the gates of Thebes (just as Parvaiz is approaching the British embassy) when he is killed in battle, and his death sets off his sister Antigone's desperate quest to have him buried honorably.

☛ Why the secrecy? Why do you think? Because of men like you with your notepads and your recorders. Because I wanted him to want to do anything for me before I asked him to do something for my brother. Why shouldn't I admit it? What would you stop at to help the people you love most?

[...]

When they left there was Isma, wounded and appalled.

"Don't look at me like that. If you liked him you should have done it yourself. Why didn't you love our brother enough to do it yourself?"

**Related Characters:** Aneeka Pasha (speaker), Karamat Lone, Parvaiz Pasha, Eamonn Lone, Isma Pasha

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 199-200

### Explanation and Analysis

When reporters and agents come to see Aneeka and Isma to ask about Parvaiz and Aneeka's involvement with Eamonn, she comes clean about the initial reason for her pursuit of Eamonn, confirming that she hoped that he might be able to talk to Karamat on her brother's behalf and allow him to come home. This quote illustrates another example of betrayal in the name of family. Isma did not know of Aneeka's involvement with Eamonn or the reason for it prior to this, and she is particularly heartbroken because she had a romantic interest in Eamonn as well.

Just as Isma thought she was protecting her family by giving Parvaiz up to the police, Aneeka felt that she was trying to protect her brother in beginning this relationship. And in both cases, particularly because each sister went about her plans without informing the other, these choices felt like a

betrayal. This illustrates how, when family members' strategies about how to protect a family differ and are cloaked in secrecy, these tactics often divide a family further rather than bringing them together.

☛ Aneeka "Knickers" Pasha, the 19-year-old twin sister of Muslim fanatic Parvaiz "Pervy" Pasha has been revealed as her brother's accomplice. She hunted down the Home Secretary's son, Eamonn, 24, and used sex to try and brainwash him into convincing his father to allow her terrorist brother back into England.

**Related Characters:** Isma Pasha, Karamat Lone, Eamonn Lone, Parvaiz Pasha, Aneeka Pasha

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 214

### Explanation and Analysis

After the story about Parvaiz, Aneeka, and Eamonn breaks, tabloid newspapers begin to carry sensationalist stories about Aneeka. This story, which begins its title with "Hojabi," demonstrates again how people like Aneeka and Isma are punished for their adherence to—and deviation from—stereotypes about Muslim women. While some judge Isma for being plain and conservative, others judge Aneeka for her beauty and her wearing makeup. For these reasons—despite the fact that she covers her head—they assume that Aneeka must be overly sexual and therefore must have seduced Eamonn. Shamsie implies that no matter what the women do, they can't win; observant Muslim women will always be attacked by the white British majority.

So much of the story quoted here is inaccurate: Eamonn pursued relationships with Isma and then Aneeka, not the other way around, and even though Aneeka's pursuit of the relationship did have a basis in wondering whether Eamonn might be able to help Parvaiz, she ultimately did fall in love with Eamonn, and he with her. But to the broader public, these nuances are invisible and meaningless; the media and its audiences are happy to stereotype Aneeka, even though readers know that her identity and actions are much more complex.

## Chapter 8 – Karamat Quotes

☝☝ “She’s going to look for justice in *Pakistan*?” That final word spoken with all the disgust of a child of migrants who understands how much his Parents gave up—family, context, language, familiarity—because the nation to which they first belonged had proven itself inadequate to the task of allowing them to live with dignity.

**Related Characters:** Karamat Lone (speaker), Aneeka Pasha

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 227

**Explanation and Analysis**

When Karamat learns of Aneeka’s plan to return to Pakistan to look for justice, he immediately criticizes Aneeka’s reasoning. Karamat’s thoughts here reveal some of the personal background that informs the political views for which so many people have criticized him.

Whereas many people in the Muslim community view Karamat as someone who is anti-Muslim and is instead loyal to his British identity for political gain, Shamsie’s narration here tells a different story. From Karamat’s perspective, his politics are an acknowledgement of how his parents worked so hard to find more opportunities in Britain when they could not find them in Pakistan; he’s proud of being British because of what Britain has given him, and he thinks other British Muslims should feel the same way. But in doing so, he rejects his Pakistani and Muslim background entirely—which Shamsie hints is an unnecessary overreaction. Just as characters like Parvaiz make the mistake of rejecting Britain altogether, Karamat makes the mistake of embracing Britain at the expense of all else. Shamsie indicates here that while Karamat’s perspective is understandable, it would be better if society could allow British Muslims to embrace both sides of their identity and accept that they truly are both British *and* Muslim.

☝☝ “Please don’t try to develop a spine. You weren’t built for it. Did she give you your first really great blow job, Eamonn? Is that what this is about? Because trust me, there are better ones out there.”

A pause, and then his son’s voice at its most cuttingly posh: “I think we’re done here, Father.”

**Related Characters:** Eamonn Lone, Karamat Lone

(speaker), Terry Lone, Parvaiz Pasha, Aneeka Pasha

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 231

**Explanation and Analysis**

After Eamonn has been taken to a friend’s home while news of his affair with Aneeka blows over, he calls his father and implores him to grant Aneeka the ability to return to Britain with Parvaiz’s body. Karamat’s argument with Eamonn touches on two major themes. First, it establishes the sense of betrayal forming between Karamat and Eamonn. Karamat thinks that he is protecting Eamonn and the rest of the family from what he believes are incredibly stupid decisions. But with this crass language, Karamat only drives his son further away. Later this language will divide the family when Eamonn tells his mother about the terrible things Karamat said. This moment is one instance of the broader idea that trying to protect one’s family can go horribly wrong when different members of the family don’t agree on the best way to do it.

Secondly, Karamat’s comment about Eamonn not having a spine strikes a nerve, because Eamonn is insecure about the fact that he can never live up to his father’s expectations or standards. It is this comment which propels Eamonn to prove that he *does* in fact have a spine; he decides to meet Aneeka in Pakistan, which subsequently results in his death. Thus, the shadow of the legacy that Karamat has left for his son ultimately costs Eamonn his life and damages the family as a whole. Finally, this exchange also points to another parallel with *Antigone*. A similar dynamic plays out in Sophocles’s work: Haemon asks his father, King Creon, to intervene on behalf of Polynices, who is the brother of Haemon’s fiancée, Antigone. But just as Karamat does here, Creon scornfully turns his son away, accusing him of having been manipulated by a beautiful woman who’s just using him to get to his father.

☝☝ She couldn’t return to the UK on her Pakistani passport without applying for a visa, which she was certainly welcome to do if she wanted to waste her time and money. As for her British passport, which had been confiscated by the security services when she tried to join her brother in Istanbul, it was neither lost nor stolen nor expired and therefore there were no grounds for her to apply for a new one. Let her continue to be British; but let her be British outside Britain.

**Related Characters:** Parvaiz Pasha, Aneeka Pasha, Karamat

Lone

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 242-243

### Explanation and Analysis

When Karamat refuses to allow Parvaiz's body to return to Britain, Aneeka goes to Pakistan to retrieve it. In order to do so, she applies for a Pakistani passport using her dual national status. This then allows British officials in Turkey to revoke her British passport. This action illustrates the injustice and the discrimination against Muslims by the British government, and it's all the more notable because it's directed by Karamat himself. Aneeka has been involved with no criminal activity, and yet she is treated in the same way as Parvaiz would have been and is essentially left without citizenship in the only homeland she has ever known, all because she wants to take her brother's body home. With no other ethnic or religious group are these privileges revoked, and yet because Aneeka is Muslim and has Pakistani heritage, Karamat claims that this treatment is justified. This again emphasizes the difference between the two families and how when people like Aneeka choose to practice Islam, they run the risk of being forced to renounce their British nationality.

☝ *Probably a virgin*, he thought, and wondered when he'd become the kind of man who reacted in this way to the sight of a woman with a covered head who made no effort to look anything but plain.

**Related Characters:** Aneeka Pasha, Isma Pasha, Karamat Lone

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 247

### Explanation and Analysis

Isma comes to Karamat's home in order to ask him to let her join Aneeka in Pakistan. When she arrives, he makes this initial judgment based on the fact that she covers her head with a hijab and doesn't try to make herself more attractive. This is in contrast to his assessment of Aneeka, who also covers her head, but who wears makeup and seems to invite sexual advances from others. The fact that Karamat is making these assumptions illustrates his willingness to

compare people like Aneeka and Isma to stereotypes he holds of Muslim women, and to judge them based on how well they do or do not conform to those stereotypes. Right away, Karamat recognizes the problems with these judgements and understands that he should see Isma as an individual and not as a type of person—particularly because he, too, has often been stereotyped by non-Muslim people. But despite this realization, Karamat continues to cling to the idea that Muslim people should renounce their religion and culture in order to be part of white British society, which again demonstrates how hard society makes it for any British Muslim person to remain in touch with both sides of their identity.

## Chapter 9 – Karamat Quotes

☝☝ She has been abused for the crime of daring to love while covering her head, vilified for believing that she had the right to want a life with someone whose history is at odds with hers, denounced for wanting to bury her brother beside her mother, reviled for her completely legal protests against a decision by the home secretary that suggests personal animus. [...] Where is the crime in this? Dad, please tell me, where is the crime?

**Related Characters:** Eamonn Lone (speaker), Karamat Lone, Aneeka Pasha

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 259

### Explanation and Analysis

After a dispiriting conversation with his father, Eamonn decides to publish a video of himself denouncing his father's treatment of Aneeka and of Parvaiz's body. First, his speech is notable because of his desire to rebel against the path that his father has laid out for him. Whereas Eamonn has been an ardent supporter of his father's policies throughout the rest of the book, here he aims to prove that he has the strength to criticize his father. This is also Eamonn's response to what he sees as his father's betrayal in mistreating the woman Eamonn loves, rather than supporting her as he asked.

Eamonn also makes a point here of countering the way that the media has been depicting Aneeka and making assumptions about her and her brother's situation. This is Shamsie's call for people to be treated as individuals rather than examples of stereotypes. Eamonn makes it clear at this point that Karamat's views on observant Muslims like Aneeka are just as biased as society's more generally—even

though Karamat himself has been a victim of those same stereotypes.

●● The man with the explosives around his waist holds up both his hands to stop her from coming to him. “Run!” he shouts. “Get away from me, run!” And run she does, crashing right into him, a judder of the camera as the man holding it on his shoulder flinches in expectation of a blast. At first the man in the navy shirt struggles, but her arms are around him, she whispers something, and he stops. She rests her cheek against his, he drops his head to kiss her shoulder. For a moment they are two lovers in a park, under an ancient tree, sun-dappled, beautiful, and at peace.

**Related Characters:** Adil Pasha, Isma Pasha, Karamat Lone, Parvaiz Pasha, Aneeka Pasha, Eamonn Lone

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 274

### Explanation and Analysis

At the end of the novel, when Eamonn comes to join Aneeka in Pakistan, he is attacked by terrorists who strap bombs to him, in retaliation for the discriminatory policies that Karamat has enacted. Aneeka, rather than running away,

joins Eamonn in an embrace, as the two await their imminent deaths. The conclusion of the novel illustrates the consequences of the conflicts that came before it: first, it highlights the outcome of the betrayals between Annika and Isma, which drove Aneeka to retrieve her brother. Second, it emphasizes how twisted the legacies of Karamat and Adil have become. Adil’s legacy drove Parvaiz to try to follow in Adil’s footsteps, while Karamat’s forced Eamonn to try to step out of his father’s shadow and prove his own strength. This moment makes it clear that these burdensome legacies will lead to Eamonn’s death as well as Parvaiz’s. And third, this final passage brings together the seemingly incompatible viewpoints of two different British Muslims, both of Pakistani descent, who have been forced to choose between their nationality and their faith and who have both ended up in this tragic scene—even though they tried to make different choices along the way.

But even though the novel makes these tragic outcomes perfectly clear, its final passage ends on a hopeful image of two lovers in a park—peaceful representatives from their respective families. This image evokes the idea that perhaps, one day, these two groups of people will not be forced to pit themselves against one another, and that perhaps politicians and governments will learn how to encourage love rather than inspire hate and violence among their citizens.



## SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

## CHAPTER 1 – ISMA

Isma Pasha is detained at Heathrow airport, prior to her flight to the United States. Even though she made sure not to pack anything that might raise flags (a Quran, family pictures, books for her research), the security officer looks through every item of her clothing. She notes Isma's nice jacket, commenting that it must not be hers (because it is too expensive).

Isma says that she used to manage a dry cleaning shop, and her jacket was donated by a woman who didn't want it anymore because it was stained. The officer asks how Isma went from managing a dry cleaning shop to starting a PhD program in sociology. She explains that she had to put her academic plans on hold after she finished college, when she had to take care of her 12-year-old siblings following the death of their mother, Zainab.

Following the search of her suitcase, Isma has an interview with a second officer, who asks her, "Do you consider yourself British?" and repeats the question when Isma affirms that she is British. The interrogation continues for nearly two hours. Isma answers the questions compliantly, having practiced just this scenario with her sister Aneeka. Eventually, she is released when the first officer walks in and confirms that the U.S. had in fact approved Isma's student visa. Isma thanks "the woman whose thumbprints were on her underwear, not allowing even a shade of sarcasm to enter her voice."

Isma misses her flight due to being detained, and a Muslim woman in customer services finds her a place on the next flight out. When she arrives in Boston, she expects a repeat of the interrogation in London, but the immigration official only asks a few questions. Isma's mentor, Dr. Shah, picks her up from the airport, and Isma texts Aneeka, assuring her she made it through no problem. She feels the promise of a new beginning, on New Year's Day 2015.

*Isma's experience being detained at Heathrow immediately introduces the idea of how Muslims are stereotyped (in this case, associated with terrorist groups and therefore put through extra checks at security) and targeted because of those stereotypes.*



*Shamsie also immediately introduces the dynamic between Isma and her siblings: because their mother had died when they were young, Isma had become more of a parental figure than a sister to them. This leads to her desire to protect her family—particularly Aneeka—at any cost.*



*The interview illustrates how discrimination plays into the incident—to the point where Isma had essentially been expecting to be detained. The officer's questions also set up the idea that being Muslim is somehow considered antithetical to being British by this officer, as if the two are mutually exclusive. This idea of loyalty to one's nationality versus one's faith becomes crucial throughout the book, as the Pashas (Isma, Aneeka, and Parvaiz) often find themselves forced to adhere to their faith at the cost of their British identity.*



*Isma's journey to America marks a new beginning for her, but it is also her decision to travel to Boston that makes Aneeka and especially Parvaiz feel isolated and betrayed, and it is one of the things that allows him to drift away and find another parental figure that will help set out a path for his own life.*



Ten weeks later, Isma is settled in a studio apartment in Boston, glad to be immersed in her daily life of reading, walking, and writing. One morning, through her skylight, she notes a **parachutist** descending from the sky. She heads to her favorite café to get to work, and she opens Skype out of habit to check if Aneeka is online. Instead, she sees her brother Parvaiz is online. She is shocked; she hasn't seen him online since he left in December. Isma wonders if he's trying to contact her, but he doesn't call. It is hard for her to think of him "without adjectives such as 'ungrateful' and 'selfish' slicing through the feeling of loss." Then his name vanishes.

Isma misses Aneeka deeply. Even though, as twins, Aneeka always relied on Parvaiz to talk to, she had always come to Isma for physical comforts like a hug or a back rub. And when Isma was forced to take care of the twins when they were 12 years old following the deaths of their mother, Zainab, and their grandmother, Aneeka was also there to support her sister in turn.

Around midafternoon, a young man (Eamonn Lone) walks in, and he looks "stomach-turningly familiar" to Isma. She recalls a photo from the 1970s in her uncle's house of their neighborhood cricket team. Her uncle had told her that the young man holding the trophy (Karamat Lone) in the photo had only been visiting his cousin and they had invited him to play. Though he had done little, he ended up holding the trophy. That's how they knew he would be a politician, and sure enough was recently elected to Parliament.

Later that day at her uncle's house, Isma overheard her grandmother saying that Karamat had recently been cruel to their family. Now, Isma thinks that the young man who walked into the café must be his son, because they look so alike. His name is Eamonn, "an Irish spelling to disguise a Muslim name—'Ayman' become 'Eamonn' so that people would know the father had integrated." She also notes that his Irish American wife, Terry, is another indicator of his integrating.

Eamonn waits at the counter until Isma walks over to explain that the counter to order is upstairs. He thanks her, offering to get her another cup of coffee, and she is surprised at his very posh accent, which is different from the "class-obscuring London accent of his father." When Eamonn returns, Isma asks how much she owes him. When he says five minutes of conversation, she offers for him to walk to the supermarket with her.

*Even though it is not revealed exactly where Parvaiz has gone until much later in the book, already there is a sense of conflict between the two. Parvaiz has gone to search for the father figure he never had in order to find his own way in the world. But for Isma, this is a complete betrayal of the family that she worked so hard to keep together following the deaths of their parents and grandmother.*



*The physical closeness between Isma and Aneeka shows the deep familial love between the two of them. This only makes Isma's supposed betrayal of Parvaiz, of which Aneeka learns later, all the more hurtful to Aneeka.*



*The story about Karamat taking credit for winning the cricket match establishes the stereotype of him as someone who will do anything for success and glory—including, many later believe, relinquishing his faith and turning on other Muslims. Yet eventually Shamsie reveals the nuance in his positions and highlights how his beliefs spring from his personal background.*



*Isma's description of Eamonn's name and family background highlights how Karamat and the rest of the Lones have made in many ways the opposite choices from the Pashas: they've decided to distance themselves from their Pakistani origins and Muslim identity in order to become more "integrated" with the British public.*



*Eamonn's posh accent in comparison to his father's highlights the relative privilege in which Eamonn grew up. This privilege is thanks in large part to his mother, in contrast to his father, who came from a working-class family. This dynamic, the reader will later learn, adds to Eamonn's feelings of pressure on himself to out-achieve his father.*



On the walk to the supermarket, Isma learns that Eamonn recently quit his job with a consulting company and is taking some time off. He has chosen to visit his maternal grandparents in Amherst. Isma notes that he is charming, but that he might be making a show of his manners. After the supermarket, they take a walk through the woods together. They primarily make small talk, but “the Englishness of his humor, and his cultural references, [are] a greater treat than she would have expected.”

Eamonn then asks Isma more personal questions about her life. She explains that she grew up in Preston Road, in North London, with two younger siblings, Aneeka and Parvaiz. She never really knew her father, Adil, and was raised by her mother, Zainab, and grandmother before they died seven years earlier. She has recently started a PhD program, fully funded, with her former tutor, Dr. Shah.

Eamonn then asks if Isma’s turban is “a style thing or a Muslim thing?” She says that some people have asked if it’s a chemo thing. He responds, “Cancer or Islam—which is the greater affliction,” but immediately admits the error of the joke and apologizes. He says he only means that “it must be difficult to be Muslim in the world these days.” Isma replies, “I’d find it more difficult not to be Muslim.” She is surprised that Eamonn doesn’t even remotely identify as Muslim, even for political purposes. They say goodbye, and Eamonn does not shake her hand, simply saying, “Thanks for the company. Perhaps we’ll run into each other again.”

Aunty Naseem, a neighbor back in Preston Road with whom Aneeka is living, calls Isma and asks her to check on her sister. Aneeka has been staying at her friend Gita’s place while Gita has been living with her boyfriend. Isma doesn’t like this idea, as “Aneeka had always been someone boys looked at—and someone who looked back.” Isma had always relied on Parvaiz to tell her if Aneeka needed some sense talked into her, but now that relationship is gone.

Isma calls Aneeka, who assures Isma that she’s fine but that it’s easier being on her own. Isma wonders if she’s lying, again remembering that Aneeka and Parvaiz used to tell each other everything—until they discovered what Parvaiz had done when he left them. Aneeka had been shocked, unable to understand how he could keep secrets from her. Isma had an easy answer: he is “his father’s son.”

*The irony in the fact that people like Eamonn and Isma are often forced to choose between many aspects of their identity, and that Isma is often seen to be not quite British enough due to her faith, is that she finds comfort in having common British humor and cultural references. This affirms the idea that Britain is indeed her home and an important part of her identity.*



*Isma’s fuller explanation of her family life hints at why she has become so protective of her family; she has been devoting her life to her younger siblings for the past seven years.*



*Shamsie explicitly highlights the differences in Isma’s and Eamonn’s identities. Despite the fact that both come from a Pakistani background and that both of their families grew up with Islam, they could not be more different. Isma is a practicing Muslim, whereas Eamonn has been raised without Islam completely. And his assumption—that it is difficult to be Muslim—highlights the discrimination that Isma faces by other British people for her faith.*



*Again, Isma reveals her protective nature over her sister. She also reveals how Aneeka’s beliefs contrast somewhat with her own. Despite the fact that she is also a practicing Muslim and dresses conservatively, Aneeka is much freer in terms of her sexuality than Isma—countering stereotypes that readers might have.*



*Even early on, Isma recognizes the motivations behind Parvaiz’s actions in joining ISIS. But even though he is trying to pursue more information about his father, he isn’t joining for the reasons of glory or militancy that his father was—he is just trying to pursue his father’s path in order to form his own identity.*

Isma then mentions that Parvaiz reappeared on Skype, but Aneeka says that if they talk about him they'll fight. Aneeka says only that Parvaiz messaged her, saying he was okay. Isma is angry that he didn't give her the same message, but she diffuses the situation by saying that she misses Aneeka. Aneeka asks Isma to stay on the line until she falls asleep, and Isma tells her a story that she used to tell Aneeka as a child, about twins who could talk to animals. Isma stays on the line after Aneeka falls asleep, listening to the sound of her breathing.

*Shamsie is sketching a picture of a family with a complicated past, and of how the different dynamics between each of the members create conflict. While Aneeka and Isma clearly care deeply for one another, their disagreements over Parvaiz prompt their secrecy with each other in how they are handling the situation of his leaving, and thus they feel betrayed when they each discover the plan that the other one has pursued.*



## CHAPTER 2 – ISMA

Isma is back at her favorite café, trying to ignore Eamonn sitting across the room, when he comes over to her and asks to share lunch with her. She agrees. He tells her that he has family in Preston Road, and she chooses not to acknowledge that she knows exactly where Karamat's family used to live. They share memories of an old Pakistani song, though he admits he doesn't understand the Urdu lyrics. Isma asks Eamonn if he knows "bay-takalufi," and he has some understanding of its meaning: being informal and comfortable with another person to express friendship or intimacy. They agree to share this informality and comfort with one another.

*As Isma and Eamonn forge a friendship, even their small talk highlights the differences between them. Isma's family and neighbors have clearly made an effort to retain parts of their Pakistani heritage, even as a part of their British identity. For Eamonn, on the other hand, Karamat's goal has always been to integrate and (as he puts it in a speech later) to not differentiate himself from the larger British culture.*



Isma continues her routine; over the next few days she watches Skype religiously and receive updates from Aneeka that Parvaiz is still checking in with her. She and Eamonn also develop a routine together, buying each other coffee at midmorning and catching up on the news together. Isma asks him more about his life, like what will happen when his savings run out. Eamonn admits that the savings are his mother Terry's, and that she has tried to instill in him that there is more to life than work. His mother wants him to find meaning in life beyond paychecks and promotions. Isma finds the idea compelling, but she thinks that Eamonn should be doing more to pursue it.

*This exchange sets up some of the tension between Eamonn and his father. Eamonn (particularly due to his mother's wealth) has grown up in a world of privilege that Karamat never had. And because Eamonn's sister Emily is treated as the successful, hardworking child, Eamonn often feels that there are low expectations set for him. The burden of this inescapable inheritance is part of the reason that Eamonn ultimately rebels against his father's wishes to prove that he can be his own man.*



One morning, Eamonn is late meeting Isma, and she quickly finds out why. Aneeka texts her saying that Karamat has been made the new Home Secretary. Isma instantly opens the internet and the first article she reads describes him as "a man 'from a Muslim background'" which Isma feels implies that his "Muslim-ness [is] something he [has] boldly stridden away from." Isma receives a series of messages, reading things like "It's all going to get worse," and "He has to prove he's one of them, not one of us."

*Although Isma's feelings about Karamat have already implied his attempts to distance himself from his own culture, the news article and the messages Isma receives confirm it. Karamat is understood as a person who has distanced himself from his faith for political gain, particularly because this makes him more palatable to the wider British public.*



Eamonn arrives just then, telling Isma about the good news—his father Karamat has just been appointed Home Secretary. At first Isma tries to feign ignorance about knowing who his father is. Eamonn confesses that he’s been staying in America to hide from the “old muck” that people will say about him. Isma remembers the “old muck,” when Karamat was criticized for entering a mosque. His response was to point out that the picture was several years old and he had only been there for a funeral; otherwise he would never enter a “gender-segregated space.” He was then criticized and voted out by his Muslim-majority constituency, but he returned to Parliament later in a seat with a white-majority constituency.

Isma notes that Eamonn and Karamat must be very close. Eamonn explains that it’s like any father-son relationship; that fathers are “our guides into manhood.” He then elaborates, saying “we want to be like them, we want to be better than them.” But he notes that in his case, that would be a futile goal. Isma disagrees, saying that Eamonn is a much better person. Eamonn catches this remark, noting that Isma must have already known that they were related and lied about it. He correctly surmises that she is one of “the Muslims who say those ugly things about him.” Eamonn then gives her a final goodbye.

Isma feels a deep sense of loss, which she chides herself for, as she and Eamonn didn’t have a real relationship anyway. Later, while hosting Isma for dinner, Dr. Hira Shah says that Isma could try explaining why she feels the way she does. Hira recalls that when she taught Isma, she thought Isma found her offensive. Isma remembers interrupting her lecture on control orders and their impact on civil liberties to point out that Britain has had a long history of depriving people of their rights, and that control orders often target citizens who are “rhetorically being made un-British,” focusing instead on their religion or their descent.

In the present, Hira affirms that Isma should be open with Eamonn about her family and her history so that he can see her perspective. She also counsels Isma to “reconsider the **hijab**” because it might be putting him at a distance. When Isma protests that she doesn’t want anything from him “in that way,” Hira tells her that the Quran says to “enjoy sex as one of God’s blessings.” Isma protests that it says so “within marriage,” and Hira counters: “We all have our versions of selective reading when it comes to the Holy Book.”

*Eamonn’s statement about the “old muck” affirms how Karamat, too, has been stereotyped and criticized for his Muslim background. However, Isma notes to readers that this led him to completely relinquish his faith and to turn on the people who supported him in the first place. Now, Karamat is often criticized by Muslims who recognize him as someone who is just trying to gain political power—even though his views truly are informed by his own personal experience.*



*Eamonn illustrates for the first time how much he is shaped by his father: he wants to live up to his legacy and even outshine it. However, he also believes that his father doesn’t have high enough expectations for him, and thus Eamonn himself already believes he isn’t good enough. Additionally, Isma’s acknowledgement that she is someone who would criticize Karamat puts the two families on opposite ends of the continuum between choosing loyalty to one’s nationality and loyalty to one’s faith.*



*Isma notes the racism and stereotypes inherent in British society in this memory from Dr. Shah’s class. In the news and by the government, terrorists are often described based on their descent, or usually by the fact that they are Muslim, as a way of distancing them from other British citizens. This foreshadows exactly what will happen to Parvaiz and Aneeka in order to make the decision to revoke their British citizenship more palatable.*



*Dr. Shah’s statement about selective reading is an important one. It reminds readers that in the case of faith or any political beliefs, everyone has individual perspectives and philosophies. Even though Isma and Aneeka are both judged (for different reasons) on their modesty or sexuality, these judgments are all based on stereotypes, and it is important to recognize people as individuals instead of just members of stereotyped groups.*



That evening, Isma is woken up abruptly by a call from Aneeka. Isma immediately worries that something has happened to Parvaiz, but instead Aneeka accuses her of telling the police what Parvaiz did, making him unable to come home—she heard Aunty Naseem talking about it. Isma tells Aneeka that the police would have found out anyway, and that she didn't want "to let the state question [their] loyalties" and she wanted to protect Aneeka.

Aneeka is deeply upset, telling Isma that Parvaiz is not Adil and accusing her of betraying her and Parvaiz. She tells Isma not to talk to her again, saying, "We have no sister." Isma tries to call Aneeka back, to no avail. She gets up and pulls out her prayer rug, praying for comfort, but she cannot make herself feel better.

Aunty Naseem calls Isma, apologizing for her role in the feud, and though Isma is angry she says that it was a simple mistake. Isma crawls back into bed, and finds that she misses Eamonn. She impulsively sends him a text, explaining that she wants to tell him about her family. He comes her apartment more quickly than she expected, before she can put on a headscarf. She can tell he is uncertain about how to interact with her without her **hijab**. They make polite conversation before he notices a photo of Isma with Aneeka. He comments on her "attractive family" before complimenting Isma's hair.

Isma and Eamonn quickly move on to talking about her father, Adil. Isma explains that she barely knew him; she has no memories of him before the first time he abandoned her family. He reappeared when Isma was eight, and despite Zainab's protests, he gradually came back into her good graces and she became pregnant with the twins. Then he was gone again, to aid a convoy in Bosnia as a jihadi. Isma never saw him again, though he wrote a note occasionally or called to hear Parvaiz's voice.

Isma continues: a few months after Adil disappeared, MI5 came around to ask about him. Then, in 2004, a Pakistani man was released from Guantánamo who contacted Isma's family to say that he and Adil were imprisoned and put on a plane to Guantánamo together in 2002, but Adil died during takeoff from "some sort of seizure." They still haven't been officially contacted by anyone to inform them that he is dead.

*This comes as the first big shift in Isma and Aneeka's relationship. Even though Isma is trying to protect what is left of her family by reporting Parvaiz to the government, Aneeka doesn't understand why Isma has taken this action and feels betrayed by the secrecy.*



*Isma intended her actions as a means of protection for her sister. But because of the covert way in which she went about it and because she ended up worsening the situation for their brother Parvaiz, Aneeka feels deeply betrayed and ends up dividing the family instead. This division between the sisters is also one of the first clear parallels to Sophocles's [Antigone](#). In [Antigone](#), Antigone rejects her sister Ismene after Ismene refuses to join Antigone in defying the king.*



*Eamonn's lack of comfort around Isma without her hijab highlights the fact that he is operating based only on stereotypes. Even though they have spoken many times before, his awkwardness shows how he can easily fit his expectations of her modesty into a stereotype that he understands—even though he claims not to identify with Islam himself.*



*Even the first full description of Adil highlights the connections between Adil and Parvaiz. Parvaiz has also abandoned the family, in the same way that Isma felt abandoned by her father. And Adil had always wanted to be more connected to his son than to either of his daughters, as is implied here in wanting to speak with him rather than Isma, the only child he ever actually knew.*



*The links between parents and children, or individuals and members of their family, are highlighted here in a broader way. Isma is deeply shaped by the experience of her father because his actions have consequences on the family as a whole—he is part of the reason that she experiences negative stereotypes and racism, in part because it seems that he actually was the kind of terrorist that other Muslim people are feared to be.*



Isma explains that her family is forbidden to talk about it, and the family only told Auntie Naseem and one other person: Karamat Lone. Isma's family asked Karamat's family to go to him, to see if he would find out any information about what happened to Adil and whether he was buried. Karamat's response was, "They're better off without him."

Eamonn apologizes for everything Isma has suffered. He says that it's harder for Karamat because of his background. He explains, "everything he did, even the wrong choices, were because he had a sense of purpose. Public service, national good, British values. He deeply believes in these things." Isma is amazed at this defense, thinking that "in the end they were always their father's sons."

Eamonn suggests that Isma meet Karamat, though Isma is doubtful that she'd feel better about him after a meeting. He says that Karamat would be nice to her, because now that Eamonn has seen her hair uncovered he's basically her brother. Isma then says she has to leave, and that she won't go to the café today. Eamonn says this is probably the last time that they'll see each other, because he's leaving the next day. He thanks her for being a "fantastic coffee companion."

Eamonn hugs Isma awkwardly, then gets up to leave. He then notices a package of M&Ms she has been meaning to send to Auntie Naseem in London. He offers to send it when he gets back. She thanks him for doing so. He leaves with a final, "Bye, sis," and after he has gone, Isma kneels down and weeps.

## CHAPTER 3 – EAMONN

Eamonn is back in London as spring starts to bloom. He is traveling to Isma's neighborhood to deliver the M&M's, and he feels that the roads are familiar to him from his childhood. He remembers visiting a great-uncle's house on Eid every year, even though none of the family observed Ramadan. Once at the house, Karamat would become a different person, with a different language and gestures. Just as Eamonn started wanting to know more about the culture, the "business with the mosque photographs" happened.

*Even though Adil betrayed the family, they still feel a sense of connection to him, and Karamat's insensitive treatment of them emphasizes how he, too, has internalized many of the stereotypes that have harmed his career.*



*Eamonn again aligns his father with a British national identity and British values rather than any connection via faith or their mutual Pakistani descent. Isma, in turn, recognizes the way Eamonn's perspective has been warped by his father, and connects him to Parvaiz in that they are both trying to walk in their fathers' footsteps.*



*Eamonn's belief that Isma would be able to meet Karamat without any issue illustrates his ignorance about the seriousness of their differences, and about how much Isma's family has felt betrayed by Karamat—a betrayal that has led to a deep divide between them rather than a sense of protection that someone so like them is about to become the Home Secretary.*



*Isma's anguish over being tacitly rejected by Eamonn only sets up her own feelings of betrayal when Aneeka chooses to go after Eamonn purely for political purposes (at least at first).*



*Eamonn's memories illuminate a different side of Karamat: he's not necessarily a person who has completely given up his faith for political gain. It also shows yet another way that Eamonn has been completely shaped by his father's political life, and how even if he wanted to, he has been unable to engage with his Pakistani and Muslim heritage.*



Eamonn is upset that after everything Karamat had done for his constituents, it was the Muslims who had “turned their back on Karamat Lone.” As Eamonn continues his journey towards Isma’s neighborhood, he thinks how spending time with her reminded him of the family from whom they are now estranged. He feels that “behind these doors existed a piece of his childhood—of his father—that he’d been too ready to forget.”

Eamonn knocks on Aunty Naseem’s door and she answers. When he says that he has brought a package from Isma, she invites him in for tea and makes him samosas as they chat. Just as Eamonn is about to leave, he hears footsteps at the top of the stairs. Aunty Naseem tells the footsteps—Aneeka—that Eamonn is here. Aneeka leaves to “[fix] herself up,” then returns a few minutes later. Eamonn is struck by how beautiful she is and is immediately attracted to her. On hearing Eamonn’s name, Aneeka immediately recognizes him; her expression hardens and she asks what he is doing there.

Eamonn explains that he walked to Aunty Naseem’s house to deliver a package from Isma. When he comments on how lovely the walk along the canal was, he mentions that he looked up information about it: the bridge above the canal was almost bombed by the IRA in 1939, she can look up more information about it. Aneeka says it’s not a good idea to look up bombs if you’re “Googling While Muslim.”

Aunty Naseem then suggests they all call Isma, but Aneeka refuses. Aneeka then offers to walk Eamonn out. She asks him what he was really doing there, and he is unable to tell her that he was curious about “a lost piece of his father,” so he says that he saw a photograph of Aneeka and wanted to see if she was that beautiful in real life. She gives him a look of disgust and walks away. But when Eamonn is on the train home, he is shocked to see Aneeka walk up to him in the carriage. She asks him if he lives alone, and then tells him to take her to his apartment.

Aneeka and Eamonn don’t speak much on the train, and when they arrive at his home, he is embarrassed by the affluence of his neighborhood and apartment, which is paid for by his mother, Terry. Eamonn notes Aneeka’s **hijab**, saying that Isma prefers turbans. Aneeka immediately unpins her hijab and the cap underneath, shaking out her long hair. Eamonn doesn’t know if she’s trying to send him a signal. He lays his hand on the table, palm up, inviting her. She takes his hand, notices his fast pulse, and places his other hand on her heart, saying that their pulses match.

*Eamonn reveals once again how much his perspective has been shaped by his father. Many people see the mosque incident as Karamat turning his back on his Muslim constituents first by insulting their religious practices, yet Eamonn chooses to believe that they were the ones who turned their back on him. In either case, the divide between Karamat and his Muslim constituents is drawn more sharply than ever.*



*Here, Shamsie draws more nuance around Aneeka and Isma’s differing beliefs. Even though both wear a hijab and are practicing Muslims, Aneeka chooses to wear makeup and isn’t shy about her sexuality. Even though this ultimately leads to people judging her for being too promiscuous, it is notable that Shamsie shows two different ways for these women to engage in modesty.*



*Just as Isma recognizes the discrimination she experiences while being detained before getting on the plane to the United States, Aneeka is aware of the stereotypes around her and of people’s associations of Islam with terrorism. In both cases, again, they are judged more harshly than British people at large simply because of the faith that they practice.*



*Here begins the spark of Aneeka’s betrayal, even though readers won’t discover this until the end of the next chapter because the story is told from Eamonn’s perspective here. Seeing Eamonn, and knowing who his father is, Aneeka sees an opportunity to eventually help her brother return to Britain. But when her game is ultimately revealed, both Isma and Eamonn feel deeply betrayed, even though Aneeka is simply trying to protect her family.*



*Again, Aneeka’s decision to uncover herself illustrates her own way of interpreting how to adhere to Islam. Unlike Isma, who believes that sex should wait until a person can at least consider marrying someone, Aneeka’s comfort with Eamonn demonstrates that she has a different perspective and a different way of practicing—she’s interpreting her faith in her own way, just as Dr. Shah told Isma to do.*



The next morning, Eamonn is amazed how everything in the apartment smells like Aneeka, as though she is a storm that has passed through. She was hesitant at first, even tried to put her **hijab** back on, but then she swung the other way as if to prove to him that she really wanted to stay. He also wanted to show her that he wouldn't expect everything from her without anything in return, and they "set about discovering each other in that slow-quick way of new lovers."

That morning, Eamonn discovers Aneeka praying in the living room on a towel. She angles herself away from his naked body, but he can't help but watch her pray for a time before returning to bed. When she returns, he asks what she was praying for, but she says that prayer isn't about transaction. He jokes that she had to "put on a bra for God." Aneeka doesn't respond, saying, "You do other things better than you do talk," and she continues to undress.

Eamonn and Aneeka have sex once more, this time with her **hijab** on. When he later asks why she wears the scarf, she says, "I get to choose which parts of me I want strangers to look at, and which are for you," and against Eamonn's will, he likes that answer. As they lie together, he brings up Isma, thinking to himself that she wouldn't approve of what they have done. Aneeka says that they used to be close, but now they don't speak.

Aneeka then asks if she can be Eamonn's "secret"—she doesn't want anyone else to know about their relationship. She doesn't want her friends knowing when they can meet him, or Auntie Naseem inviting him over, or Isma using him as a way to get to her. He agrees to keep the secret. Eamonn quickly discovers that secrecy means not having Aneeka's phone number or being able to find her online. Instead, she simply turns up at his apartment at some point in the day. The secrecy acts as "an aphrodisiac that gained potency the longer it continued," and he finds himself constantly thinking about her.

Sometimes Eamonn and Aneeka speak about Isma and even about Parvaiz, though Eamonn thinks about him like a ghost. She talks about him like a partner in crime during childhood, from whom she was rarely detached. But after school, their lives diverged. Parvaiz hadn't received scholarships like Aneeka, and instead he went traveling. Aneeka says little about him past that.

*Aneeka's hesitancy, which Eamonn here interprets as being because of her faith, is later revealed to be because of the morally questionable nature of what she is doing. At first she is not sincerely interested in Eamonn, and she is instead trying to get close to him for political gain.*



*Eamonn's questions and lack of understanding about what Aneeka is doing again show the gulf between their choices and highlight how much Karamat has foregone his faith. Eamonn is completely ignorant of a religion that his father used to practice, and so he continues to make insensitive comments.*



*Aneeka's answer as to why she wears a hijab illuminates her own perspective on modesty and who it is designed for. Whereas Eamonn assumes that it is born of dated practices, Aneeka instead sees it as a way of being in control of her own body and her sexuality. Her perspective is another way for Shamsie to illustrate that every character has individual beliefs, and others should not make assumptions about them.*



*The secrecy Aneeka insists on allows her to continue to perpetrate her scheme, but it is also one of the reasons that her betrayal stings so much for both Eamonn and Isma, when they realize what Aneeka has done without being open with them. However, there is an argument to be made that Aneeka is trying to protect Eamonn as well as Parvaiz, by not making traceable contact with Eamonn and therefore enabling him to deny their relationship, as he does later.*



*The way that Aneeka talks about Parvaiz, even though he has abandoned her to join ISIS, illustrates how much she still loves him and cares for him, and the lengths to which she will go to protect him.*



One morning, less than two weeks after they met, Eamonn feels resentful of Aneeka's control of their relationship and packs his bag for a week away at a friend's home. But the second night, he finds a cab company and arrives home at 3 a.m. to find her curled up on the doormat. He immediately gives her a key, and "something shift[s] between them that night."

When Eamonn wakes he finds Aneeka making breakfast, and she shows him a chart she's made of the blocks of time that he shouldn't expect to see her. He gives her a few times as well, including a weekly Sunday lunch with his family—which he adds that she could join sometime. She grows nervous about this idea, but Eamonn assures her that he knows that might be difficult for her—Isma told him about Adil.

Aneeka is shocked to learn that Isma told Eamonn about Adil, and asks what else Isma told him. Eamonn assures her that no one will judge her for her father's mistakes—even Karamat. Eamonn says that Karamat believes "you are what you make of yourself," unless you're his son. Eamonn explains that his sister gets all the expectations, while he is indulged. When Aneeka asks if he minds that, Eamonn says he minds a lot.

Aneeka says that she understands what Karamat said about Adil, but that it makes him seem unforgiving. Eamonn acknowledges that he can be unforgiving, but he isn't always. When he asks Aneeka if she wants him to ask Karamat about Adil, she says no. He is relieved, though he knows eventually he'll have to bring up the issue if their relationship is going to continue seriously.

Weeks go by and Aneeka and Eamonn build a routine together, and he withdraws from his friends. He does attend one dinner with his friends, where they joke, "twenty-something unemployed male from Muslim background exhibits rapidly altered pattern of behavior, cuts himself off from old friends," and wonder if they should be concerned. They jokingly note that at least he's drinking (though Eamonn thinks that he barely drinks anymore because Aneeka doesn't want to kiss him when he does). Eamonn realizes at the dinner how tired he is of his friends.

*Even though Aneeka's motivations for starting the relationship with Eamonn ultimately become clear, Shamsie also drops clues throughout the novel that Aneeka did in fact fall in love with Eamonn as well, and that in some ways in protecting her brother she is betraying her own self-interest as well.*



*Eamonn bringing up this fact reminds readers that Eamonn is one of the few characters in the novel who can understand Isma and Aneeka on their own terms, rather than viewing them as the daughter of a jihadi. He makes an effort to recognize them as individuals, and not to judge them based on their father's actions.*



*This statement highlights the paradox of Eamonn's relationship to his father: he wants to work hard to outshine his father's expectations, but so much of his life has been provided for due to his mother's wealth and his father's political power. Eamonn struggles with how to make a name for himself after being born into such privilege.*



*Aneeka's assurance that she doesn't want Eamonn to go to Karamat about her father, and his subsequent relief, foreshadows the conflict that will come when she ultimately asks him to talk to Karamat about getting her brother home*



*Even though Eamonn's friends are joking, they highlight the stereotypes of young Muslim men by implying that he might be joining ISIS. Yet the irony is that this statement foreshadows the chapters in which Parvaiz is actually drawn in to ISIS and pulls away from his sisters. In Parvaiz's case, Aneeka assumes that he must be experiencing what Eamonn actually is: falling in love. This again highlights the connection between the two young men.*



Occasionally, Aneeka turns cold, or sad, or angry, in a way that unsettles Eamonn. One day, she receives a Skype call and runs out of the room. When he goes to look for her, he hears her in the bathroom, saying, “I’m making sure of things here.” He goes back to the living room, alarmed, and when she comes back it seems like she’s been crying. When he asks who she was talking to, she doesn’t answer, simply kissing him and laughing manically. He is put off by this reaction, but she acknowledges that she’s acting a little crazy, and when she puts a hand on his cheek he feels that all obstacles between them are surmountable.

## CHAPTER 4 – EAMONN

Eamonn sits in his apartment, watching a clip of Karamat addressing the students at a predominantly Muslim school that Karamat himself attended. He said to the students: “You are, we are, British. Britain accepts this. So do most of you. But for those of you who are in some doubt about it, let me say this: Don’t set yourself apart in the way you dress, the way you think, the outdated codes of behavior you cling to, the ideologies to which you attach your loyalties. Because if you do, you will be treated differently.” At the time, the media went wild for his “truth-telling” and “passion.”

Eamonn, however, thinks about Karamat’s words in the context of Aneeka. He imagines a hypothetical video showing her praying, or undressing except for her **hijab**. He thinks that the “total lack of self-consciousness in everything she did—love and prayer” are the “the things that were most striking about her.”

Aneeka arrives back at the apartment at that moment. When she comes in, Eamonn asks if anyone gives her a hard time because of her **hijab**. She says that sometimes things happen to make people more hostile, like terrorist attacks involving European victims or “Home secretaries talking about people setting themselves apart in the way they dress.”

*This episode in their relationship is another warning sign that Aneeka’s affection is not fully genuine. Aneeka’s secrecy and betrayal will prove to hurt people on all sides. Even though she is trying to protect her family and bring her brother home, she is doing so at the cost of her own well-being, at the cost of Eamonn’s love (at least when she first tells him), and at the cost of Isma’s trust.*



*Even though Karamat is lauded for the speech by the wider British media, there is an inherent contradiction in what Karamat is saying—he saying that even though the students are British, they will only be accepted as British if they give up the practices that make them Muslim (like dress and codes of behavior). Again this emphasizes the idea that one has to choose faith or nationality, while people like Isma show that that doesn’t have to be the case. Karamat’s character parallels the character of King Creon in Sophocles’s [Antigone](#), and this moment highlights the similarities between the two characters. Like Creon, Karamat values loyalty to the nation about all else—and like Creon, Karamat will soon find that this devotion will have dire consequences for his own family members.*



*This hypothetical video underlines again what Karamat is saying: that Aneeka, who adheres to the “outdated codes of behavior” Karamat describes, chooses her faith over her nationality. Eamonn’s thoughts also emphasize the idea that Aneeka’s own way of interpreting her practice is the “most striking thing” about her, showing the importance of recognizing individuals rather than stereotypes. This moment also emphasizes the connection between Aneeka and Sophocles’s Antigone. Antigone is notable for her refusal to confirm to the dictates of her society, and Aneeka shows that same tendency here.*



*Aneeka’s acknowledgment of the things that make it harder for her to wear a hijab in public emphasizes the opposite of what Eamonn was just thinking: that so often people associate her with stereotypes and a group rather than seeing that she is just one young Muslim woman.*



Aneeka turns on Eamonn, asking what he says to Karamat when he makes a speech like that. She asks if he knows that some of the things the country will let a Muslim person achieve are “torture, rendition, detention without trial.” Eamonn protests, saying that Karamat wants “people like you” to suffer less, not more. Aneeka is hurt by the phrasing of “people like you.”

Aneeka notes that this is why she wanted to keep their relationship a secret, because she wouldn't be accepted by Eamonn's family. Eamonn says that may have been true before, but he admits that he has been thinking about proposing to her. Aneeka at first seems shocked by this, but then she kisses him passionately.

The next morning, Eamonn and Aneeka are outside in the communal garden on a warm, sunny day. Eamonn suggests they go on holiday together somewhere. He also suggests that they start to tell people about their relationship, but Aneeka remains hesitant. Aneeka admits to Eamonn that if they were to leave the country together, Karamat would know. She says that MI5 is watching her, monitoring all her messages and Internet history. When Eamonn protests that they're not watching her because of Adil, she says that they're watching her because of Parvaiz, who joined ISIS's media unit the previous year.

Eamonn is stunned, picturing “The black and white flag, the British-accented men who stood beneath it and sliced men's heads off their shoulders. And the media unit, filming it all.” Eamonn knocks over several plants in the communal garden in rage. Aneeka leads him back into the apartment, and once there, he opens a bottle of beer and downs it in two swigs.

Aneeka tells Eamonn that Parvaiz wants to come back home, and she asks for his help. It slowly dawns on Eamonn that their relationship has been about this the entire time. Aneeka protests, admitting that when she got on the train that first day she thought he could help her brother, but she says that she couldn't have continued the relationship if she didn't have real feelings for him. He tells her to get out.

*Aneeka also highlights the dangers of treating someone based on their associations with a group rather than as an individual—like the experience that Isma had at the beginning of the novel when she was detained. And again, Eamonn separates his own experiences from the experiences of Muslims at large, even making the same mistake of generalizing by saying “people like you”—even though he knows that Aneeka is a unique individual.*



*Aneeka makes an excuse about the secrecy she is demanding from Eamonn, but as their relationship grows more serious, it is becoming more difficult for her to inhibit her own feelings for Eamonn, even though she knows she'll soon have to admit that she has betrayed him.*



*Aneeka finally makes explicit what other characters have been hinting at throughout the book: her brother has followed in her father's footsteps and has joined ISIS in Syria. In hindsight, readers can now see the magnitude of his betrayal of both of his sisters, as they were left to deal with the aftermath of his decision.*



*Eamonn here serves as an avatar for the reader; his assumptions about what Parvaiz is involved in likely mirror readers' own assumptions. This is an idea that Shamsie will later complicate in the chapter from Parvaiz's point of view, which adds nuance to his storyline.*



*At this point, Eamonn recognizes more fully the magnitude of the betrayal that Aneeka has perpetrated in order to try to ensure her brother's safety. Again, as this chapter is from Eamonn's point of view, many readers likely experience Eamonn's realization in real time with him, but because Aneeka's perspective isn't yet part of the story, her true loyalty remains unclear.*



As Aneeka changes out of a dressing gown into real clothing, Eamonn goes to clean up the plants he destroyed in the garden. But he quickly returns to find her still in the bedroom. She shows him a photograph of Parvaiz, saying that she's been worried sick about him, and all she wants to do is stop worrying about him so she can be more fully with Eamonn. He still isn't sure whether she is telling the truth about her feelings, but he kisses the top of her head and asks her to tell him everything about Parvaiz.

Early the next morning, Eamonn arrives at his parents' home. He greets his mother, Terry, then continues on to Karamat's office. Karamat greets him warmly, and they sit down together. Eamonn thinks about the complexity of their relationship: "*Who is this posh English boy with my face*, the father would say, sometimes with disappointment, sometimes with pride. *Who you made me, so blame yourself* the son would reply, and his father would respond with either *There is no blame, my jaan, my life* or *That was your mother's doing, not mine.*"

Eamonn confesses that he's been seeing someone. He tells Karamat about Aneeka—that she lives in Preston Road in Wembley, that her family is from Pakistan, that she's beautiful and smart, and that their relationship is very serious. Eamonn even speaks a few words in Urdu to express his love. Karamat is pleasantly surprised, saying that if he's in love, Aneeka should come to meet the family.

Eamonn continues, saying that Aneeka is a practicing Muslim—she prays in the morning, doesn't drink or eat pork, fasts during Ramzan, and wears a **hijab**. When Karamat wonders if she has any problem with sex, Eamonn assures him that there's no problem there. Karamat reiterates that he is pleased, and Eamonn is surprised that he's taking this so well.

*Even though Eamonn feels severely betrayed by what Aneeka has done, he still loves her and recognizes that her actions come from a desire to keep her brother in her life. This is perhaps the only relationship in the novel that is not altogether destroyed upon discovering that one person has betrayed another, in contrast to many of the relationships between the siblings.*



*Eamonn's description reveals how his father views Eamonn as a mirror, as an illustration of what he has achieved, and as a recognition of the limitation of what Eamonn can achieve. Again, there is a paradox here in inheriting so much from his father: because his father has worked so hard, Eamonn will never need to work as hard to achieve what Karamat has, and thus he can never truly out-achieve Karamat or make him proud as Eamonn so wishes to. This also marks the moment in the novel where the parallels to Sophocles's [Antigone](#) become especially direct. In the play, Haemon goes to his father, King Creon, to argue on behalf of his fiancée, Antigone, who wants Creon to intervene on behalf of her brother's honor. Eamonn is about to do exactly the same thing here on Aneeka's behalf.*



*Eamonn recognizes that Aneeka represents not only a partner, but also the choice of a way of life that might not necessarily be the choice that Karamat would have made. Whereas Karamat relinquished so much of his heritage and culture, Eamonn is actively seeking it out through Aneeka.*



*This exchange teases out two themes: first, Eamonn's hesitancy to tell his father again acknowledges that his father has separated himself from his Muslim background. Second, Eamonn's description of Aneeka's practice recognizes that every person's practice is different, and that Aneeka has her own individual ideas and beliefs about how to be a Muslim.*



Karamat assures Eamonn that he grew up a believing Muslim. Eamonn says he didn't know that, and Karamat replies that there are still "moments of stress when [he'll] recite Ayat al-Kursi as a kind of reflex." He asks Eamonn not to mention that publicly, however. Eamonn says that Karamat shouldn't have to hide his religion. Karamat replies, "I'd be nervous about a home secretary who's spoken openly about his atheism but secretly recites Muslim prayers. Wouldn't you?"

Eamonn brings up one other issue: that Aneeka has "a boy she was close to at school" who has gone to Syria to join ISIS. Karamat says he knows only one person who fits that description from Preston Road: Parvaiz Pasha. He says that Parvaiz had exceptional circumstances: "terrorism as a family trade."

Eamonn doesn't know how to proceed; he did not expect Karamat to know this. When Karamat prompts him, Eamonn admits that Aneeka is Parvaiz's twin sister. Karamat says, "You stupid, stupid boy," and he says that Eamonn will have no more contact with Aneeka. Eamonn begs his father to meet her, but Karamat laughs at the idea that "the nexus of al-Qaeda and the Islamic State is just going to waltz in." Eamonn is furious at his father for using this language. Karamat instructs Eamonn to stay in his office for a minute, and when he leaves, Eamonn curses the fact that his phone is in his jacket outside.

When Karamat returns, he says that it is his fault for not wanting Eamonn to know "what it feels like to have doors closed in your face." He continues, saying that Eamonn is so entitled that he wouldn't recognize why Aneeka would give a "public-school boy who lives off his mother because he can and has no ambition" the time of day. Karamat explains that officers have been monitoring Aneeka following Parvaiz's departure for Syria. Karamat was surprised to find that Eamonn and Aneeka haven't had any recorded communication—until today. Karamat presents Eamonn's phone, which has 23 missed calls from Aneeka.

## CHAPTER 5 – PARVAIZ

Farooq and Parvaiz walk into an electronics store in Istanbul to pick up an audio recorder. The man behind the counter and the rest of the customers are quite intimidated by Farooq and Parvaiz's appearance and air of superiority. Farooq leaves Parvaiz to go to a café on the corner while Parvaiz tests several mics to see which ones work best with the recorder. Parvaiz's journey really began the previous autumn, when Isma walked into the kitchen on an otherwise normal night and announced she was going to America.

*This is perhaps Shamsie's first hint for readers that there is more to Karamat than the descriptions she has given so far. He is not just out for political gain: instead, he is a person of true faith who feels that he has been forced to give up his faith because of the way people associate him with terrorists and to make himself more acceptable to the British public.*



*Karamat's description of Parvaiz foreshadows the fact that he goes to Syria in search of information about his father. Though he did not learn the "family trade," the fact that his father was a jihadi nonetheless shapes Parvaiz's journey a great deal.*



*Karamat once again reveals his own bias and his own reliance on stereotypes. Aneeka and Isma are both horrified by the actions that their brother has taken, and yet Karamat chooses to associate them with terrorism as well. This becomes key when he later has Aneeka's British citizenship revoked, despite the fact that she has committed no crime.*



*This brutal assessment of Eamonn's character illustrates even further his father's disappointment in the fact that Eamonn has never had to work as hard as Karamat has—an opinion that informs Eamonn's rebellion at the end of the novel. Additionally, Aneeka's insistence on secrecy takes on another meaning here, as it becomes clear that she may have been trying to protect Eamonn as well as herself in keeping their contact unrecorded.*



*Shamsie plays with time and perspective in an interesting way in this chapter, showing readers their first glimpse of Parvaiz through the terrified eyes of others and hiding any information about who Farooq is. Yet over the course of the chapter, Shamsie complicates the stereotypes that readers may share about someone like Parvaiz and shows how an average British kid could wind up joining ISIS.*



The narration returns to that night, with Isma’s announcement. They then discuss what to do about their home. Aneeka is about to start school, and Parvaiz’s earnings as a greengrocer’s assistant aren’t sufficient to cover the house. Isma says that the best option is for them to move in with Aunty Naseem and to rent out their house. Parvaiz is upset, but Aneeka doesn’t seem to be as concerned. Parvaiz realizes that Aneeka has no intention of coming back after getting her degree; he calls her a “traitor.”

Parvaiz grabs his keys, phone, and microphone and walks out of the house, upset. He meets an old friend of his mother’s, Gladys, on the road, and they talk briefly. He continues his walk through the neighborhood, pulling out his microphone to record more sound footage for a video game he is working on. He hopes desperately that he might get job offers after sending out the game. Suddenly, a band of neighborhood boys Parvaiz knows stops him in the street and demands his phone. They beat him up, stealing his phone but leaving the expensive mic. He thinks how much he hates his life and its inevitability.

The next day, when Parvaiz is at work, a man named Farooq introduces himself. He apologizes for his cousin’s actions the night before and returns Parvaiz’s phone, saying he didn’t realize that he was the son of “Abu Parvaiz.” Parvaiz immediately becomes skeptical, wondering if the man is from MI5. He remembers when agents had come to the house and played with him and Aneeka, before taking the album that Adil had sent him. The album held many photographs of Adil with a gun slung over his shoulder across various landscapes, inscribed with the words, “When you’re old enough, my son.”

Parvaiz protests that he never knew his father. Farooq says that Adil regretted that, which is why his jihadi name was “Abu Parvaiz”—Father of Parvaiz. Farooq says his own father told many stories of “the great warrior Abu Parvaiz.” Parvaiz is amazed, feeling tears come to his eyes. Farooq says, “I’m glad I’ve found you, brother.”

Farooq and Parvaiz meet every day over the next weeks. Farooq tells Parvaiz of “stories of his father for which he’d always yearned—not a footloose boy or feckless husband but a man of courage who fought injustice.” Farooq also tells him about the centuries-old conflicts between Christianity and Islam, explaining the history of the conflict in various parts of the world: the “centuries of humiliation; imperialism, with its racist underpinnings of a ‘civilizing mission,’ followed by the cruel joke of pretending to ‘give’ independence.”

*Although Isma and Aneeka feel betrayed by the actions that Parvaiz takes in the subsequent months, it is he who first believes that he has been betrayed by his sisters: one leaving for America and forcing them to leave their childhood home, and the other who doesn’t care enough to try and salvage that home and who telegraphs that she will eventually separate herself from him. Thus, this perceived betrayal is what actually begins the divide within the family.*



*Given Parvaiz’s lamenting of “the inevitability of his life” and the fact that he feels inadequate in comparison to the achievements of his sisters, it makes sense that Parvaiz goes in search of some kind of path to follow—and finds it in the legacy his father has left for him. Additionally, Gladys makes her first appearance here. She will resurface later after Parvaiz is killed to fight for the idea that Parvaiz wasn’t a bad kid, and that the media’s picture of him is more stereotypical than it should be.*



*Perhaps part of the reason that Parvaiz ultimately becomes so involved and invested in what his father did is because his father once expressed this warmth and tenderness toward his son. Even though his sisters and mother always characterized Adil as a bad presence in their lives, his investment in his son is clear from the inscription in the album and is ultimately a successful way to get Parvaiz interested in becoming a jihadi.*



*Parvaiz’s need for some kind of connection to the father he knew becomes clear in the emotion that Farooq stirs in him, and this feeling sparks much of his path from here through the rest of the book.*



*Again, Shamsie emphasizes Parvaiz’s need to view his father as a role model and someone he can look up to, rather than the way that he has been characterized by Isma. Additionally, the history lessons that he receives from Farooq provide some background context of the long struggle between Christianity and Islam, and why it is so difficult for Parvaiz and other Muslims to find a sense of belonging in Britain, which has always been a majority Christian country.*



Farooq always returns the conversation to the heart of all of his lessons: how to be a man. He says it's Parvaiz's sisters' fault for bringing him up to be soft and to serve them. He says that Allah has made men to be in charge of women. Parvaiz likes the sound of this, though he knows better than to try to convince Isma of this idea.

One evening, Aneeka asks Parvaiz what he's been up to, noting that he seems upset about moving. She assures him that they'll still be in the neighborhood and that if they sell the house, he could go to university. Parvaiz starts to rattle off a rant about the fact that she only got scholarships because she ticks their "inclusive" and "diverse" boxes. He says that people think Muslim women need to be saved from Muslim men, while Muslim men need to be detained and harassed. Aneeka points out that he's only been stopped and searched by the police twice, and that he said neither time was a big deal. She leaves him alone.

Farooq invites Parvaiz over to the flat where he lives. He gives Parvaiz some tea, then leaves the flat and asks Parvaiz to wait for a few minutes. On the wall, Parvaiz notices a photograph of Adil and a man who must be Farooq's father, taken as they departed for Bosnia. Parvaiz notes his father's excited expression, and he is thrilled to see a photograph of Adil that he has never seen before.

At that moment, two of Farooq's cousins enter the flat. They knock Parvaiz to the ground, tie a chain around his ankles, and shackle his wrists, looping the chain through a bolt in the floor so that he is forced to remain in a squatting position. They leave him there, playing a loud video game so that they can't hear him begging to be let go. He screams in pain for hours, until finally they unshackle him. They carry him to the kitchen sink, which is filled with water, and dunk his head in over and over. After a few rounds, they carry him over to a pile of mattresses.

Farooq returns, tears in his eyes, and explains that they had done this to Adil for months. Parvaiz cries as well, unable to move. Farooq brings him a hot water bottle for his back and gives him an ice cream stick. He asks if Parvaiz knows about the torture that prisoners like his father endured, but Parvaiz shakes his head and gets up to leave, still shaky. On the bus home, he texts Aneeka, asking her to come home. But then he remembers that before the pain became too unbearable, he looked at the photo of his father and thought, "I am you, for the first time." He texts Aneeka to say he was just kidding.

*Farooq himself also starts to fill this role of a father figure for Parvaiz, and this is one of the reasons that Parvaiz gets so wrapped up in Farooq's toxic lessons: he is searching for a person who can make him feel connected to his father and who can show him the path to becoming a man. This is not dissimilar to some of the language that Eamonn used when he described father-son relationships to Isma in the book's early chapters.*



*This exchange between Aneeka and Parvaiz illustrates how much he has already been persuaded by Farooq's arguments. Aneeka completely understands what he is saying, and she knows that there is truth in the idea that the country is particularly hard on Muslim men—she even makes similar arguments to Eamonn—but Parvaiz's vitriol and inability to have a discussion with his sister foreshadow his impending decision to leave the family.*



*Parvaiz continues to build a connection between himself and his father through Farooq and through finding out more about what it means to be a jihadi. Noting the excited expression in his father's face is part of the allure for Parvaiz himself, as he wants to feel the same excitement over a greater purpose as his father did.*



*At first, Parvaiz doesn't understand what is happening and why he is being literally tortured. This contrasts with Parvaiz's eventual desire to be tortured in order to be connected with his father, as he describes in the subsequent pages. This gradual change enables readers to see Parvaiz not as some kind of psychopath or masochist, but instead as a normal boy who ended up in the wrong circumstances.*



*Parvaiz starts to recognize how being tortured and feeling some of the same pain that plagued his father actually makes him feel connected to his father. Shamsie also illustrates how Parvaiz is moving away from the comfort of his sister and instead is trying to find personal comfort in that connection to his father. But his secrecy about what he is doing is ultimately what makes Aneeka feel betrayed by him.*



Soon after, Parvaiz starts to do research on some of the torture that Adil experienced—some of the images he finds are so visceral that he throws up. After reading this, he returns to Farooq’s flat. He tells Farooq to chain him again, saying, “I want to feel my father’s pain.” Farooq replies, “My brave warrior.”

Later, Aneeka asks Parvaiz about the girl he’s been seeing, and why he’s being so secretive about it. Parvaiz doesn’t answer, instead asking why Aneeka is studying the law, because the law never helped Adil. Aneeka is confused, saying that Adil never had anything to do with them. Parvaiz says she doesn’t understand, and he tells her to leave him alone.

A few days later, Parvaiz returns to Farooq’s flat to find him ironing his clothes. After they speak for a bit, Farooq tells him to put his hand on the ironing board, saying he’s going to press the iron into it. Parvaiz realizes he isn’t joking, and sets his hands on the ironing board. Farooq then places the iron on his hands—it is hot but not unbearable. Farooq says that it uses steam more than heat, and it wouldn’t burn his hand. He commends Parvaiz: “My faithful warrior.”

Farooq then tells Parvaiz that there is a place where they can go, where Parvaiz can live like a prince and talk about Adil “with pride, not shame.” Farooq says that he’s just come back from Syria, saying that the media has been lying about what it’s really like. He shows him idyllic pictures of life in Syria. Parvaiz asks if the pictures are real, and Farooq shows Parvaiz that he’s in a few of the photos.

Parvaiz then asks if the stories of violence are true, and Farooq explains that the pursuit of the ideals that they hold dear warrants a revolution. Farooq asks, “Will you protect the new revolution? Will you do the work your father would have done if he’d lived?” Parvaiz doesn’t know how to answer, but increasingly over the next days he feels more and more suffocated in London. He sees evidence everywhere of rot and corruption, noting that one of his sisters is traveling to “the nation that had killed their father” and the other is “propping up the lie that theirs was a country where citizens had rights.”

*In a short time, Parvaiz transitions from being upset by what Farooq allowed to happen to him to actively wanting to feel the pain again, not only to be connected to his father but to be rewarded for the bravery that he is showing. It is this acknowledgement of bravery that puts him on the path towards joining ISIS, as he feels like he is achieving the same version of manhood that his father did.*



*This exchange between Aneeka and Parvaiz draws another connection between Eamonn and Parvaiz. Whereas Eamonn’s friends joke that he is joining ISIS when really he is in a secret relationship, the opposite is true of Parvaiz. The fact that Aneeka never saw this decision coming is part of what creates a huge divide within the family.*



*All of these actions are continued tests on Farooq’s part. But where Farooq thinks that Parvaiz is training to be a loyal warrior to the cause, Parvaiz simply wants to live up to his father’s legacy as a brave hero, and to be praised for the man that he is shaping up to be.*



*Farooq’s language here plays exactly into Parvaiz’s desires to have a father figure whose life and legacy he can look up to. For so long, he has been trying to avoid mentions of his father and associations with what his father represented, so now finding something positive in his father’s life is a powerful shift for him.*



*Here, Shamsie illustrates how Parvaiz’s newfound pride in his father’s cause also highlights some of the shortcomings of countries like America and the U.K. He now recognizes that the countries do not prioritize their Muslim citizens and often force people to choose between their faith and their nationality—which is one of the reasons that Parvaiz is drawn to Syria, where he will not have to make this choice.*



Suddenly, Parvaiz realizes that he is preparing to leave, though he's not quite sure how it happened. Farooq assures him that he can come back if he wants to, and Parvaiz thanks him for being his friend and for helping him find people in Syria who knew Adil.

Parvaiz tells Aneeka and Isma that he is going to Karachi to stay with a cousin of theirs and work on a popular music show. He half believes that he is going to actually stay, even while booking a flight with a connection to Istanbul. Aneeka is upset that Parvaiz is leaving, particularly with Isma going away as well. Parvaiz thinks that there is no living person for whom he'd leave her, "but the dead made their own demands."

## CHAPTER 6 – PARVAIZ

Parvaiz pays the man in the electronics store in Istanbul, and then, after a moment, he buys a phone that can make international calls. He walks out the shop's back door, towards the cars, and when he hears the door close behind him he sets the equipment that he has bought down on the side of the road, along with his traceable cell phone, and starts to run.

Six months earlier, Parvaiz arrived in Raqqa with excitement and terror. Farooq takes him to a villa where the media unit stays, a sprawling and luxurious home. They address Parvaiz by his nom de guerre, Mohammad bin Bagram, which Farooq chose while also giving away Parvaiz's passport at the first checkpoint—though he told him he could get it back if Parvaiz ever needed it.

Parvaiz meets other members of the media unit, who reveal that they've only been there two months, and who also discuss the future wives that they have been talking to—women from France and England whom they are convincing to come join the cause. Farooq reveals that he'll be going to the front lines to fight.

*By showing readers Parvaiz's full transformation, Shamsie creates a sympathetic portrait of a boy who is in search of his father, rather than simply painting him as a terrorist—as the rest of the world is all too eager to do.*



*Shamsie also reminds readers how much of a betrayal Parvaiz's actions constitute for his sisters. He is choosing to abandon them to follow the memory of his dead father, which ultimately puts his living family back home in danger and under surveillance. Now, Isma's unforgiving language at the beginning of the novel makes more sense given the full context of what Parvaiz has done.*



*While Parvaiz's first chapter tracks the circumstances that led him to this path, this chapter charts his realization of the enormous mistake he has made. Here is the first moment where he tries to escape the situation he's put himself in.*



*The description of Parvaiz's arrival is full of symbolic actions. In giving up his passport, he gives up one of the only things that still ties him to his life in Britain and his homeland. It is a tangible sign of the idea that he is choosing his faith over his nationality. And having name Bagram chosen for him is another way of tying himself to his father, who was imprisoned in Bagram.*



*The discussions of the women that these men are luring foreshadows the eventual revelation that this is the media unit's primary work. So while Parvaiz isn't directly involved in the violence associated with terrorism, he isn't completely innocent either, as he helps to uproot other lives in irrevocable ways, just as his own life as been uprooted.*



Parvaiz is shocked to hear that Farooq won't be staying, as he thought that Farooq would help find people who knew Adil. Farooq says that Parvaiz will meet old jihadis at the training camp and he can ask them about Adil. Parvaiz is also surprised to hear about training camp: ten days of Shariah camp and six weeks of military training, followed by another month of media training. Parvaiz realizes how little he had asked Farooq about the life he was planning to enter.

Farooq also suggests that Parvaiz tell Aneeka and Isma the truth about where he is, now that he has arrived. He calls Aneeka on Skype, and she picks up demanding to know where he is, as she heard that he had gone with someone named Farooq to Raqqa. Suddenly Isma appears, saying "you selfish idiot" and showing him that two policemen are in their living room. Parvaiz tells the policemen that his sisters didn't know anything, before Farooq takes the phone and ends the call. Parvaiz is panicked.

Months later, Parvaiz is still panicked after running away from the electronics shop. He shaves his beard, cuts his hair, and buys new clothes. He calls Aneeka briefly while sitting in café. He feels very homesick, even looking forward to sparring with Isma. Aneeka texts, saying she's already gotten a ticket and is rushing to the airport for a flight in three hours. He feels some relief, knowing that he will at least reach the British consulate and return home, no matter what awaits him there. He then receives another text: "You're a dead man, my little warrior."

Three months prior, in March, Parvaiz had survived Shariah classes and military training, and he had been accepted into the media unit officially. He learned that men in Adil's generation who fought jihad in Bosnia all went home to their families for the winter months. This made him weep at night, because "he finally saw that he was his father's son in his abandonment of a family who had always deserved better than him."

Parvaiz is then taken out for his first important field recording, but he quickly realizes with horror that he is about to watch a beheading. As he sets up the video cameras and the microphones, his hands start to shake uncontrollably. He says he's not feeling well, and the head of the media unit, Abu Raees, tells him to lie down in the car. Parvaiz can't help but imagine what is happening outside.

*Parvaiz's lack of knowledge about the life that he is about to enter illustrates that his motivations for joining have largely been based on a desire to be connected to his father, more than a real desire to join the cause. This is why he is so surprised that Farooq will not be joining him, as Farooq not only represents Parvaiz's tie to Adil but also serves as another kind of father figure for Parvaiz.*



*Shamsie illustrates clearly the ramifications of Parvaiz's betrayal on his family back home. In this way, he is mirroring what his father did to his mother and Isma two decades earlier, which is what informs Isma's own comparisons between the two and why she in particular feels betrayed. In showing the police—whom, the reader already knows, Isma called preemptively—Shamsie also emphasizes how Parvaiz's decision laid the groundwork for more betrayals between the sisters and created irreversible divides between the siblings.*



*In contrast to the betrayal that his sisters felt in the moment he revealed that he had joined ISIS, here Parvaiz recognizes the love that had been a part of his life and his family, and which he had forsaken. Even the arguments that he had with Isma, he recognizes in hindsight, still came from a place of love. This is what makes their family's ultimate deterioration all the more tragic.*



*It is here that Parvaiz acknowledges how trying to emulate his father and reconstruct his life has actually been to his detriment, because he realizes that the only thing he has truly been able to live up to is the abandonment of his family. Parvaiz finally recognizes the severity and the pointlessness of his betrayal. He was searching for love and fulfillment from a dead father, when in reality he could have found it in his living sisters.*



*This incident illuminates the complexity of Parvaiz's character and situation. After Parvaiz's eventual death, many people assume he is a violent terrorist, but here Shamsie emphasizes that Parvaiz has not been a part of any violence up to this point, and that he is in fact deeply disturbed by and opposed to it.*



In the present, Parvaiz leaves the café, keeping watch for Farooq's car. He destroys the phone he just bought and changes into new clothes. He knows the British consulate is just down the street. He wonders if he should just go there, rather than wait for Aneeka, and admit he made a mistake. But he knows that if he goes, he will simply be treated as "the terrorist son of a terrorist father." He doesn't know how to "break out of these currents of history."

The narrative flashes back again, to a time when bombs have been dropped close to the media unit's villa. Parvaiz takes a recorder and drives in the direction of the bombs to capture footage of the damage. He drives around until he finds a collapsed section of a wall, and a woman pinned beneath it crying out for help. As Parvaiz approaches the woman, a man from the Hisbah (the morality police) tells Parvaiz that he can't help the woman, as she has taken off her face veil.

Parvaiz is pained to hear the woman call out—she is speaking English, and she is from London. She sounds his age, Aneeka's age. Parvaiz argues with the man, saying that leaving her is a greater sin than helping her. The man replies that she is being left to suffer because she removed her face veil. Parvaiz knows that protesting further will get him killed, and he thanks the man for correcting him. As he leaves, the woman continues to call after him.

When Parvaiz returns to the car, he immediately logs on to Skype and calls Aneeka for the first time in a long time. He is amazed to realize "how it feels to hear someone speak to you with love." He tells her that they've taken his passport, but that he just wants to come home. She tells him to find a way to get to Istanbul and go to the British consulate. Parvaiz says he worries that they'll torture him. She assures him that what happened to Adil won't happen to him—that she's "making sure of things here." She says that she thought she was doing something for him, but that it's "turned out nice for [her] too."

*Parvaiz recognizes here how trying to define himself through his father has ultimately led him to the same mistakes his father made. He also foresees what will eventually happen after his death: that people will make assumptions about him based on an idea of him and because of his history, rather than understanding him as an individual and trying to empathize with him.*



*In addition to seeking a connection to his father, Parvaiz has also been motivated by the idea that he doesn't feel fully accepted in Britain; that's part of why he chose to go to a place where his faith wouldn't define him as an outsider. But here, that idea is tested, because the adherence to religious law is so much more extreme—being a practicing Muslim, he now sees, doesn't mean he'll feel at home here either.*



*Shamsie depicts Parvaiz's disillusionment with the society that he has chosen. Even though he shares a common religion with the people there, he recognizes here that he doesn't agree with their moral interpretations of that faith. It is the injustice of being forced to leave the woman that ultimately shows Parvaiz that this society is not any more just than the one he left behind.*



*Parvaiz's thoughts again highlight the importance of love in the family. This scene depicts the other side of the conversation that Eamonn half-overheard in Chapter 3. What ended up being a betrayal for Eamonn is, in Aneeka's mind, simply a way for her to try and help her brother, who is desperate to return home.*



In the present, Parvaiz grows more and more anxious, as Aneeka should have him texted back. But then, he realizes that she would never be allowed to board a flight to Istanbul. He texts her that she doesn't need to come hold his hand. Parvaiz walks to the consulate, with its red, white, and blue flag. He thinks of "Mo Farah at the Olympics, Aunty Naseem's commemorative cake tin from the Queen's Golden Jubilee. London. Home."

*Even though Parvaiz never actually makes it back to Britain or even to the consulate, his final thoughts are reminders for himself of the place where he actually came from. They illustrate the idea that London, for all its faults and oppressions, was the only home he ever truly had. His thoughts here also highlight the tragedy of his believing that he didn't really belong there, as this led directly to his death. The mention of Mo Farah, a real-life British Muslim Olympian, hints at Parvaiz's thwarted hope that he might someday be able to reconcile his identity as a Muslim person with his identity as a British person.*



## CHAPTER 7 – ANEEKA

After not being allowed to board the plane to Turkey, Aneeka is unable to process the news of Parvaiz's death. She thinks that everyone in her life dies, but that Parvaiz has always been there to process that grief with her. She pushes the idea away, asking for proof that it is in fact Parvaiz who has died. She goes upstairs and locks her door, thinking that this has all been a mistake, that Parvaiz must be on his way to her, and she falls asleep.

*Much of this chapter depicts Aneeka's severe grief at losing her brother, reinforcing the deep bonds that had existed between them and clarifying why it is so important to her that his body be returned to Britain. This also adds to Aneeka's horror over Isma's betrayal, as Aneeka connects his inability to come home (and subsequently, his death) to Isma's talking to the police.*



Aneeka wakes late the next morning. Isma arrives back from America and immediately tries to comfort her. She says, "we'll always have each other," but Aneeka thinks that "'always' was only Parvaiz." The man from the Pakistan High Commission who informed them of Parvaiz's death returns, but Aneeka insists that they have the wrong person, and that Parvaiz is a British citizen. The man apologizes, saying that he is there because "the home secretary has a point to prove about Muslims." Aneeka then realizes that Eamonn has not yet called her back.

*Aneeka again pushes her sister away because she views Isma as an indirect contributor to her brother's death, even though Isma is simply trying to maintain what little family she has left. Additionally, the representative from the Pakistan High Commission who tells them of their brother's death makes a telling statement: that Karamat is using Parvaiz's death to implement general laws and paint other Muslims with a broad brush, while simultaneously distancing himself even further from his heritage and his faith.*



On TV, the news reports on Parvaiz's story. It says the Turkish government confirmed that the man killed in a shooting outside the British consulate was "Wembley-born Pervys Pasha, the latest name in the string of Muslims from Britain who have joined ISIS." They report that they do not know why he was approaching the British consulate, but that a terror attack has not been ruled out. They report that it is likely the attacker was from a rival jihadi group.

*Here and throughout the rest of the novel, news stories and reports like this one play the same role that the chorus would in ancient Greek tragedies like [Antigone](#), commenting on the action and speaking for the public (and sometimes for the audience). This news story illustrates the ways in which people like Parvaiz are stereotyped. He is grouped in with terrorists and given very little additional context; the reports even speculate that he might have been about to commit violence even though he was a victim of ISIS himself and never perpetrated a violent crime. Readers already know the truth from Parvaiz's perspective, but the British public doesn't provide any space at all for that perspective.*



The news then shows a clip of an interview with Karamat, who says that he has revoked the citizenship of all dual nationals who left Britain to “join our enemies.” He says that Parvaiz was a dual citizen of Britain and Pakistan and that his body will be returned to “his home nation, Pakistan.” He says, “we will not let those who turn against the soil of Britain in their lifetime sully that very soil in death.” The reporter asks if Parvaiz’s family in London has been informed, and Karamat responds that that’s a matter for the Pakistan High Commission.

*This is a fulfillment of Isma’s statement in Hira Shah’s class in which she noted that Muslim British citizens involved in violent acts of terror are “rhetorically being made un-British.” Here, Karamat emphasizes Parvaiz’s Muslim identity rather than his British one. Despite the fact that Parvaiz was born in London and never lived in Pakistan, Karamat treats Pakistan as if it is his “home country.” Again, Karamat’s sentiments here matches those of King Creon in [Antigone](#): he believes that people who have dishonored their home nations do not deserve dignified burials there.*



No mourners come to the house. Only Gladys phones to express her sympathies. A news clip has appeared of her telling cameras, “[Parvaiz] was a beautiful, gentle boy. Don’t you try to tell me who he was. I knew him from the day he was born. Shame on you, Mr. Home Secretary.”

*Gladys’s plea serves as an argument for the fact that Parvaiz’s situation should not be generalized, nor should he be treated like a stereotype rather than an individual. But Isma later recognizes that Gladys is free to make such statements in a way that Isma and Aneeka are not. As a white woman, Gladys’s loyalty to her nationality is never questioned, even when she openly supports Parvaiz.*



Aneeka feels grief so viscerally that it “flay[s]” her. She realizes that she has moved past grief and into rage. The police then come to Aunt Naseem’s—not to talk about Parvaiz, she realizes, but to talk about Eamonn. Aneeka tells them she started their relationship because she thought he could help get her brother home. When they ask her why the secrecy, she says, “Because of men like you with your notepads and your recorders. Because I wanted him to want to do anything for me before I asked him to do something for my brother. [...] What would you stop at to help the people you love most?”

*Aneeka’s overwhelming grief is one of the novel’s clearest parallels with [Antigone](#), in which the protagonist is so devastated by the death of her brother Polynices that she defies her king in order to honor Polynices. The interview that Aneeka gives reveals her own betrayal in pursuing a relationship with Eamonn and keeping it a secret. Whereas the police (and Isma) find Aneeka’s actions incredibly suspicious and upsetting, Aneeka feels that she is completely justified by her loyalty to her brother and her intense desire to protect him and bring him home.*



Isma hears Aneeka give this interview. When the police leave, Aneeka sees that Isma is “wounded and appalled.” Aneeka turns on her, saying, “If you liked him you should have done it yourself. Why didn’t you love our brother enough to do it yourself?”

*Isma’s reaction to Aneeka’s revelation about her relationship with Eamonn makes it clear how much she views this as a betrayal, particularly because Isma also had romantic aspirations with Eamonn. But to Aneeka, Isma’s feelings for Eamonn only make Isma guiltier; Aneeka thinks that Isma could have done the same thing Aneeka in order to help Parvaiz.*



Isma tries to comfort Aneeka, but Aneeka says she knows Isma doesn’t want to see her because of Eamonn. Isma insists that they’re still family. Aneeka is upset that it seems Isma is more hurt about Eamonn than Parvaiz. Aneeka says she doesn’t want her company because she betrayed Parvaiz. Isma tells Aneeka that that’s not why he’s dead. Isma apologizes.

*The anger between the two sisters illustrates that their different methods of trying to protect their family have only served to drive a further wedge between them. Even though Isma is trying to repair the relationship between them, the mutual hurt ultimately overcomes any attempt to reconcile what they’ve each done.*



Aneeka asks if Isma believes in heaven and hell. Isma says only as parables. When Aneeka asks her what she thinks happens when people die, Isma says she doesn't know. Aneeka insists that she needs to bring Parvaiz's body home. Isma says that Aneeka cannot do that because of the trouble it could get them both in—they can't even say the things Gladys said. Isma says that she loves Aneeka too much to do anything else. Aneeka says "your love is useless to me if you won't help," and tells her to leave.

A news story emerges quoting Isma, "the 28-year-old sister of London-born terrorist Parvaiz Pasha," as she says that she and Aneeka were horrified upon learning that Parvaiz had gone to join ISIS. She notes that they informed Counter Terrorism Command immediately. She thanks the Pakistan High Commission for returning his body to Pakistan, where relatives will bury his body. She says that she and Aneeka have no plans to travel to Pakistan.

The article goes on, explaining that Parvaiz was carrying weapons at the time of his death. It reports that Parvaiz was working with the media wing of ISIS, which is responsible for the recruitment of fighters and "jihadi brides." It also says that an Immigration Bill is due to go before parliament that will make it possible to "strip any British passport holder of their citizenship in cases where they have acted against the vital interests of the UK."

Aneeka is sleeping at their old home now, after the renters who were there moved out in the wake of the news. She doesn't let Isma stay with her in the house, and she starts having delirious nightmares about David Beckham, the Queen, and Zayn Malik trying to get in and board up the broken windows. Later, Aneeka tries to sort through Parvaiz's recordings, but she can't find any of his own voice.

*Even though they each carry a lot of love for each other, part of the conflict between them lies in the person to whom they are most loyal. Isma has always felt closest to Aneeka, describing later how Aneeka feels more like a child than a sister to her. Aneeka, on the other hand, has always been most connected to her twin brother. And so, even when they are trying to protect their family, they have different priorities of who to protect most within that family, and that creates the tension between them.*



*The article quoting Isma again makes the same kind of generalizations that the first article did, even if it is slightly more accurate. Isma's quote also emphasizes how she viewed turning Parvaiz in to the police as necessary in order to maintain their own safety. People already question their loyalty to Britain (as shown in the opening chapter) and reporting Parvaiz to the police gives her some insurance against more of the same suspicion. This news story also highlights how Isma's character parallels that of Ismene in [Antigone](#). Like Isma, Ismene opts to side with the government to avoid getting in more trouble after her brother's death, even though doing so causes her sister pain.*



*The description of the media wing makes the novel's depiction of Parvaiz even more complicated and nuanced. Even though he didn't participate in the violence directly, he was still a bystander to many incidents and served to recruit more unsuspecting people to ISIS's ranks, much like himself. Thus, Shamsie again emphasizes the importance of having a full story and not judging a person based on other cases or with incomplete information.*



*Aneeka's dream shows how she is starting to descend into a kind of frenzy due to the death of her brother. The characters in her dreams are telling, as all are British icons. Though the dream's meaning is ambiguous, it could be interpreted as an illustration of how her British identity is protecting her, but like her home, it is soon to be abandoned.*



Another article breaks the story that Parvaiz's father, Adil, fought with jihadi groups in Bosnia and Chechnya in the 1990s and traveled to Afghanistan in 2001 to fight with the Taliban. An unnamed classmate of Parvaiz says that this doesn't come as a surprise. A retired Special Branch Officer who interviewed the family in 2002 remembers the photo album he took away from Parvaiz, with the inscription "One day you'll join me in jihad." He says that Parvaiz was already being taught to idolize his father. The article continues, "it's a cause of profound concern that the children of jihadis are not closely watched by the state."

Aneeka orders a Pakistani passport. Meanwhile, another article comes out entitled "Ho-Jabi! Pervy Pasha's Twin Sister Engineered Sex Trysts with Home Secretary's Son." It describes Aneeka as Parvaiz's accomplice, saying that she hunted down Eamonn to try and convince Karamat to return her brother home. That morning, his office issues a short statement in the interest of transparency.

The chapter includes lines of poetry, which appear to be Aneeka's thoughts about Eamonn: "He looked like opportunity / tasted like hope / felt like love." She describes him as "A real / actual / straight from God / prostrate yourself in prayer / as you hadn't done since your brother left / miracle."

Aneeka packs a suitcase and leaves her house for the first time in days, facing police, cameras, and microphones. She gets into a cab and heads to the airport. When she is given permission to go through, a journalist calls out to her, asking her why she is going to Pakistan. "For justice," she replies.

*So much in this article is in direct contrast to what Shamsie is arguing throughout the book. First, it shows how people are judging Parvaiz based on the sins of his father—which highlights the difficulty of escaping the legacy of one's father. But the article also illustrates the public's willingness to play into stereotypes, and to create stories which serve people's assumptions rather than challenging them. The Special Branch Officer misquotes the inscription on the album (making it much more explicit), and he incorrectly states that Parvaiz was being taught to idolize his father, when in fact the opposite was true.*



*This article is another example of characters being evaluated based on stereotypes. Because Aneeka doesn't adhere to the typical vision of a conservative Muslim woman, she is treated as being sexually promiscuous and manipulative. The article's appearance also makes it clear that another betrayal has taken place, as Karamat revealed this information of his own volition in order to end the affair and protect Eamonn.*



*These lines illustrate not only the real depth of Aneeka's love for Eamonn, but also how he enabled her to regain a faith that she had lost—particularly because he represented a hope that she might be able to bring her brother home.*



*Even after his death, Aneeka plans to try to protect her brother's body and return him to his proper home. Like any other British citizen, Parvaiz deserves to be buried in his homeland, and she recognizes the injustice in the fact that only Muslims are given this discriminatory treatment.*

Aneeka arrives in Karachi. She is picked up by her cousin, who drives her to a hotel and explains that Parvaiz's body is arriving the next day and that they've arranged a funeral plot. Aneeka protests, saying that she is taking Parvaiz's body home. Her cousin objects, saying he doesn't want to be mixed up in any more of their problems. He asks her if she "[stopped] to think about those of us with passports that look like toilet paper to the rest of the world who spend our whole lives being so careful we don't give anyone a reason to reject our visa applications?" Aneeka assures him she doesn't want to involve his family.

Aneeka finds the British Deputy High Commission compound, which is guarded with barbed wire, vans, and guns, but a few minutes' walk away there is a park. She thinks, "here she would sit with her brother until the world changed or both of them crumbled into the soil around them."

*Aneeka's determination to see Parvaiz honorably buried in Britain is the novel's most pointed parallel with Sophocles's [Antigone](#). In the play, Antigone secretly buries her brother's body, even though the king has ordered her to let the body rot and Antigone's sister has warned her to obey. Antigone remains fixated on justice for her brother even though she knows that doing so might destroy her, and Aneeka does the same thing here. Aneeka's cousin's argument reminds readers that discrimination isn't solely found against British Muslims; people from other countries are also stereotyped simply for the fact that they practice Islam. Additionally, they are judged particularly harshly because of public depictions of people like Parvaiz and how Karamat is associating him with Pakistan. It's as if by associating Parvaiz with another country, Karamat can separate Britain even further from terrorism, but he is inherently associating Pakistan with terrorism, which is harmful as well.*



*Aneeka's resolution emphasizes her conviction to find justice for her brother and the other Muslims who might face the same unfair treatment. But ultimately, as this line foreshadows, Aneeka dies alongside her brother because of terrorists protesting Karamat's policies, illustrating how the conflict between faith and patriotism has tragic consequences for all of the book's protagonists.*



## CHAPTER 8 – KARAMAT

Karamat walks along the Thames, sipping coffee and pondering the events of the prior few days—Eamonn's earnest pleadings that Aneeka truly loved him and the story of Aneeka going to Pakistan to retrieve Parvaiz. He was shocked at her statement that she was looking for justice in Pakistan, as he understands how much his parents gave up in order to leave Pakistan and find greater opportunity and dignity in Britain. A brown-skinned runner approaches Karamat on the Thames, and the head of his security detail grows visibly anxious.

Karamat then receives a call from Eamonn, who has been staying with friends for the past few days, ever since he was "restrained from returning to the arms of that manipulative whore" and his "hysteria" had passed. Meanwhile, in response to the release of the statement of Eamonn's involvement with Aneeka, Terry moved some of his clothes to the basement bedroom, claiming he could have protected Eamonn. On the phone, Eamonn apologizes to Karamat for how he acted the other day.

*In the final part of the novel, the perspective shifts to Karamat Lone. This allows Shamsie to provide more nuance to his character as well. Up to this point, he has been assumed to be a calculating and self-serving politician, but here it is revealed that so much of his pride in his nationality comes from the fact that his parents came to Britain for more opportunity than they could find anywhere else. Like all the other characters, he's drawn to the place that feels most like a true home.*



*Karamat's perceived betrayal of Eamonn splits his family in ways he did not predict. In being transparent, he was hoping to soften the blow of the news stories that would inevitably emerge (and some stories in fact argued that Eamonn had immediately turned on Aneeka upon learning of her intentions), but this comes at the cost of his wife's anger.*



Eamonn explains that from the outside, Karamat's actions look bad. Eamonn reminds Karamat that he said he would help Aneeka in return for Eamonn's not contacting her. Karamat tells Eamonn that he has stationed police outside Aneeka's home, hasn't released videos that Parvaiz worked on, and hasn't had Aneeka locked up. Eamonn questions how not locking someone up without reason is doing someone a favor. Karamat says, "please don't try to develop a spine. You weren't built for it." Karamat asks if Aneeka gave him his first "really great blow job," and tells him that there are "better ones out there." Eamonn hangs up.

Midmorning, a picture ends up on Twitter of Aneeka, dressed in white for mourning, sitting in a park. Press flocks to her. In his office, Karamat turns on the Pakistani news. Karamat's assistant James informs him that there are people who think he wants to revoke Aneeka's citizenship as well as Parvaiz's. When Karamat asks what he thinks, James explains that he thinks that's a bad idea, as people will think it's because of Eamonn. Karamat disagrees, asking if they know what Aneeka might be planning next. As they watch, footage is shown of an ambulance pulling up and men carrying out an unadorned casket.

Aneeka then pulls the lid off the casket and pulls at each side until it collapses. Wind starts to pick up and her **hijab** falls off, revealing her long hair. She looks at Parvaiz's body. A dust storm arrives and the wind howls around her. Aneeka then addresses the cameras, saying that in stories of tyrants, bodies are kept from their families, "their heads impaled on spikes, their corpses thrown into unmarked graves." She asks the prime minister for justice—to let her take her brother home.

The Prime Minister responds to Aneeka's plea in a session of Parliament, declaring that Parvaiz left Britain to join people who follow the practices of "heads impaled on spikes. Bodies thrown into unmarked graves." The Members of Parliament agree with his statement, and Karamat is lauded for his commitment to doing the right thing.

*Karamat believes he is protecting his son from the disastrous decisions he has made, believing that Eamonn fell victim to Aneeka's manipulations. But in using crass language and in demeaning Aneeka based on stereotypes, he only serves to drive a wedge further between himself and Eamonn (and also between himself and Terry, when Eamonn relays this language later). Thus, what is meant to be protection is again interpreted as a betrayal of trust. Karamat's accusations here also mirror Sophocles's [Antigone](#), in which Creon accuses his son Haemon of naively falling under the spell of an attractive woman. In return, Haemon accuses Creon of being an unjust ruler, which is roughly what Eamonn says to Karamat here.*



*It is here that Karamat's distaste for Parvaiz's actions truly starts to bleed into discrimination against Muslims in general. Despite the fact that Aneeka has committed no crimes, her faith and her affiliation with Pakistan allows Karamat to turn policy against her and to essentially revoke her British citizenship without cause.*



*Aneeka is trying to make a political statement, by illustrating the injustice of the British government disrespecting one of its citizens on the grounds of faith. But at the same time there is a deeply personal component to what she is doing, in that all she wants is to be with the brother that she failed to protect. Instead, he is being turned into a political pawn rather than being treated as an individual.*



*The Prime Minister uses Aneeka's language and turns it against her, creating an even deeper division between Britain and Aneeka, whom they paint as being opposed to Britain. Yet again, Aneeka is treated like a terrorist even though she has not committed any crimes.*



Later, Karamat makes a phone call to the Pakistan High Commissioner. They speak in both Urdu and English. Karamat blames the HC for allowing the body to be brought to the park. The HC says they had no grounds to refuse Aneeka's request, and they have no reason to intervene on Britain's behalf. He explains that people are embracing her as a woman who has stood up to a powerful government that has "very bad PR in the matter of Muslims." The HC says he will not get involved, and he hangs up.

In Pakistan, people have begun to help Aneeka by delivering slabs of ice to keep Parvaiz's body preserved. Tabloids continue to write articles about her, asking, "Is This the Face of Evil?" and noting that she has been called "slag," "terrorist spawn," and "enemy of Britain." As Karamat watches the news, he understands that he doesn't have to strip her of her citizenship to stop her from getting what she wants, as her British passport was confiscated when she tried to join her brother in Istanbul. He thinks, "Let her continue to be British; but let her be British outside Britain."

Karamat returns home that evening following a difficult interview in which he affirmed that people who betrayed their British identity could not do so without consequences. He said that the British people support him, including the majority of British Muslims. The news anchor was surprised, nothing that there seems to be a common view that he hates Muslims. He replied, "I hate the Muslims who make people hate Muslims."

Karamat comes into the bedroom, but Terry immediately tells him to leave. She says that she spoke to Eamonn and he relayed what Karamat said about the blow job, asking him if he's "an expert on the better ones out there." He returns downstairs to the kitchen, and soon after his security detail comes in, explaining that a woman has been circling the block—Isma Pasha. She said that she wanted to speak with him, and he lets her come in.

Isma comes in; when Karamat offers her wine she politely refuses. He evaluates her plainness and her **hijab**, noting that she is "Probably a virgin." He is surprised at himself for these thoughts. Isma asks to go to Pakistan without being stopped, so that she can take care of her sister. He asks, in return, for her to convince Aneeka to bury Parvaiz in Pakistan. Isma says that she won't be able to convince Aneeka; she only wants to be with her. This reminds Karamat of language that Eamonn has used about Aneeka, of only wanting to be with her.

*The treatment of Aneeka by the Pakistani government reinforces her conflict with the British government. The Pakistani government recognizes that she is being mistreated simply because she is Muslim, and it is taking up her cause—even though she is not really a citizen of Pakistan—in order to send a message to the British government.*



*It is telling that the tabloids are actually turning in Aneeka's favor, recognizing the racist and sexist stereotypes that she has faced by the news outlets, when really all she wants to do is bury her brother at home. Yet Karamat now even refuses to let her return to Britain; he recognizes the absurdity of saying that she can be "British outside Britain" and how that essentially leaves her without a homeland, but he still sticks to his choice.*



*Again, there is some nuance to what Karamat is saying—that he dislikes people who invite others to discriminate against Muslims like him. But he does so at the cost of holding onto his faith at all; he believes that he is forced to choose a national identity over his faith. Yet in reality, perhaps Shamsie's argument is that if he were able to have a foot in both identities, there might not be so much conflict between those two groups.*



*Karamat's words come back to bite him; he believed his words would show Eamonn the error of his ways, but instead they have largely turned his family against him.*



*Karamat's thoughts about Isma again touch on the stereotypes that plague her and Aneeka. He compares both sisters to this idea of a conservative Muslim woman, and he finds Isma to be someone who conforms more readily to that image. Isma is an individual, and she has shown that she is interested in sex, and yet Karamat can only view her based on a type—even if the strength of his own judgmental thoughts alarms him.*



Karamat texts James asking if Eamonn has used his passport in the last few days, then returns to his conversation with Isma. Karamat thinks that she is a “reminder of a world he’d lost.” Karamat explains to her that “if there is an Almighty and He sends His angel Jibreel to lift up [her] brother,” that god would not let Parvaiz and Aneeka enter. Isma quietly rebukes him for using such dramatic language about two 19-year-olds. Then Karamat receives a call back from James. Isma asks again if Karamat will stop her from going to Pakistan. He says he will not. When she leaves, he thinks of Eamonn—“a son who was moving in the opposite direction of home, burning bridges in his wake, a trail of fire in the sky.”

## CHAPTER 9 – KARAMAT

That evening, Karamat wakes in the middle of the night, lonely. He climbs into bed with Terry, asking her to let him stay. She relents, pressing into him. Tomorrow, he knows, he’ll have to tell her that Eamonn has gone to Karachi “to prove to his father he had a spine.” Soon after, however, he realizes that he needs to keep his mind clear, and he leaves once more to sleep in the basement.

The next morning, Karamat is woken by James telling him that Eamonn has almost landed in Pakistan. James also shows Karamat a video that Eamonn released. Eamonn speaks directly to the camera, explaining that he is currently caught between his father and his “fiancée.” Eamonn explains that he knew Aneeka’s father had been a jihadi who was held in Afghanistan and died on his way to Guantánamo. He says that he despises the choices that Adil Pasha made, but that Aneeka and Isma’s ability to move past these difficulties makes them “extraordinary women.”

Eamonn explains that he and Aneeka fell in love, and that even though Karamat knows that he doesn’t “deserve a woman that wonderful,” he knows that there was no pretense between them. And so Aneeka told him about her brother, who was trying to escape to the British consulate to return home—not approaching it for some act of terrorism. He admits that he does not know what crimes Parvaiz may have committed in Syria, however.

Eamonn concludes that Aneeka has been abused for “daring to love while covering her head” and “reviled for her completely legal protests against a decision by the home secretary that suggests personal animus.” He asks Karamat directly where the crime is in wanting to return Parvaiz’s body home. Karamat is heartbroken by his son’s words.

*The final description of the chapter is another nod to Greek myths: this time to Phaethon, who tried to drive the chariot of his father, the sun god Helios. Phaethon was unable to control the horses, however, and drove alternately too high (freezing the Earth) or too low (burning the Earth). Zeus was then forced to strike Phaethon down with a thunderbolt. This allusion again underscores the hubris of a son in attempting to live up to his father, and it foreshadows his demise in doing so.*



*Eamonn’s motivations for going to Karachi illustrate the fallout of his feelings that his father has betrayed him. He is also rebelling against his father to try and prove to him that he has his own strength and can be his own person outside of the legacy his father has left.*



*Like Isma and Aneeka have done throughout the book, here Eamonn and Karamat stand on two competing sides of doing what they think is best for their family, and each thinks that the other is betraying them. Karamat was trying to separate his son from Aneeka in order to protect him, while Eamonn feels that Aneeka essentially represents family to him now—he wants to protect her instead.*



*Eamonn’s language here about Karamat believing that he doesn’t deserve Aneeka is another sly hint at the fact that Eamonn knows Karamat doesn’t think much of his son, which is part of the reason that Eamonn has gone to Karachi in the first place.*



*Eamonn’s video blurs the line between personal and political, as he shows how the ideological divide between families like the Lones and families like the Pashas end up hurting everyone. And in setting himself firmly on Aneeka’s side and questioning his father’s motivations, he is completely betraying his own family—just as Parvaiz betrayed his own.*



Karamat goes to the headquarters of the home office. News of Eamonn’s video is already in the morning papers; someone must have leaked the video ahead of time. The main article paints Karamat as an ambitious son of migrants who married money and class to be elected; they call him a person who “used his identity as a Muslim to win, then jettisoned it when it started to damage him.”

In response to Eamonn’s video, Karamat prepares a video that was shot by the media unit for which Parvaiz had been working—a “backup plan to remind the public that the only story here was that of a British citizen who had turned his back on his nation”—though he hopes not to have to use the video of a head rolling in the sand. He wonders if Aneeka even knows the person her brother was.

Terry then texts Karamat, telling him to come home or else she is going to move out to a hotel. He goes home and finds his daughter, Emily, whom he describes as “the son he’d never had.” She tells him that she’s come to get Eamonn back and take him with her to New York while things blow over. Terry then comes into the room, and Emily leaves so that Terry and Karamat can talk together. Terry asks him why he can’t leave Aneeka and Parvaiz alone, insisting that now he’s made even more enemies, and that he is soon to lose Eamonn as well. She tells him to fix it.

Karamat thinks of two memories: first, he remembers comforting Eamonn through his first heartbreak, his son weeping into his father’s chest. Karamat had thought to tell him to take it on the chin, but instead he just pulled him closer, grateful that Eamonn had turned to him for comfort. The second memory is of himself reading aloud from the Quran to his mother on the night that she died. He wonders who would do the same for him, and he resolves to fix what he has done.

*Just as the news has painted other characters based on stereotypes (Parvaiz as a terrorist, Aneeka as manipulative and sexually promiscuous), Karamat gets the same treatment as a calculating politician. Yet Shamsie has shown through the chapters from each character’s perspective that there is more to each of their stories.*



*At first, Karamat’s only response is to sharpen the divide between himself and Aneeka and Parvaiz, now that he believes his son has squarely turned his back on him. He again emphasizes the idea that Parvaiz’s involvement with ISIS and Aneeka’s faith and attempt to retrieve her brother make them traitors to their nationality, but the reader knows that Parvaiz really wasn’t the violent person Karamat is imagining here.*



*Terry, unlike Karamat, recognizes that all of these actions are simply serving to divide their family rather than protect it. She recognizes that Karamat has been treating Aneeka and Parvaiz of representatives of a type for a larger political statement, rather than seeing that he is simply hurting two 19-year-olds along with his own son. Terry is also a parallel for the character of Tiresias in Sophocles’s [Antigone](#). Tiresias is a blind prophet who convinces King Creon that punishing Antigone will also destroy her fiancé, Creon’s son Haemon. Tiresias succeeds in convincing Creon, just as Terry succeeds in convincing Karamat here—but in both cases, the change of heart comes too late to save the son.*



*Even though Karamat sees and desires the wider political implications of fixing this situation, he believes that above all else, his son should come first. Here, he finally recognizes that his son truly is what he has made him, and that even if his son has not fully met his expectations, the bonds of family are more important than anything else.*



Suddenly, Karamat's security detail leads Karamat, Terry, and Emily down into the basement bathroom—a safe room. There has been “chatter” about an imminent attack, and they have to stay inside for their own protection. Karamat tries to think of something comforting to say, but instead he can only say that he is sorry. After a time that seems endless, the head of Karamat's detail gives the all-clear, explaining that it is safe to come out. They explain that it must have been a hoax, because the people are claiming that they've got Karamat, and they clearly haven't.

Every television channel replays the footage: Eamonn walking into the park, calling out to Aneeka, who seems unaware of him, her face pressed into Parvaiz's coffin of ice. Two men step into Eamonn's path, greeting him. When Eamonn approaches them, they immediately lock a belt of explosives around him and run away. Everyone panics and starts to run, but Aneeka realizes for the first time that Eamonn is there. Eamonn shouts at her to run away, but she instead runs toward him. She holds him, and he kisses her shoulder. For a moment, they just look like happy lovers in a beautiful park.

*The true tragedy of the story is that Karamat's recognition of the error of his decisions comes too late. Even though he soon means to do the right thing and allow Aneeka and Parvaiz to return home, his own pride, the intolerant policies that he has put forth, and the tense relationship with his son have already led to his own family's endangerment, and ultimately to the death of the son he was trying to protect.*



*This conclusion mirrors that of Sophocles's [Antigone](#): Eamonn is destroyed alongside Aneeka, just as Haemon dies immediately after Antigone. The climax of the novel bears out all of the previous conflicts: the betrayals between family members have driven Aneeka and Eamonn to Pakistan; Parvaiz's and Eamonn's strained relationships with their fathers have led to their deaths; and ultimately, the feeling that British Muslims are forced to choose between their faith and their nationality has set the stage for horrific acts like this one. Yet even though the novel ends in tragedy, the calm final image expresses some hope that someday, people like Aneeka and Eamonn might be able to come together and be at peace, free of the judgment and hatred of others.*





## HOW TO CITE

To cite this LitChart:

### MLA

Emanuel, Lizzy. "Home Fire." *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 29 Mar 2020. Web. 29 Apr 2020.

### CHICAGO MANUAL

Emanuel, Lizzy. "Home Fire." LitCharts LLC, March 29, 2020. Retrieved April 29, 2020. <https://www.litcharts.com/lit/home-fire>.

To cite any of the quotes from *Home Fire* covered in the Quotes section of this LitChart:

### MLA

Shamsie, Kamila. *Home Fire*. Riverhead. 2017.

### CHICAGO MANUAL

Shamsie, Kamila. *Home Fire*. New York: Riverhead. 2017.