



The Kite Runner

AMIR lives in Kabul with his father and his brother, Hassan. He talks to the audience about the local kite fighting tournament.

AMIR: The tournament started early in the morning and didn't end until the winning kite flew in the sky. People gathered on the sidewalks and rooftops to cheer their kids. The streets were filled with kite-fighters, squinting up at the sky, trying to gain position to cut an opponent's line. The lucky kite-fighters had an assistant — in my case, Hassan — who held the spool and fed the line. But the real fun began when a kite was cut! That was where the runners came in. They chased the falling kite through the streets until it came spiralling down in a field or on a rooftop. And the most coveted prize was the last fallen kite of the tournament. For this, fights broke out. But Hassan was by far the greatest kite runner I'd ever seen.

In the winter of 1975, the night before the tournament, it snowed heavily, and the next morning the streets were glistening white. Word had it that was going to be the biggest tournament in twenty-five years. I had never seen so many people on our street. Rooftops were jammed with spectators. The smell of lamb kabob drifted from open doors.

Hassan and I were ready. I had to win this tournament, Hassan ran and tossed the kite. Then it was rocketing towards the sky! At least two dozen kites were already up there. Within an hour the number doubled. Red, blue, and yellow kites spun past each other. And soon the cutting started!

A red kite was closing in on mine! I tangled with it a bit, then cut him when he became impatient. Got him! Then I sliced a bright yellow kite! And then one with a white tail! My hands were bloody, but I didn't care! Eventually, the number of kites dwindled from fifty to a dozen. And by three o'clock that afternoon, we were down to a half dozen. And I was one of them! My legs ached, and my neck was stiff. But with each defeated kite...hope grew in my heart like snow collecting on a wall one flake at a time. I saw a blue kite slice a big purple one and then sweep the sky in a series of loops and cut three more! And suddenly...it was just me and the blue kite! I smelled victory! Salvation! Redemption! Concentrate, Amir...Play it smart...Be patient...Almost there. Then a gust of wind lifted my kite! I pulled up! Looped my kite on

top of the blue one! I closed my eyes and loosened my grip! The string sliced my fingers and then...

I won! Hassan, I won! (*Laughter, joy*) No...We won, Hassan. We won.

By Khaled Hosseini

Adapted by Matthew Spangler