

# **Shame Study Guide**

## **Shame by Salman Rushdie**

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## Plot Summary

*Shame* begins and ends in a fantastic house in the town of Q., located on the arid, isolated border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Nicknamed Nishapur, home of the great Persian poet Omar Khayyam, it is inhabited by three sisters who for twelve years raise a son, named for the poet. They rear him in strict isolation from the world, instilling in his brilliant mind a strange feeling of being peripheral and inverted. In exchange for being allowed to attend school, Omar is ordered never to feel shame (*sharam* in Arabic). He goes away to medical school and a brilliant career as an immunologist and shame does indeed appear to have no part in his voyeuristic, misogynistic character.

Omar befriends and debauches with a rich playboy, Iskander ("Isky") Harappa, who marries Rani Humayun, who immediately sees Omar as a threat. Isky and Rani have one daughter, Arjumand, nicknamed the "Virgin Ironpants," for her determination to overcome her gender sexually and professionally. On his 40th birthday, Isky hears the call of History and abandons his debauchery to enter politics. For years, he has been the rival of Raza Hyder, a military hero who calls himself "Old Razor Guts." Raza has married Bilquïs Kemal, a woman whose mind is shaken by the suicide of her idealistic father. After a wrenching stillbirth, they bear two daughters, Sufiya Zinobia (nicknamed "Shame") and Naveed (nicknamed "Good News").

The elder, left mentally retarded by a fever as an infant, takes within herself all the unfelt shame of the world, which eventually becomes incarnate as a Beast. The Beast makes her behead a flock of turkeys and she falls ill with the plague of shame. Omar treats her immunological disorder and falls in love with her. At her sister's wedding, the Beast again makes her lash out and she bites the groom in the neck. Omar marries her quietly, nonetheless, but he is forbidden to have sexual relations with her. Despite her mental limitations, Sufiya Zinobia knows husbands are for giving women babies and when her Omar impregnates her ayah Shahbanou, the Beast again takes over and four young men are forced to have sex with Sufiya Zinobia and have their heads torn off.

Omar and Raza Hyder realize the truth and drug and imprison Sufiya Zinobia, unable to kill her. Raza Hyder, who was placed in charge of the army by Prime Minister Iskander Harappa, has overthrown him, instituted Islamic law and allowed Isky to be tried, brutally imprisoned and executed. Raza is himself overthrown by a military coup and flees with Bilquïs and Omar, to supposed safety in fortress-like Nishapur, disguised shamefully in women's burqas. There, Omar's three mothers rejoice to find Raza, the murderer of their second son Babar, in their hands. After the visitors endure the wild ravings of malaria, the three sisters dispatch Raza Hyder with great gore in the dumbwaiter they had specially customized to serve as their means of limited communications with the outside world. The Beast that has taken over Sufiya Zinobia hunts Omar in the bed where his grandfather died and after a last eye-to-eye confrontation, beheads him. The shell of Sufiya Zinobia is cast off, set free and the spouse-protagonists are consumed in a great fire.



# Part 1 Chapter 1

## Part 1 Chapter 1 Summary

Old Man Shakil hates both the bustling native bazaar and the fashionable Western Cantt that neighbor his fortress-like residence and he curses both - and himself - as he dies. In 18 years of widowhood, he has kept his three daughters imprisoned and uneducated but well bred in the mansion, where they invent private languages and fantasize about male genitalia. Chhunni, Munnee and Bunny vow to remain forever together and to share babies. They appear at their father's deathbed dressed in bright colors and spend the time of his mourning settling unexpected debts. Swindled by moneylenders they retain only the unmanageable mansion. They throw a gala coming-out party to which foreigners rather than the local notables are invited. Alcohol is served and Western-style dancing enjoyed. The few non-white guests leave early. One of the sisters becomes pregnant.

The unashamed sisters commission a dumb waiter from handyman Mistri Yakoob Balloch. The externally mounted conveyance can accommodate three adults, is operated from inside the house and it incorporates a variety of lethal security features which are kept carefully secret. Soon after completing the installation, Balloch dies suspiciously. The enormous front gates of the Shakil house are sealed for what turns out to be 50 years. Local merchants have written orders to supply the house's regular needs, paid for by gradually pawning the household treasures.

No one discovers which of the sisters is pregnant, because no doctor is involved and the sisters close ranks, with two feigning pregnancy and experiencing all its physical symptoms. All three experience labor to produce one child, Omar Khayyam Shakil, whose first upside-down view of the world is the Impossible Mountains. Only after the baby cries does Hashmat Bibi enter the room and see the three mothers in their father's mahogany, four-poster deathbed beneath a brocade Eden canopy. Six breasts nourish the boy, who never hears the name of God, has a haircut, or is circumcised.

From his earliest days, Omar feels inverted and fears life so close to the edge of the world. Regular nightmares convince Omar to limit his sleep time to 40 minutes a night and he flits about the house at night like Batman or Dracula. Legends about angels causing earthquakes in the Impossible Mountains lead Omar to believe Paradise is located beneath his feet rather than in the sky and, therefore, Hell must loom overhead. Experience becomes for him inverted and Omar feels himself a person apart.

In adolescence, an already fat Omar accompanies Farah Rodrigues to her father's customs outpost, suffers vertigo and faints when a cloud overtakes the jeep. Vertigo returns later in life, leading Omar to lament he is "not even the hero of his own life." Twenty years later, a tri-mothered half brother will be born.

## Part 1 Chapter 1 Analysis

"The Dumb-Waiter" describes how three sisters, sequestered in strict Muslim fashion by a non-believing father, give birth unwed to a son, Omar Khayyam Shakil, an unlikely hero for a story, the author admits. Omar's world is even more constricted than his mothers' world is because the great house is locked tight. He communicates with the world only through an oversized, booby-trapped dumb waiter. Insomnia and vertigo are manifestations of Omar's sense of existing in an upside-down world. The story sounds like medieval fantasy, so the intrusive author clarifies it takes place in the late 14th and early 15th centuries A.H.; 1400 A.H. translates to 1980 C.E. Rushdie uses a technique of jumping forward to some delicious detail, catching and reprimanding himself and returning suddenly to the narrative.



# Part 1 Chapter 2

## Part 1 Chapter 2 Summary

Rushdie visits his family a few weeks after Russian troops invade Afghanistan. They live in the fashionable, highly desirable army-owned "Defence" neighborhood accessible only through "nice-guy" arrangements. Rushdie visits a poet friend and innocently mentions the execution of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. He is hushed because a nice-guy informer is present. Returning to London from Karachi, Rushdie learns his friend has spent months in jail for knowing someone who knows someone somehow involved in gun running in Baluchistan. They say he was hung upside down and beaten like a newborn. Wherever Rushdie turns in the East, he finds something of which to be ashamed, but no one there notices it any more. Everyone has grown "civilized." After the Soviet invasion, the West feels obliged to support ul-Haq's dictatorship, but the Pakistanis could get rid of him "in the usual way." Shame on the West. The poet has stopped writing, so Rushdie undertakes to invent his story and name his hero after the great poet, Omar Khayyam. Rushdie feels like a poacher, but holds that history is not just the property of the participants. He vows these will be his final words about the East: a story about a Pakistan-like country. Omar Khayyam the Persian poet is more popular in the West than in his native Persia and in the Fitzgerald translation of his verses, things are not only lost but also gained. Rushdie confesses to be a "translated man."

The sight of Farah Zoroaster through his telescope gives Omar the strength to break his mothers' power. Having named their son for the great poet, they dub their reclusive mansion "Nishapur," but no rubaiyat ever issues from their boy. For 12 years, Omar is imprisoned but yearns to escape. He has the run of the house and receives anything he wants - other than freedom. He sees family treasures decomposing wherever his nocturnal wanderings take him. Once, Omar glimpses the outside world through a shattered wall but is too frightened to leave. Soon afterwards, Omar vandalizes the rooms, massacring history.

Sitting together on a favorite swing seat, the Shakil sisters doubt Omar's imaginative stories. In grandfather's book-lined study, which his mothers never enter, Omar discovers the library has never been used and begins putting it to good use, mastering Arabic, Persian, Latin, French and German on his own. Omar masters hypnosis and first practices it on the remaining trio of men servants, who happily confess to a relationship unlike the sisters' platonic love. Hashmat Bibi also agrees to "go under," but quickly wills herself to death at the age of 120.

From the upper windows, Omar's telescope surveys the neighborhood. One day, at age 12, he spies the incomprehensibly appealing figure of 14-year-old Farah Zoroaster. Instantly, his voice changes and his testicles descend and every time he looks outdoors, his groin aches dully. Omar hates his mothers' closeness, their private languages and their ability to finish one another's sentences. Omar feels excluded. During the 6 years they nursed Omar, they synchronized every activity with precision. During the next 6



years, they shrank and lost much outward identity. Educated only in manners, they cannot understand their self-taught prodigy son and declare his book learning crazy. Omar knows they are holding him back and for his 12th birthday requests two presents: let him out of the house and reveal his father's name. Unaccustomed to arguing, the Shakils become individuals again. Omar, they declare, may attend school. He must not, however, ever feel shame.

Shame is a pale reflection of the Arabic word *sharam*, which holds an encyclopedia of nuances: embarrassment, discomfiture, decency, modesty, shyness, etc. Being forbidden to feel shame at age 12 will affect the rest of Omar's life. Omar is bewildered by the new concept. It makes you hot, it makes you cold; it makes women cry and die; it makes men go wild - the mothers as a team explain. Thereafter, themselves stung by *sharam*, the sisters are separate beings, squabbling over trifles. They take on characteristics not in keeping with their birth order. Late in life, Omar will remember his years of imprisonment by these strange mothers with icy hatred, but in the middle years, he becomes a misogynist, looking for revenge in every woman he meets.

Stepping happily from the dumbwaiter, armed with a fine leather satchel full of school supplies, Omar faces hostility. In addition to a variety of gapers and taunters, there are people convinced his mothers caused Balloch's death. They are determined to shame Omar by draping a necklace of old shoes over his neck. There are two religious zealots, ready to confront the "Devil's seed." Claiming primacy, Maulana Dawood flings himself to his knees to beseech God's vengeance on the fat boy. The others are eager for their turn to insult him and the shoes fly towards Omar as Dawood straightens up. They wrap around his scrawny neck, making Omar giggle out of fear and the other onlookers to follow. Dawood arises with murder on his face, but he is intercepted by Eduardo Rodrigues, the schoolmaster come to fetch his new pupil. Farah, who accompanies Rodrigues, roars with blasphemous laughter at Dawood.

## Part 1 Chapter 2 Analysis

"A Necklace of Shoes" begins with an author's aside about a recent visit home to Pakistan. Rushdie explains this novel will speak on behalf of a poet friend who, after undergoing torture, writes no more. Rushdie tells about a fictional country that sounds like Pakistan but is more than Pakistan. The protagonist will bear the name of Persia's greatest poet and his fictional mothers will play along by nicknaming their home Nishapur. Returning to the narrative, Rushdie shows Omar's life to age 12 divided into two parts: up to six, when he is finally weaned, years in which his three mothers move as one and from six to twelve, when they began to differentiate and he educates himself from grandfather's library to a point they cannot comprehend. The mothers allow him to leave the house to go to school, after warning him about a novel concept: *sharam*. Rushdie interrupts the story to offer a commentary on the richness of the Arabic term. By now, the reader should be accustomed to these incursions. The author is as much a character in the novel as any of his creations.



# Part 1 Chapter 3

## Part 1 Chapter 3 Summary

The English administrators divert sparse water to keep the lawns of the Cantonment School green, but remove their children at age 8 to send them home to finishing schools in England. Thus, most of the student body, aged 3 to 19, is brown-skinned. Omar is treated as fat boys usually are in school and when his tormentors get no rise from him, is happy to become nearly invisible. Voyeurism by telescope gives way to close-up spying, at school and around town. The peeping tom never is caught and he delights in living through other human beings. His mothers pump him for information after school, becoming voyeurs-by-proxy.

Omar studies every Englishman's face for signs he may be his father. Frustrated, he arbitrarily attaches himself to the newly arrived schoolmaster as his father. Slim, sharp Eduardo Rodrigues is a mystery figure. He pulls into town dressed in white and carrying an empty birdcage and swiftly talks himself into a teaching position. Rodrigues lives in a plain room decorated with a crucifix and a variety of cheap calendar pictures. It seems he must be hiding his past. Omar and Farah Zoroaster, Rodrigues' two best students to whom he offers private tutoring, are the only ones allowed into Rodrigues' inner sanctum.

Customs officer Zoroaster arrived wifeless with his 8-year-old daughter two months before Rodrigues. Gossips decide that because Christians are all perverts, teacher and student must be lovers. Farah is known not only as "Disaster," but also as "The Ice Block," for the way she treats admirers, including the teacher. Omar tries to ignore the rumors, but they creep into his psyche and Christian-like perversion becomes part of his chosen inheritance. Rodrigues decides Omar must be a physician, someone Essential, Indispensable and Dispensing. Medicine will also legitimize the voyeurism Rodrigues discerns in Omar.

Rodrigues asks Farah to be nice to bright, lonely, 16-year-old Omar and she invites him to visit her father's isolated customs post. Omar faints when a cloud descends around their jeep, convincing him they are headed over the Edge. By contrast, Farah finds the empty frontier thrilling. Customs officers need heavy traffic to make an adequate living, redeeming impounded goods, but no one passes through Zoroaster's post. Dizzied by the sun, Omar declares his love for Farah, but he is rejected. It is not that he is fat or ugly, but something indefinable in his personality repulses her. Watching Farah cavort among the mirrors hung on bollards, Omar realizes she is simply self-obsessed. He asks whether she has ever been hypnotized.

Farah is expelled from school when she becomes pregnant and Rodrigues marries her by force. He is fired and the couple leaves town. Omar reminds himself that subjects under hypnosis do nothing they do not wish to do. He is almost convinced Rodrigues is the father; that what Farah was willing to do with one man she might do with others. A





demon makes Omar cry for no reason, feel strangled and spend long unproductive hours on the toilet. One night he comes home drunk, enraging his mothers. Omar realizes he must escape.

At 18 and already obese, Omar informs his mothers he has won a scholarship to the best medical school in Karachi. They insist, however, on pawning vast treasures to supplement his finances. In the desert, Zoroaster has lost his mind and is calling on God to cleanse the earth with fire. Chand Mohammad, an ice vendor, sells Omar a block of ice to cool himself against the hot Loo wind on his long train ride and Omar leaves Q. as another Ice Block rolls back into town. Farah comes home childless, but her raving father rejects her. No one knows what has happened to her baby or Catholic husband. Farah remains a recluse until her very old age, when she begins frequenting bars and reminiscing about Omar, who by then is famous.

Two years after Omar's escape from Nishapur, his mothers write to tell him he has a brother, named after Babar, first Emperor of the Mughals. They are unified again in motherhood, happy and indistinguishable. Omar admires the old witches' achievement.

## Part 1 Chapter 3 Analysis

"Melting Ice" deals with Omar's first love, Farah Zoroaster, a student only slightly less brilliant than himself and the only other student the mysterious English schoolteacher takes under his wing. Farah, known as the "Ice Block," rejects Omar's declaration of puppy love and under hypnosis becomes pregnant. The teacher takes the blame, marries her and hustles her out of town. She returns, childless and husbandless, as Omar is leaving for Karachi to study medicine, the field towards which the tutor steered him. Omar leaves Q. with his feet on a block of ice, intended to make the hot train ride more comfortable. The reader knows that Omar is destined for fame and big brotherhood, but one has to wonder how his mental state will allow him to function in the outside world, much less excel.



## Part 2 Chapter 4

### Part 2 Chapter 4 Summary

Rushdie intrudes to announce, "This is a novel about Sufiya Zinobia," Omar's wife and adds, enigmatically, "Sufiya Zinobia is about this novel." Her mother Bilquès, as a young woman in the dangerous days just before partition, is afraid of the hot afternoon wind known as the Loo. She imagines herself as a grand, imperious empress. Her widowed father, Mahmoud ("The Woman") Kemal, runs the seedy, raucous, cheap Empire Theater, whose only pretension, a gold-painted equestrian knight labeled *Excelsior*, inspires Bilquès' flights of fancy. Muslims and Hindus attend different movie theaters and attack those of their enemies. Mahmoud announces a double feature, one film appealing to Muslims and one to Hindus and both communities boycott the Empire. Bilquès begs her father to give up such romanticism, but he turns uncharacteristically stubborn.

Terrified by a sound like the beating wings of an angel, Bilquès grabs a green dupatta of modesty and runs into the street, just as Empire explodes. With eyebrows burnt away and all clothing save the dupatta blown off, Bilquès knows her father committed suicide and curses him. Others suspect terrorism and the Muslims, naked Bilquès included, are herded for their own safety into al-Hambra, the ancient red fortress. Bilquès awakens to find herself wrapped in Raza Hyder's military coat. The humble, energetic, pious captain goes sleepless for almost 18 days, keeping watch over the refugees. This brings out the black patches beneath his eyes that will distinguish him for life. Raza visits Bilquès regularly, bringing her gifts that the envious suggest are looted from the innocent.

After the marriage ceremony, the couple boards a northbound troop transport. Bilquès prophesies that fame awaits her husband, upon whose boulder-like solidity she rebuilds her life. The Loo continues to unnerve Bilquès and she develops a habit of pacing, slamming and locking doors and fixing things in place, lest they blow away like the Empire.

Rushdie explains that if this were a realistic novel about Pakistan, he would be writing not about Bilquès but about his own sister, whom he remembers in nine incarnations corresponding to the brief visits he has made over 22 years. Rushdie feels closer to each successive incarnation — of her and of Pakistan as a whole. When he writes about "over-there," there are inevitably missing fragments. If this were a realistic novel, Rushdie would have to write about sex discrimination, skewed industrial programs, biased textbooks, read-life political figures, censorship, corruption, genocide, clothing regulations, cover-up hangings, anti-Semitism, smuggling and misapportioned budgeting. It would do no good to say this is not a book about Pakistan, because such realism would get it banned. Fortunately, Rushdie is writing a modern fairytale, so no one needs to be upset or take him too seriously. Telling about what one is not writing about is a form of censorship, because it prevents telling other tales, so he must stop

and return to sidelined Omar in order eventually to bring Sufiya Zinobia into the narrative.

## **Part 2 Chapter 4 Analysis**

"Behind the Screen" begins Part 2 "The Duellists." It announces a new protagonist, Sufiya Zinobia Hyder Shakil, but proceeds to tell only about how her mother Bilquis met her father Captain Raza Hyder, destined to be President, after her idealistic father's suicide. Throughout Part 2 Omar will be a peripheral figure. Great emphasis is given to Bilquis' grabbing a green dupatta on her frantic way out of the apartment, sensing trouble is coming. It is a "dupatta of modesty," no more said and her nakedness after the explosion and being clothed by her future husband is contrasted to the usual pattern. The author ends the chapter with a lengthy postscript on how and why this is not a historical novel. He squeezes in all the remarks he might want to make about Pakistan while claiming not to discuss such sordid matters. Notice the details about Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, whose hanging will appear under the guise of Raza Hyder's story.



## Part 2 Chapter 5

### Part 2 Chapter 5 Summary

Until things quiet down in Karachi, Bilquès sleeps in a cavernous dormitory with 39 female Hyders under the supervision of tiny old Bariamma. The women lie awake, waiting for conjugal visits from the "forty thieves." This is the "old village way" of dealing with the shame of sex, which marriage does not remove. All conceptions are, thus, immaculate and all births virginal. Bilquès' dormitory neighbor, 18-year old cousin Rani Humayun, soon to be wed to millionaire Iskander Harappa, decries such backward stupidity. Rani shocks Bilquès by suggesting the dormitory is a cover-up for wife-swapping orgies. Bilquès examines a genealogy in the family Qur'an and discovers Rani and her own deceased mother-in-law are the only female Hyders in their generation. Bilquès' head spins, finding she has 11 legitimate uncles, at least 9 illegitimate ones and 32 male cousins. Because she cannot keep track of the specific terms by which her new relatives are to be addressed, she speaks only with Rani and Raza. Bilquès is obliged to sit at Bariamma's feet to listen to recitals of horrors that serve as family tales. The stories of Mahmoud the Woman and Bilquès' nudity in Delhi are added to the family lore.

The hot season brings out the spirit of war between Pakistan and India and army morale is high. A wedding reception for Iskander and Rani must be postponed. Raza Hyder learns Bilquès is pregnant and lets out a whoop of triumph that relatives misunderstand as news of a military victory. Bilquès tells frustrated Rani she is making a boy to marry Rani's unborn daughter. The family saga describes in terms too perfect not to quote verbatim how prospects of a son lead to Hyder's sole military victory, which establishes his reputation as an intrepid hero, his nickname "Old Razor Guts," and promotion to major. Iskander Harappa, however, moves in to capitalize on the frozen region, building ski lodges for Westerners.

Rani weds the 25-year-old Iskander ("Isky") in grandeur, submits to sex and then asks the identity of the doctor she saw in the procession, so fat that he flattened a horse under his weight. She hears in town that he has a bad influence on her new husband. Iskander makes clear Rani does not pick and choose his friends. Omar, at 30, is five years older than Isky and has a reputation as a great doctor but degenerate human being. Shame seems to have been expunged from his vocabulary and Rani correctly identifies him from the start as an enemy. During the wedding celebration, Isky is informed of the prime minister's assassination and drunken Omar complains loudly of the dead bastard's spoiling their party.

Partition brings a sense of newness to Pakistan, but this turns into instability and rootlessness. Assassinations and bandits achieving wealth are commonplace. Voices asking what kind of God would permit this are silenced. Raza Hyder, whose star is rising after Aansu, weeps freely in public when Bilquès delivers a stillborn son. The umbilical cord had wound around the baby's neck like a hangman's noose. Bilquès icily tells Raza to buck up. Raza and Bilquès conceive again, a replacement for their predestined heroic



son. Their obsession with reincarnation will come back to haunt them, when Iskander Harappa recalls those days while on trial for his life.

Rani too conceives and gives birth to a daughter, Arjumand. Born prior to any Hyder boy, Arjumand thwarts the plan for uniting the families in marriage. The Hyder females mock Bilquìs' inability to bear a live male, which brings shame on the family. In the darkness, Bilquìs ferociously assaults her loudest critic, Duniyazad Begum and Raza has to pull her off. When Bilquìs demands a home of her own, Bariamma is happy to have the "immigrant" pack up and leave, removing shame from the house.

Rushdie muses about being an emigrant from India and a newcomer to England, while his family, against his wishes, has settled in Pakistan. He recalls being uprooted from Bombay and seeking freedom by migration. He muses about anti-gravity pills revolutionizing and personalizing international travel and making migrants of everyone. Migrants are individuals who come unstuck from their native lands; nations like Bangladesh that do this are said to "secede." Migrants are filled with hopelessness; they float upwards from history, memory and time. Pakistan is a made-up name, externally imposed, a palimpsest reflecting the rewriting of a long history as part of India. Like all migrants, Rushdie must decide which memories to retain and which to dump - and how to deal with change. He muses about Yggdrasil, the mythical Norse world tree and the twilight of the gods and reflects on people without a past being people without a name. He seizes on an Indian story to name his country "*Peccavistan*."

Bilquìs conceives, declaring, "Raz, he's coming back," and after eight hours of howling and filthy screaming, gives birth to Sufiya Zinobia, a quiet little mouse. The parents, too, are silent in defeat. Sufiya Zinobia is the wrong miracle. Old Razor Guts demands the baby be unswaddled to recheck the genitalia. Only assurance by a brigadier general quiets Raza. Family lore preserves that newborn Sufiya Zinobia blushed at all the fuss and for life, she remains too easily shamed.

## Part 2 Chapter 5 Analysis

"The Wrong Miracle" tells how the novel's second hero comes to be born, blushing and wrong-sexed. Along the winding way, the reader glimpses life in a traditional Muslim extended family. The author interrupts the narrative to discuss the psyche of the immigrant and the migrant and the challenge Pakistanis face in dealing with their pre-1948 history.



## Part 2 Chapter 6

### Part 2 Chapter 6 Summary

Gas fields are discovered in Needle Valley, in the Impossible Mountains near Q. When the natives rape and kill mine workers, Raza Hyder is dispatched. Misunderstanding a popular saying about a frog croaking down a well, only to be frightened by the booming frog-voice that answers, Raza tells reporters he is the giant who will scare the pants off the brigand frogs. Bilquis and 15-month-old Sufiya Zinobia accompany the colonel. Sindbad Mengal, one of the "Filmi types" that cause uproar in the Hyders' train compartment, makes a pass at Bilquis during the trip, which ends with Raza's prepared speech being upstaged at the Q. station. Sindbad's father runs the regional cinema.

As Isky's wife, Rani Harappa is disrespected by the household help. She has escaped the family dormitory, but she is stranded in Mohenjo, the ornate Harappa family estate. Isky has lost interest in his wife sexually and he spends his time in town with Omar Khayyam. Mohenjo is arid and isolated and Rani, perpetually embroidering on the wrap-around verandah, becomes confused, talking often by phone with Bilquis to lament her abandonment. The prospect of visitors is exciting and the staff is well prepared to greet them. Little Mir Harappa arrives, not to pay a social call, but to loot the house in vengeance for Isky's stealing Little Mir's juiciest French tart. This repeats their grandfather's siring a bastard son with one of his whores and forcing Lady Harappa to accept it as her own. Like father like son. Rani continues embroidering and after the thugs depart, phones sympathetic Bilquis, who reveals that Karachi is abuzz over Isky and Omar's carousing. When finally told about Little Mir's looting, Isky replies cryptically, "Life is long."

Colonel Raza Hyder leads his troops and a trembling team of gas workers into Needle Valley, but he is distracted by Maulana Dawood. The ancient holy man warns him not to trust Chief Minister Gichki, a godless smuggler. Gichki has taken advantage of the fact that the custom officer at the border has gone mad and turns a blind eye to illegalities in exchange for regular gratuities. As Dawood speaks, Raza looks at an enormous, silent house, where he sees a young boy looking out with field glasses. During her husband's three-month mission, Bilquis goes to the movies every night with Mengal, causing gossip.

Word reaches the colonel that infant Sufiya Zinobia has brain fever. Seeing this as a judgment, Bilquis seeks a local Hakim cure, which leaves her daughter mentally slow for life. Awaiting Raza's furlough, Bilquis worries about gossip and confesses to Rani that non-male, mousey, bird-brained Sufiya Zinobia is a shame she must accept. Raza learns that three crazy witches, who manage to produce children without outside help, own the house. They are said to be wealthier than Alexander the Great. Finding his wife the very incarnation of tragedy, hearing the shameful rumors and seeing the boy with binoculars, Raza is filled with rage as he meets with Gichki. Raza demands authority to institute martial law in Needle, but Gichki forbids illegal torture. Raza warns him the



army is upset and is watching the politicians. Dawood tells Raza a secret - probably about Bilquis and Sindbad. That night, Sindbad is knifed to death and portions of his mutilated body (but never his head) are found days later.

That night, Raza makes coarse love to Bilquis and the name Mengal is never mentioned. Raza returns to Needle Valley and Bilquis stops going to the movies. She begins suffering dizzy spells. She is pregnant again. Bilquis' left eye begins to blink when he receives the news, a sign of bad news to come. Raza writes his wife that he must visit Karachi on family business. He must also attend a reception by Marshal Aurangzeb, the commander-in-chief. He must go for courtesy's sake, but Bilquis should remain in Q. and rest.

Thus, Raza and Isky, both unencumbered by wives, meet in the capital, setting up their ultimate duel. The Marshal is in his dotage and his alluring wife Atiyah, known as "Pinkie," looks for pleasure anywhere she can. Rigid Raza falls instantly for the daringly clothed beauty, but half-drunk Isky moves in to steal Pinkie from under his - and the Marshal's - nose. Good manners stifle Raza's rage as Isky leads Pinkie to the garden. When Isky returns and seeks to make peace, Raza's honor- *takallouf* - obliges him to accept.

Pinkie becomes Isky's mistress and they remain forever faithful to each other, although Isky will leave her and she will take her life on the day he dies. Isky never again sleeps with Rani, ensuring the end of the Harappa line. Daughter Arjumand, nicknamed "Virgin Ironpants," will have no use for being a woman. On the day before he is sentenced to death, Isky will be allowed a one-minute phone conversation with Arjumand and he will use it to lament not having finished off Raza when he staked himself to the ground.

This story comes out, after Isky's death, when Rani and Arjumand are confined for several years in Mohenjo and Arjumand refuses to hear anything bad about her revered father. Mother tells daughter about embroidering while the house was looted and learning about Little Mir's woman. She was embroidering when Isky rather than Raza pinched Pinkie and she learned about it when a fat drunken doctor spoke too loudly and too freely at a party at Mohenjo. Isky sometimes feels sorry for sequestered Rani and he leaves Pinkie behind to lead a convoy of cronies to his villa. Pregnant Bilquis and Sufiya Zinobia attend one such outing, along with starlets, magnates, diplomats and their wives. Hearing Omar's declaration that Raza would be with Pinkie had Isky not won out, Bilquis calls down shame upon him. Refusing to fight inside Isky's house, the colonel stakes himself in the courtyard, refusing to leave until his honor is restored. Omar faints of alcohol and fright. Isky remains on the verandah, knowing the colonel means to gain vengeance on him and gives him time to cool off. Just before dawn, fatigued, Raza is surprised by old Gulbaba and fells him with a single blow. Bilquis relents and goes out to convince Raza to unhitch himself from his post. Raza and Isky hug with considerable grace. Rani emerges to say goodbye to her husband, wrapped in an intricate shawl that makes Isky go pale.

Bilquis' second daughter, Naveed ("Good News"), is born six weeks prematurely, but Raza shows no suspicion. After the birth, Bilquis can no longer bear children and Raza



sleeps with her no more. The colonel arrests Gichki and is appointed administrator of the region. Dawood gives him all the advice he needs. Rani worries that the citizens of Q. will turn against them.

On Rushdie's last visit to Pakistan, he hears a joke about God's displeasure with the country and God's following the advice of military and political figures to wipe out those accused. In the end, nothing works and God wonders why people do not seem to love him any more. Rushdie wonders what General Zia replied.

## Part 2 Chapter 6 Analysis

"Affairs of Honour" brings Part 2 "The Duellists," to a conclusion. At its heart lies a somewhat confusing exposition on the Arabic term *takallouf*. Rushdie describes it as an untranslatable social restraint so extreme as to keep a victim from expressing what he or she truly means. It manifests itself in the sense of honor that restrains the military officer Raza from challenging the drunken civilian Isky over Pinkie and obliges him to accept him as a friend for years. By chapter's end, the Hyder and Harappa spouses are both estranged and Hyder's power is rising under the sole influence of the malignant mystic Dawood. The author's personal postscript, by now expected, is colorful but enigmatic. As a spiritually born-again Isky also attains political power, the reader will see the parable played out.





## Part 3 Chapter 7

### Part 3 Chapter 7 Summary

London is shaken by the true story of a Pakistani father who murders his only child for dishonoring the family. Rushdie is appalled, but as an Easterner, he understands the killer in a way Westerners, not fed a diet of honor and shame, cannot. Wanting to write about shame, Rushdie conceives a character whom he provisionally names Anahita ("Anna") Muhammad, an attractive, vivacious, 16-years-old Londoner. Anna eludes the author and he looks eastward again to create Sufiya Zinobia and turn her into a brain-damaged idiot, the victim of hatred for a miracle-gone-wrong. All stories are haunted by stories that might have been told and Anna Muhammad haunts this book, but she will never be written about. Two other unnamed Londoners merge into the Sufiya Zinobia character: one, an "Asian," goes berserk after being dishonored in the subway and nearly kills her tormenters; another is a young male victim of spontaneous combustion. Apologizing for the distraction, Rushdie picks up the story ten years later.

The Hyders have returned from Q. to Karachi, a city grown expensive and corrupt. The army is in power. Gichki has disappeared and rumors fly about his fate, since it is known he is a bitter enemy of Raza's favorite, Dawood. Old Razor Guts rises to brigadier general during his western career, in which corruption and separatism are quashed and mosques grow full. Bilquìs calls her idiot daughter "Shame" and treats her badly. Bilquìs is breaking down, but because Rani does not know how to address the situation, the two women no longer talk by phone. No one mentions Sindbad or speculates about the parentage of the younger Hyder daughter. The president names Raza National Minister of Education, Information and Tourism. Dawood influences Raza to launch a campaign against shellfish, which only turns Karachi's fishermen to smuggling. When previously unspoken rumors about Raza's misgovernance in Q. reach the capital, he is returned to military duty in a futureless training job - but that lies in the future.

Rushdie portrays Sufiya Zinobia as a blushing idiot because idiots are, by definition, pure and innocent. Bilquìs rains affection on Naveed ("Good News"), while Sufiya Zinobia exists in a desert of insults and is content to overhear words of love addressed at her sister. The parents are amazed at how easily Sufiya Zinobia continues to blush. Rushdie believes she blushes for the world. She is filled with unfelt feelings. In a world where shame is omnipresent, the unfelt shame of the world has to be manifested somehow and Sufiya Zinobia sops it up like a janitor - and she blushes. Bilquìs dismisses it as a play for attention. Sufiya Zinobia blushes most often understanding the conflicts that are building between her parents.

Medical experts say blushing is a "psychosomatic event." Omar Khayyam is a practitioner of medicine and devotee of hypnosis. Omar and Sufiya Zinobia are destined for a love story. It begins the year her father and Isky both turn forty. Isky is sharing Pinkie's bed when he learns Little Mir like Raza has ingratiated himself with the president and is about to attain high office and Isky sees life has grown serious. Older



Pinkie, a chain-smoking widow, is more worried about the dimming of her charms. She hears rumors about being a kept woman. Pinkie has always known History is Isky's true mistress. Leaving Pinkie for History, Isky gives up all the vices he had shared with Omar. He also gives up Omar and orders his gatekeeper to throw the degenerate out if he comes visiting. Reformed Isky is attended by 13-year-old Arjumand, who has always believed a second man of worth resided inside her father. Later, she will take credit for the transition, particularly in getting rid of Omar. Isky advises his precocious daughter to rise above her gender; Pakistan is no place to be a woman. Obediently, Arjumand binds her developing breasts and wars against her soft, despised flesh.

Omar, the peripheral hero, has not been treated kindly by age. He retains his brilliant mind and is internationally renowned in immunology. He is still fat and ugly, but dresses with distinction, all in grey and carries a swordstick cane. He sleeps only two and a half hours a night, still dreaming about falling off the world's edge. He suffers terrible vertigo. Rushdie discovers him in Q., in his mothers' fortress home for the first time since leaving Nishapur. He has come because a brother, Babar, whom he never met, has been shot dead and must be mourned. Notebooks found on his body in the Impossible Mountains intersperse pornographic descriptions of his lust for a popular singer's voice and entries that portray what a torment it had been to be Omar's kid brother. Omar haunts every corner of Nishapur. He supports their mothers as a virtual second absent father. On his 20th birthday, Babar gathers up everything he can find belonging to Omar and sets the things on fire before fleeing down the dumb waiter. Babar wanders the streets uncertainly when an earthquake strikes and shakes something into place. Drinking heavily and joking about the country being raped by the government and army, Babar joins the guerrillas, grows a beard and between military raids writes poetry and fills notebooks with the relative merits of copulation with sheep and goats. The guerrillas call Babar "The Emperor." Two days before he leaves Q., Raza Hyder personally leads a sortie against the rebels and shoots Babar dead. Shortly before his death, the guerrillas notice Babar giving off a yellow light and budding tiny wings - a sure sign Babar will not be violating sheep much longer. Omar and Babar's mothers put a good spin on Babar's death, but the mothers decline badly until the very end. Raza Hyder writes the women that only the Shakil family name protects them from Babar's great infamy.

Rushdie declines to describe Omar's arrival at the Harappa town house, his dead brother's notebooks in hand. Rejection triggers a severe attack of vertigo. Omar returns to his bare-walled apartment and falls spinning onto his bed. Next day he returns to work and the day after that, Omar falls in love.

Abandoned by her lover and widowed, Pinkie chooses an empty plot of land in the city's choicest area to raise turkeys. High-strung Bilquīs takes the gobbling as a personal insult and threatens to slit their throats. Bilquīs has not forgotten Omar's words in Mohenjo and yells at her husband in front of both daughters. Sufiya Zinobia, 12 years old and incontinent, blushes and begins tearing at split ends. Thick-maned, plain-faced Good News mocks her prettier, dim sister about ruining her hair. Shahbanou endures a pummeling to stick up for the elder sister and warns that bad talk will not go unpunished. As a hot wind builds outside, Shahbanou secures the shutters. The



sleeping sisters contrast sharply: miniature Sufiya Zinobia and rangy Naveed - Shame and Good News. Awake they are also polar opposites, behaviorally and in their mother's attentions.

The wind might be coincidental to years of unloved humiliation, but it is blowing hard, terrifying Bilquìs, when Sufiya Zinobia rises and begins sleepwalking. After the storm, she is found sitting in Pinkie's turkey yard and all 218 birds have been beheaded and gutted through their necks by hand. Raza wonders at the child's strength and Shahbanou raises a lamentation that snaps Sufiya Zinobia from her lethal sleep, only to look around and pass out from shame. *Sharam* has resulted in violence, as it always must. Bilquìs crops to black stubble Sufiya Zinobia's tortured hair. Raza carries his daughter gently indoors while Bilquìs continues cutting the hair. They always wanted a boy, Bilquìs says, "but God knows best." By next evening, Sufiya Zinobia is burning with fever. Shahbanou calls it "Wind Fever." When black buboes form in Sufiya Zinobia's armpits - the plague of shame - she is taken to the hospital, a saint suffering for others.

That night, Omar has a vivid dream of Eduardo Rodrigues whose white robes are blackened and singed and he floats away, gesturing farewell. The dream prepares Omar to meet and fall in love with a child who is the daughter of his brother's killer. Rushdie confesses to being depressed by his hero's behavior, extenuating circumstances aside. To an immunologist, Sufiya Zinobia presents a unique challenge. He is convinced Sufiya Zinobia is willing damage on herself and prescribes appropriate immunosuppressive drugs. Keeping vigil with the ayah as chaperon, Omar falls in irrational love with his patient. Rushdie judges that Omar is no more than a nitwit wanting a beautiful wife, a shameless social climber ingratiating himself to the important father. Omar might later claim this has kept him near his brother's murderer, but he is no avenger and thinks his foolish terrorist brother got what he deserved. Omar is a refugee in the whore-city Karachi, having rejected Q. as a bad dream. Rushdie apologizes for losing another 7 years in his latest headache and says it is time to attend to arranged marriages.

## Part 3 Chapter 7 Analysis

"Blushing" begins Part 3 "Shame, Good News and the Virgin." It tells the story of Sufiya Zinobia's unloved childhood, in the shadow of her younger sister Naveed. "Shame" stands opposite "Good News," in every way, physically and mentally. Sufiya Zinobia is portrayed as a scapegoat for the untold offenses of family and society and these reach the breaking point in an explosion of unconscious violence against a flock of domesticated turkeys. The adolescent then sinks into "Wind Fever" that manifests as the Black Plague. Omar, an expert, diagnoses it as Sufiya Zinobia's psyche willing her immunological system to attack her body. As he treats the unmarriageable girl, Omar falls in love. The author intrudes twice into the narrative. One intrusion is far more subtle and interactive than the reader has come to expect: he apologizes to the readers for Omar as a hero, discusses extenuating circumstances and possible motivations - and concludes: we are stuck with him. More formally, he explains the three news events that

he has incorporated into the novel's second protagonist, the hapless and now violent Sufiya Zinobia.



## Part 3 Chapter 8

### Part 3 Chapter 8 Summary

Preparing Good News for her wedding, Bilquès and the womenfolk guffaw about sex being like an eel, a sikh kabab and a rocket. The women sing songs insulting her fiancé and Good News announces she will not marry potato-faced Haroun Harappa, eldest son of Little Mir. While studying in England, Haroun, now 26, has published details about his father's dungeons and illegal foreign accounts. When *Newsweek* republishes the article, authorities seize every copy imported. Haroun has been expelled, despite financial encouragement to keep him. Obstinate Haroun hates his authoritative father and has since boyhood done everything possible to aggravate him. Haroun attaches to his uncle and affects the hallmarks of Isky's pre-conversion behavior. Haroun does not abandon whoring, gambling and drinking and speaks out on political topics that might compromise his father.

Isky steps in after Haroun's talk reaches the president's ears and tells the nephew it is time to marry. Arjumand watches with scornful eyes. Isky has become a high-profile writer and speaker on international affairs, advocating "Islamic Socialism," and he runs the country's foreign affairs even before joining the cabinet. Isky realizes the administration is losing popularity and resigns to head the opposition Popular Front. When he offers Haroun a job collecting information about corruption, the young man sees an opportunity to bring down his hated father.

Little Mir begs Rani's help in finding Haroun a wife. At age 40, Rani embroiders shawl after shawl at Mohenjo. Relations with her often-absent husband are cordial and she is surprised to realize she still loves Isky. Bilquès, by contrast, is sinking into eccentricity and craziness. Rani suggests Naveed Hyder, thinking this link to Bilquès will be useful. The unpopular president also sees the utility and gives his blessing. Raza, relegated to training army recruits and looking for some way of gaining preferment, sees having Haroun as son-in-law giving him a foot in both camps. Photographs are exchanged and Arjumand observes that Good News' have been retouched. Her eyes show a determination to be beautiful and Haroun convinces himself, mind-over-matter, that she is. That Haroun is rich and famous is enough for Good News; his reputation and photo are inconsequential. Good News will fix him. Marriage, she tells her ayah, is power and freedom. Bilquès tries to convince her daughter that in the modern age, fiancés must get to know one another and develop a love match.

By age 20, the defiantly beautiful Arjumand has rejected so many suitors that matchmakers are writing her off. She dresses and grooms herself to minimize her attractiveness; since 16, she has been a self-defense expert, using her skills even on indiscrete diplomats. She has attended a Christian boarding college in Lahor, but leaves after finding girls fall for her too. She is known as the "Virgin Ironpants." Haroun ignites Arjumand's passions, both by his physical resemblance to her father and by rumors of his debauchery. Convinced she can bring out the best in Haroun, she pursues him, but



he is frightened off by her virginal reputation. News of Haroun's betrothal turns Arjumand into a lifelong recluse in Mohenjo. "Life is shit," she declares.

*Beauty and the Beast* is the story of an arranged marriage: a merchant down on his luck delivers his daughter to rich Beast for a lavish dowry and eventually her obedient love turns the monstrous stranger into a prince. Rushdie consults the radical, silvery-haired Great Living Poet whether this means Beast inherits a title. Bourgeois remark, the Poet chides; the ennoblement comes in her perception of him. Why, asks Rushdie, do fairy tales always end in happy marriages? A masculine question, he is told; women make the best of their fates and if the Beast dies, Beauty will be left less than a daughter and less than a wife - worthless. The author continues his "what-ifs," and the Poet tells him he has grown too westernized. Rushdie asks what would happen if a Beast dwells inside Beauty-if Beauty is the Beast. The deceased Poet's answer would be, doubtless, that Woman's essence precludes this.

When he hears Good News is betrothed, Omar asks for Sufiya Zinobia's hand. Decrepit Dawood denounces the obscene proposal, but this helps restore the obstinate Bilquès of old. Omar is dismissed, blushing, as Raza and Bilquès discuss. Sufiya Zinobia's fever has made her father begin playing games with his retarded child and she thrives, gaining height, weight and several years of mental age. Sufiya Zinobia grows as devoted to her father as Arjumand is to Isky. With Omar out of his house, Raza speaks rationally about the man who spent 7 years curing his own vertigo and Sufiya Zinobia's life. Dawood remains adamant. Bilquès is sanguine: "Where are we going to find the girl a better match?" Bilquès wants to get rid of Sufiya Zinobia as badly as Raza wants to see Good News gone. Sufiya Zinobia is not as stupid as she was. She can do the little tasks expected of women and she no longer blushes. Bilquès wants to finish Good News' elaborate wedding, then quietly marry Sufiya Zinobia. Dawood, having waged a mighty war for God, withdraws in defeat, recalling the necklace of shoes.

Bilquès shakes Naveed/Good News awake to be dolled up and to meet Haroun at a polo match. Bilquès watches her daughter like a hawk, lest she catch the eye of other men, but is so engrossed in the game she misses Captain Talvar Ulhaq, star of the Police team sidle over to Naveed. Ulhaq is a dashing, mythological figure in no need of fixing like stammering, unambitious Haroun. Good News shudders. He is thrown from his horse. That night Good News and Ulhaq make hungry love at Fisherman's Cove and she begins thinking she might have bitten off more than she can chew. Ulhaq is clairvoyant (a useful gift for police investigators) and knows Naveed will bear a profusion of children. By normal standards, the situation is hopeless: the wedding invitations are already sent out. Fishermen discover Ulhaq and Good News together. Ulhaq pays blackmail without arguing and drives Good News home, knowing what is to come. Good News is torn between love and duty, compounded by the desire to remain her mother's favorite and knowledge that she has lost her virginity. Only at the last minute does she declare she will not marry the stupid potato.

All hell breaks loose among the female relatives and when it is revealed there is Someone Else, Bariamma takes charge. Declaring the horror is Bilquès' fault, she summons Raza and tongue-lashes the mulish floozy bride. Raza has been dreaming



about his failing career and he is primed to wreak havoc on his shameful daughter. The ghost of Sindbad is present as Raza stalks out of the room, army pistol in hand. Because this is not Anna Mohammed's story, Raza demands only that Naveed be cast out into the street. After long pleadings and negotiations, Raza relents and the wedding will go on, with Ulhaq substituted as groom. Mir Harappa vows to get even. Isky is asked to tell Haroun. Ulhaq, also fingering a pistol, is ordered to appear for the ceremony, warned there will be no dowry and told to stay out of his father-in-law's sight thereafter. Ulhaq is politely honored to marry Raza's daughter. Naveed sleeps with an innocent expression on her face. Sufiya Zinobia learns of the family shame and scandal in the morning from Shahbanou.

Elsewhere in the city, a general known as "Shaggy Dog" overthrows the president after troops refuse to obey orders to fire on rioting civilians, who instantly turn to joyful celebrations. Mir Harappa learns of the bloodless coup, resigns and flees to estate, convinced his death must be the third bad thing to happen that day. Isky and Arjumand spend the day with despondent Haroun. Rani arrives from Mohenjo, expecting to spend a carefree day at the wedding. Isky is happy she is there to stand together before the people in this hour of testing. A rejuvenated Rani exults inwardly at "good old Shaggy Dog."

The coup eclipses the Hyder family scandal. Ulhaq slips into the nuptials alone but determined to be the best son-in-law possible. Fearful of the street mobs, the guests dress in their most tattered clothes and Bilquìs' spread of delicacies goes uneaten when guests read hand-written erratum slips announcing a change of groom. Repeating the message 555 times drives shame deep into Bilquìs' heart. Raza too is anesthetized by his public disgrace. Despondent Shahbanou, attending Sufiya Zinobia, does not notice Omar enter. He is so preoccupied with his own engagement that he fails to remember, for a while, the legendary party given by his mothers in Q.

Sufiya Zinobia's eyes glaze over and the fire burns beneath her skin. Omar sees it happening, but is too late to stop his betrothed from throwing herself on Ulhaq and trying to twist his head off. Good News grabs her sister, followed by Omar, Shahbanou, Raza and Bilquìs. Sufiya Zinobia buries her teeth into Ulhaq's neck, turning the wedding into a slaughterhouse scene. After four days in critical condition, Ulhaq will never again move his head to the left. Omar uses his hypnotic skill to bring Sufiya Zinobia out of her self-induced trance. Good News weeps in the hospital on her wedding night, sobbing that her parents ought to have drowned her monster sister at birth.

Raza softens towards the son-in-law. Bilquìs' long-approaching mental breakdown occurs and she is sequestered. Seeing Isky's Popular Front will do well in the upcoming elections, Raza comes groveling. Isky brushes off the wedding fiasco and declares himself impressed with the coup Ulhaq engineered. Soon afterwards, Shaggy Dog retires and Prime Minister Iskander Harappa names Ulhaq police chief, promotes Raza to general and puts him in command of the army. Isky now owns Raza. Both families move north to the new capital.



Brokenhearted Haroun throws himself into party work and vows never to marry. Thus, he rejects Arjumand's declaration of love and Ironpants is filled with a lifelong hatred of all Hyders. Arjumand transfers her love to her father. Haroun and Ulhaq are obliged to work together, but never speak. Omar and Sufiya Zinobia marry quietly, but her reawakened problems do not go away. That story will be told in the new capital.

Rushdie's idea this would be a masculine tale of rivalry, ambition, power, betrayal, death and revenge proves wrong: the women have taken over with their own tragedies, histories and comedies. Their stories explain and subsume the men's. Repression - sexual and political - cannot last forever. Pakistan's women, despite their real chains, are more impressive than Pakistan's men are. Eventually, things blow up in your face.

## Part 3 Chapter 8 Analysis

"Beauty and the Beast" brings to a close Part 3 "Shame, Good News and the Virgin." It gives Raza and Bilquìs Hyder two sons-in-law: lecherous old Omar for "Shame" and handsome, up-and-coming Captain Ulhaq for "Good News." The Hyder and Harappa families are now fully interwoven, with Rani and Bilquìs both marginalized by their husbands. Isky has risen to prime minister and General Raza, commander of the army, is in his pocket. Frustrated, angry, vengeful members of the younger generation are poised to make trouble.





## Part 4 Chapter 9

### Part 4 Chapter 9 Summary

Isky appears everywhere on heroic posters announcing "A New Man for a New Century." Then, suddenly, Isky falls, is condemned to death and thousands beg his life be spared. Then, Isky is dead and buried, but still casting his shadow, relentlessly murmuring in his enemies' ears. Arjumand, shut away in Mohenjo with her mother, fills herself with her father's legend in order to serve as his epitaph. Aged Rani cannot accept her dead husband being thus divinized.

Pakistan is divided into two Wings when Isky is elected prime minister under disputed conditions in the West Wing, but soundly repudiated in the East. President Shaggy Dog dispatches an enormous army to the East. Arjumand does not dwell on the fearful war, in which the idolatrous Indians backed the East to divide-and-conquer. The East Wing is reconstituted, laughingly, as a basket-case autonomous nation, Bangladesh. Hourly radio bulletins describe glorious victories by the Western regiments, right up to the admission of unconditional surrender. Isky places the shameful blame on Shaggy, but spares him a war crimes trial on the condition that he accepts house arrest. The people are cynical about the pardon, knowing Isky is the principal beneficiary of the civil war. He copies a scene from the film *Alexander the Great*, in which Richard Burton bares his chest to a cheering crowd to show the battle scars he bears. Isky packs away the old army leadership and installs Raza Hyder - which proves to be his worst error.

At Mohenjo, Arjumand remembers how fervently the people loved her father during the election and he reciprocated, diverting love from Pinkie. Arjumand hires photographers to snap pictures showing how old and pitiful Pinkie has become for her father to find. Isky knows without being reminded that he accelerates the aging process in the women in his life. Rani suffers less than Pinkie because she spends most of her time in Mohenjo. Precocious Arjumand, too mature for her age, realizes her father feeds on his women. At 23, Arjumand is also far too beautiful for her own good. She moves into the prime minister's residence and rejects her mother's letters proposing suitors. She and Haroun never communicate. She becomes a lawyer, joins the green revolution and prosecutes enemies of the state so ferociously that "Virgin Ironpants" takes on a new meaning. Isky comforts his daughter that there is no shame in being hated by enemies of the people. He is building a nation with strength and caring.

Isky is adept at handling mealy foreign interviewers, Arjumand sees, reviewing videotapes. Isky dislikes arguments and sets up the Federal Security Force (FSF) headed the clairvoyant Ulhaq, who can head off traitors. "Nobody can topple me," Isky's ghost says on tape, because he is the incarnation of the people's love. "Masses versus classes" is an old saw. The five who love Isky - Pinkie, Rani, Arjumand, Ulhaq and Haroun — are so divided, Arjumand thinks, they may have caused his fall. Fat cats, smugglers, priests, socialites and factory bosses contribute, but the chief culprits are the ambassadors, U.S., British and Russian. The prime minister makes their lives miserable



in every way possible. Having given the ninth U.S. ambassador a heart attack, Isky is prevented from working over a tenth when he is unseated in a coup.

Isky wastes away grimly in prison. The self-proclaimed "New Man for a New Century" used the glib slogan too early and Time takes revenge. Isky is hanged in the middle of the night, cut down and delivered to Ulhaq to be flown home to Mohenjo for burial. Rani demands to see Isky's face. Ulhaq is under orders not to show her. Allowed to kiss him through the shroud, Rani claws a hole with her nails to reveal the grey face with eyes open. A hanged man should have a blue face, bulging eyes and a tongue sticking out, Rani declares. Morticians might have fixed these things, but Isky's neck is clearly free of rope burns. Arjumand is disgusted by her mother and only understands when Rani declares, "They hanged a corpse." Rani knows about hangings because she saw Little Mir.

That day, Rani tries for the last time to phone Bilquis, but cannot reach her. She realizes her old friend has also been shut away. Rani and Arjumand endure two years' house arrest before Isky's execution and four afterwards. Because their memories of Isky are so different, mother and daughter grow no closer and are alike only in never shedding a tear. An army of army tents surrounds Mohenjo, commanded by 19-year-old Captain Ijazz. Rani refuses to be provoked by him and spends her time embroidering shawls. Ijazz threatens to confiscate the house and Rani directs him to the paintings and silver plate that will bring the most money. Ijazz is filled with shame and to restore his pride, orders the valuables consigned to a great bonfire. Rani advises the soldiers what to throw on the pyre, explaining she has always hated the old stuff, but Isky would not let her throw it out. Ijazz begins treating Rani with respect and by the end of his six-year assignment thinks of her as a parent. It has always been Rani's fate to have men - even Isky - mistake her for their mother. Ijazz hates himself for loving Rani; Arjumand begins dressing to kill, flirting with Ijazz and his troops and lustful fights break out. Losing control, Ijazz threatens to stone her as a whore, but Arjumand dares him to do it. The men want to rape her, he warns; bring them on, she replies - but the captain must be first. Ijazz's hair is snow white by the time the house arrest ends and when he is later arrested and led to the torture chambers, he says, "So, what's new?"

Rani completes 18 exquisite shawls in six years, but instead of showing them off, locks them away in a chest. Years later, she sends it to Arjumand, with a note signed "Rani Humayun." It announces her epitaph in wool on "The Shamelessness of Iskander the Great." There are a badminton shawl; a slapping shawl; a kicking shawl; a hissing shawl; a torture shawl; a white shawl; a swearing shawl; several international shame and election shawls; an allegorical "Death of Democracy" shawl; an autobiographical shawl; a 15th-century shawl reproducing the famous poster; a Pinkie shawl; and a shawl of hell, detailing the tens of thousands victims of Isky's rule. At the bottom of the chest lies the 18th shawl, Rani's savage masterpiece featuring the hanged Little Mir Harappa. It is for alleged complicity in the murder of Little Mir that Isky is put on trial for his life, although Haroun is the actual culprit. Rani's 18th shawl depicts no murderers, just a cadaver with a decaying, unloved dog.

## Part 4 Chapter 9 Analysis

"Alexander the Great" begins Part 4 "In the Fifteenth Century." The 15th century of the Muslim calendar began in 1980 CE. Iskander is Arabic for Alexander and two references are made to the famous Macedonian who conquered the Balkans, Egypt and Central Asia before succumbing (probably to a virus) at the height of his power. The first is to actor Richard Burton's portrayal in a Hollywood film. Isky at the height of his power evokes the image to demonstrate he is suffering with his people, hoping to divert attention from how he came to power. The second is the note Rani includes with her collection of shawls that chronicle her late husband's meteoric career, as a counter-argument to their daughter's veneration of the man's memory. The reader knows at this point that Isky is dead and may suspect with Rani that he was not executed by hanging as the official story goes. The noose/umbilical cord theme that was first evoked when the hoped-for son and heir was stillborn is reprised, but this time in an air of mystery.



# Part 4 Chapter 10

## Part 4 Chapter 10 Summary

At 21, Sufiya Zinobia is small, uncoordinated and mature-looking, belying the intelligence of a 7-year-old. She is married without complaint to a man 31 years her senior. Within the muted appearance lurk the avenging angels, werewolves or vampires that are more than figments of the imagination. A Beast takes possession of the girl and her ability to resist it is weakening.

After Sufiya Zinobia tries to kill her brother-in-law, Raza offers to let Omar out of the proposed marriage, but Dawood demands they make their hell together somewhere removed from the Hyders. Omar stands by Sufiya Zinobia, but Rushdie's disappointment in his hero does not lessen. Omar is still a base fellow, but he just might love Sufiya Zinobia. After Good News's wedding, Bilquis cannot deal with a second celebration, but on the eve of Sufiya's wedding, she delivers her stock bridal advice and the 7-year-old mind declares she hates fish. Most humans react to danger by pretending it does not exist. Only the Hyders, the lawyers and Omar attend Sufiya Zinobia's private wedding. In order to shield the family from anything she might do, Raza inserts a clause in the contract forbidding Omar to remove her from the parental home without his permission. Omar signs, but is too blinded by science to see that Sufiya Zinobia could become the incarnation of the family's shame. Sufiya Zinobia outlives most of her family and some die for her.

Omar is named senior consultant at the Mount Hira Hospital in the new capital and moves in with General Hyder. Dawood, seeing the fertile Potwar plateau from the air, believes he is approaching the Arafat plain outside Mecca and lives in fantasy in the holy precincts for the rest of his days. The general inherits as adjutant the tall Major Shuja and a force so demoralized that the Army sports teams can beat no one. Raza attends every possible contest to build esprit de corps and thus witnesses some of the most humiliating events in the annals of army sports. The army has been used to win power and respect, but since the war has enjoyed neither. Raza begins wrestling the soldiers, appearing to be trying but allowing them to win. The 49-year old general is badly battered in 111 matches, but restores his Razor Guts image and gives the troops faith in themselves. This reversal of spirit in the army is Raza's greatest life accomplishment but distracts him from paying proper attention to what Sufiya Zinobia is getting into at night.

The new city, modern and already crumbling, contrasts sharply with the old town, ages old and beautiful. The army dominates the old town and it is there that the extended Hyder family settles under one very large roof. Things do not go well. Dawood, dressed for the hajj, sees in everyday events unbelievers desecrating the holiest sites and the sight of Dawood's antics will never leave Raza's mind.



Good News bears healthy twin boys and Raza forgets all about Mengal. Exactly a year later, she produces triplets and Raza is concerned Ulhaq is too good a son-in-law. Twelve months later Good News delivers quadruplet girls, followed at exact interval by quintuplets. Two years later, the year of Isky's fall, Raza is grandfather to 27 children. Ulhaq's clairvoyance guarantees a conception every time, no matter how badly Naveed - no longer "Good News" - would like to stem the "stream of humanity passing through her thighs."

Bilquis wanders and holds down furniture even when the Loo does not blow and Raza suggests Omar check her out. Raza feels life is shedding people like a rocket jettisoning burned-out stages, but because he has done nothing to them, he refuses to feel ashamed. Good News' suffocating beneath an avalanche of children makes Bilquis snap and she wears the burqa all the time. She speaks only in metaphors and Raza keeps her out of public sight. Rani sometimes tries to phone, but Bilquis seems to resent her former friend.

General Hyder visits Prime Minister Harappa to report on the defense budget, but he is curtly dismissed. Raza tries to warn Isky not to forget his friends, but he is coldly informed that men in his position form only temporary alliances for mutual self-defense. The prime minister flies into a rage and strikes Raza on the cheek and the blushing soldier reminds the politician that such blushes do not fade. Years later, with Isky buried, Raza dreams of the day he was treated like dirt. Arjumand had been present, staring at him with open hatred. Arjumand prefers to relate the feuding families through Rani and Bilquis' remote ancestry rather than by intermarriages.

On his wedding night, Omar is prevented by contract from taking his bride away and he sleeps alone. Omar is content to wait until his childish wife is ready for sex, but Shahbanou is posted to see he tries nothing. One night the ayah enters Omar's bedroom and nobly offers herself in Sufiya Zinobia's stead. Thereafter, Shahbanou visits nightly and a happy Omar begins to lose weight, reaching normal dimensions by the time Isky falls. Sufiya Zinobia cannot sleep, but pretends to in order to make people happy. She notices that Shahbanou gets up, walks down the hall and makes funny noises. Mother told Sufiya Zinobia there is something people do at night: something about fishing. She pictures Omar with scales, fins and gills and notices that when she checks, his sheets have damp patches in the morning.

Sufiya Zinobia likes being left alone to imagine a world where she is not criticized. She sees her father picking her up and playing with her - as often as she wants. She sees things that never happen, like mother skipping rope with her. Some days a special teacher visits and introduces Sufiya Zinobia to new, fun but confusing things like the globe and writing. She hopes all the good new things will squeeze out other things she hates, like dead birds or biting people. Some days only the bad things are present. Sufiya Zinobia knows she was ill once upon a time and maybe these bad toys are left over from then. Sometimes there are things that do not seem to come from anywhere, like people hanging upside-down from the roof. These make her cry because she is certain they must be her fault.



Often, Sufiya Zinobia thinks about *husband*. She knows what husbands are but does not understand what they are for. Shahbanou says they are for money and babies, but that explains nothing. Sufiya Zinobia loves playing with her sister's babies and wonders why Good News never does. Without knowing why, Sufiya Zinobia blushes over having a husband but no babies. She feels she is changing into something. She knows Shahbanou does the *I hate fish* thing at night and it must be horrible, given the shrieks, moans and smelly sheets. Not understanding makes Sufiya Zinobia sick. She feels the ocean's tide. In the depths, a Beast is stirring.

Children have been disappearing from the shantytowns and slums for years and this is explained in many ways. No arrests are made. Then headless bodies begin to be found, the year of the general election, as Isky and the Popular Front after six years in power are campaigning hard. Corruption and a weak economy have given the opposition plenty of issues. Four adolescent male bodies are found in a dump with heads wrenched off. Rumors but not the media deal with the deaths. Ulhaq, chief of the FSF, is busy, keeping ahead of Isky's enemies. Flying back from Q., he has a vision of Bilquis passing him in a blood-soaked burqa. He investigates but finds nothing. Then he happens to hear about the headless bodies and rushes to talk with his father-in-law. Respecting Ulhaq's clairvoyance, Raza listens, but the figure in the vision is not conclusively Bilquis. It could have been Sufiya Zinobia sleepwalking again. Ulhaq wants Sufiya Zinobia's virginity checked and a disgusted father orders him to butt out of family business.

In the depths of the ocean, the sea-Beast stirs, feeding on guilt and shame. It can turn insomniacs into sleepwalkers. Sufiya Zinobia is 28 physically, nine and a half mentally, when Shahbanou is found to be pregnant and is fired. Sufiya Zinobia cannot get out of her head Shahbanou's baby, which her husband should have given her and she is filled by shame. The Beast is set free on the world. Sufiya Zinobia puts on a burqa and stalks the streets of the slums. Four boys wait their turn to have sex with Sufiya Zinobia and have their heads torn off and hurled high into the air to never be seen again. Sufiya Zinobia goes home and sleeps as the Beast subsides. On Election Day, Raza personally searches his daughter's room, burns the blood-starched garment to ashes and throws them out the window of a moving car.

## Part 4 Chapter 10 Analysis

"The Woman in the Veil" can refer either to Bilquis, whose growing mental problems are capped off by adopting the head-to-foot burqa at all times, or to the figure of someone in that dress that the clairvoyant son-in-law sees in a vision. In reality, it is Sufiya Zinobia, denied her husband's marital attentions by a protective family and an accommodating ayah. The Beast that has twice attacked Sufiya Zinobia takes possession of her as she wonders what husbands are for and plays with a proliferation of nieces and nephews for whom her sister has little use. Sufiya Zinobia's backward mind cannot make sense of the situation and four young men suffer the turkeys' fate on the night Isky's political fate hangs in the balance. Rushdie offers no comments.



# Part 4 Chapter 11

## Part 4 Chapter 11 Summary

Thirty seconds before jeeps surround the Harappa home to arrest Isky, he and Arjumand are talking about tempting fate. Suffering a bad toothache, he smokes what he declares the "last but one cigar" of his life. General Hyder's adjutant announces the coup. Isky continues joking about an albino panther said to be wandering the Bagheeragali hills. Shuja informs him Hyder signed the order. General Salmàn Tughlak, the last holdover from Shaggy Dog's high command, learns about the overthrow from Hyder. He is called upon to use his experience with martial law to stop the riots that broke out when the opposition disagreed with the ballot counting. Colleagues had given Hyder the choice of deposing Isky or falling with him.

In the morning, Raza Hyder appears on national television, reciting Quranic verses and devoutly announcing "Operation Umpire": the army intends only to provide honest refereeing. With his hand on the sacred book, Raza promises free elections within 90 days. By overthrowing Isky, he has already broken a sacred oath and wants to cleanse his sullied name in the eyes of God.

Arjumand is packed off to Mohenjo, but Haroun escapes. Isky's first confinement is so comfortable he entertains hope his pious protégé will be lenient. Shuja questions what will happen if Isky wins in 90 days and suggests revenge crimes are common. Raza grows determined to sort everything out properly. Shuja will later swear that Raza never considered assuming the presidency until he met directly with Isky and "that stupid man" brought his fate on his own head. Isky's premonition about cigars comes true. Guards are under orders to deny him his favorite Havanas and Isky turns to chewing betel nuts non-stop, hurting his teeth even more and throwing him into a rage. He curses as soon as Raza enters the room and continues for 90 minutes. Two days later Ulhaq implicates Isky in the murder of Little Mir. That is where bad language will get you.

Good News is up to 27 children and once again looks as though she has swallowed a whale. Eight ought to come out this time. Children are beginning to unhinge Raza and Ulhaq. The FSF is unpopular and there are pressures on Hyder to disband it and deal with its chief. At this moment, the perfect son-in-law hands Raza a detailed report on Mir Harappa's murder by his hate-filled son but at the instigation of the Chairman of the Popular Front. Additional evidence of misusing public money seals Isky's fate. The party is banned and elections are first postponed, then cancelled. The memory of a right hand on the Book refuses to fade, however.

Isky is transferred to solitary confinement, where he contracts malaria and influenza, loses his teeth and weight. Isky's six-month trial, at which he is sternly reprimanded for swearing, ends with a death sentence. Isky is moved to the death cell and given 7 days (rather than the usual 30) to appeal. He announces appeal is pointless.



That night, Ulhaq discovers his wife hanging by the neck in her bedroom. A suicide note says only she is terrified by the arithmetical progression of babies. At the funeral, Raza asks Bilquīs how they reached this point - from naked meeting to burqa mourning. Bilquīs blames him for everything. Raza has Shuja escort her home before the services are complete. Thinking back, Isky cannot remember Pinkie's name and there is a drumming in his ears.

The death cell is tiny and infested. Isky shivers in the winter, but the stench of the latrine is muted. He roasts in summer and the stench makes his eyes bulge. He goes on a hunger strike. When he asks for water, they boil it and force him to wait hours for it to cool. He is transferred to an identical death cell in the District Jail, within sight of his former palace - if he had a window. Isky is chained around the clock. Nevertheless, he tells his lawyers that his morale is high. One night in a dream, he cannot remember Raza Hyder's face. In the end, Isky understands parents become children and Raza is turning his political father, Isky, into the son who emerged from the womb with a noose around his neck. Prison is the inverse womb, the death canal. Isky's death will avenge the stillborn son. Isky's lawyers convince him to lodge an appeal, which draws out the process for another six months.

Jumping back to Election Day, Omar is in a funk over Shahbanou's dismissal. This is the second Parsee girl he has known to be pregnant with a fatherless child. Omar worries what Raza will do, since it is clear whom Shahbanou has been visiting every night. Raza is indeed agitated, but over whether Ulhaq will discover evidence has been destroyed. Wishing he could forget the whole incident, Raza is visited in a dream by Dawood yelling about how a devil has gotten inside Sufiya Zinobia as a test of Raza's loyalty. Sufiya Zinobia's antics could increase and end Raza's career. Raza recalls Abraham as he dries his eyes. He and Omar are both under Fate. Raza must talk with Omar about Sufiya Zinobia's Beast; the business with the ayah is mere foolishness.

Raza takes Omar on a fishing trip. The stream is famed for even the worst anglers catching many trout, but neither gets a bite. Rushdie offers a "fishy" explanation: fish sense through rod, line and hook whether their opponent is confident; if not, they refuse to bite. Raza is gloomy about his sons-in-law and this scares the fish away. Rushdie cannot take seriously that Omar holds a grudge for his brother's death. When he realizes the Shahbanou affair is being ignored, Omar's fear turns to what Raza means by referring to Abraham and leaving the matter of Sufiya Zinobia up to him, as her husband and doctor. Perhaps her rage can be cured by hypnosis and Omar promises to watch her closely. This is the most dangerous mission of Omar's life.

Omar sees Sufiya Zinobia getting worse. Two beings, two tragically opposed natures, occupy the same space in his wife. God has never meant much to Omar, but as a scientist, he cannot miss in Sufiya Zinobia's eyes the evidence of possessing devils. The children she plays with are at risk. Sufiya Zinobia obeys Omar's invitation to his quarters, but when he commands her to lie on his bed, the Beast takes charge and springs at him. Sufiya Zinobia writhes on the floor, fighting the Beast, trying to protect her husband. Omar injects a sedative just before Sufiya Zinobia's strength gives out and Omar thus survives looking into the eyes of the Beast of Shame. Omar carries her





drugged form into the attic. Omar refuses to kill his wife, but by agreement with her father, she is chained to the beams, the window is bricked up, the door is bolted and she is kept drugged in suspended animation. Sufiya Zinobia becomes Sleeping Beauty rather than Beauty and the Beast. The "wrong miracle" has disappeared.

The Supreme Court upholds Isky's death sentence 4-3, but his lawyers convince him this is so close that a pardon is certain. Six months later, however, Isky is still in the death cell when Shuja delivers a *Romeo y Julietta* cigar and Isky begins reciting pre-death prayers. Shuja interrupts him to say his mission is only to obtain a full confession, after which clemency will be favorably considered. Knowing that signing a confession is a form of suicide, Isky rails so obscenely that Shuja shoots him through the heart. Prisoners that night howl as Isky's body is hanged. The hangman vanishes. The body is cut down and delivered to Rani, who tears away the shroud to reveal Isky's face but not his chest. Soon, sick folk touching Isky's tomb begin experiencing cures. Standing beside the dangling corpse, Raza recalls Bilquìs's words about people falling away "like rocket stages" and for the first time hears Isky's voice in his head, "Never fear, old boy, it's pretty difficult to get rid of me. I can be an obstinate bastard when I choose." The Isky-voice assures Raza he is dead, but is there to advise and taunt him for the year or two Raza has left. The specter of Dawood perches on Raza's left shoulder to speak God's message in his head.

On the night of the hanging, Sufiya Zinobia escapes the attic, leaving a hole in the brickwork the shape of her body. "God help us," says Omar, realizing it is time for the Almighty to take charge.

## Part 4 Chapter 11 Analysis

"Monologue of a Hanged Man" details the fall of Prime Minister Iskander Harappa, his dubious trial, horrendous imprisonment and execution. Three times, Isky's temper and long-suppressed filthy language get him deeper into trouble; the final time, on the verge of being reprieved, he so infuriates his jailer that the man shoots him through the heart. Thus, we understand the missing signs of hanging that Rani observed on the corpse. General Hyder, who assumes the reins of power after the coup, is preoccupied with daughter Sufiya Zinobia, the Beauty in whom the Beast of Shame has come violently alive and Raza is forced to ally with Omar to control her, because neither can kill her. On the night of the sham hanging, she ominously escapes. Rushdie quotes the Russian writer Nikolai Erdman's *The Suicide* about the dead saying what the living are thinking to introduce a new plot twist: two unseen spirits take up residency in Raza's head and begin a struggle of good and evil that will continue through the rest of the novel. Note that the *Qur'an* relates Genesis' story of Abraham (known in Arabic as Ibrahim) sacrificing his son to God, although Isma'il rather than Isaac is the would-be sacrificial victim.



## Part 4 Chapter 12

### Part 4 Chapter 12 Summary

With three visitors from Pakistan, Rushdie attends a London performance of *Danton's Death*, a play about the French Revolution. The hero Danton sarcastically declares that Robespierre and the people are virtuous. Danton is guillotined because he loves pleasure and the people, like Robespierre, distrust fun. Epicure vs. Puritan is the true dialectic of history. Most of the theatergoers dislike the play because it features too much of the ranting Danton and not enough sinister Robespierre. The Pakistanis love the play and are envious Rushdie lives in a land where such plays can be performed. They tell him about a staging of *Julius Caesar* that authorities forbade until a prominent British diplomat was recruited to play Caesar, dressed in British regalia, in order that it may appear Caesar's assassination is a patriotic overthrow of imperialism. The friends point out that "we are Robeston and Danpierre" - and Isky cannot be simplistically equated with Danton or Raza with Robespierre. Isky had indeed been an epicure and always thought himself right; the shawls show he sent many to the Terror before it finally consumed him. Raza cannot be believed when he claims to act in the name of God, taking no personal pleasure in his acts.

Seeing the hole in the bricked-up window, Omar realizes the Beast has consumed his wife. It is not Sufiya Zinobia that now roams free, but the principle and embodiment of violence. The world, Omar tells himself, is going mad. The wife who lay two years asleep has not been destined to be awakened by a prince's kiss; instead, the unsleeping monster within her has occupied every cell and has grown tired of refraining from blood. During the next four years, while Raza Hyder is President, Omar ages. When he turns 60, walking becomes agony and he retires from Mount Hira Hospital. He lives quietly under Raza's roof, shelling pine kernels and sending money to his mothers and Shahbanou. He thinks about how Sufiya Zinobia created the Beast, because an autohypnotist cannot ask herself to do anything she is unwilling to do. Omar knows he is living too much in his head and shame waits.

Raza Hyder also thinks about shame approaching, because Sufiya Zinobia has almost had to die before he could love her. Isky and Dawood are always in Raza's head and now Sufiya Zinobia enters to take revenge and drag him down. As president, he is impotent to help his wanted-dead-or-alive daughter. Cover-ups will not work. Like Omar, Raza begins consuming large quantities of pine kernels, Sufiya Zinobia's favorite treat. Shelling them is a form of lunacy, since they yield so little to eat.

A foreign reporter asks Raza to comment on the barbarity of Islamic punishments. Smiling courteously, he replies that cutting off hands is not barbaric, because: 1) he, Raza Hyder - a non-barbarian - is applying the law; 2) it is done under medical supervision, with anesthetics, etc.; and 3) it is God's will, as revealed in sacred texts.



Raza refuses to live in the President's House, although he spends some nights there during a Pan-Islamic conference. The mothers of the heads of state accompany their sons and all hell breaks loose as they struggle for seniority, interrupt sessions and bring the world leaders close to fistfights - and even war. Raza considers himself fortunate to be an orphan, but Isky keeps up a monologue in his ear so loudly he cannot think. Isky gives his successor useful tips from Machiavelli: commit all your cruelties at once, so the injuries will cause less offense. Guards run to Raza's defense when they hear his cries of "Shut up!" and he is obliged in shame to say it is only a bad dream.

After the conference, Raza rushes home to relax, because there Dawood's voice is louder than Isky's. Dawood demands that the sacred places be cleansed and Raza bans alcohol and limits television stations to airing theological lectures. Prayers are obligatory on the Prophet's birthday. Recalling that the *Qur'an* obliges believers to give alms, beggars march on the presidential office to demand a minimum amount be set. Raza jails 100,000, plus 2,500 members of the illegal Popular Front. God and socialism are incompatible, Raza declares. Holding otherwise was Isky's blasphemous mistake. The U.S. agrees whole-heartedly, although the God they speak of is different. Isky's voice doggedly urges Raza to read Machiavelli, but the president prefers taking advice from Dawood and foreign movies are banned and women are veiled. Religious students arm themselves and fire on insufficiently devout professors. Religious courts are instituted. Anti-faith elements vanish like slum children.

Pro-family Raza is too busy to spend time with his 27 grandchildren, but invites veiled Bilquis to pray beside him during weekly broadcasts. Bilquis busies herself mysteriously sewing large expanses of black cloth and eventually Raza's curiosity gets the better of him. They are shrouds, Bilquis answers seriously and a chill goes down Raza's spine.

Two years after Isky's death, Dawood screams in Raza's ear about stripping and hanging the women marching against God. Raza uses restraint, however, putting the matter in God's hands. A suitably pious pretext is found for arresting the chief organizer, Noor Begum and Isky's ghost complements Raza on being a quick learner. Raza's motto, "Stability, in the name of God," is supplemented: "God helps those who help themselves." Generals are positioned to control every aspect of society. Raza learns that Tughlak, Ulhaq and Shuja are planning a coup and the three disappear without a trace by morning. Ulhaq's 27 orphans raise a harmonized scream for 40 days and then shut up, so their grandfather never notices them again until the last night of his reign. Everything seems stable until Sufiya Zinobia re-enters Raza's life.

Rushdie begs the reader's patience as he discusses Islamic revival. Pakistan is not a theocracy like Iran and Israel and has never been dominated by mullahs. Politics and culture are more important than theology even for the founders of the extremist Jamaat Party. Islam could have been a unifying force, had it not been forced on the other communities. Most mythologies grow unpopular when rammed down people's throats. So-called Islamic fundamentalism in hapless Pakistan has been imposed from above rather than springing from the people. Dictators often use religious rhetoric to shore up their power, because people are reluctant to see religion discredited or mocked. Eventually, however, they lose faith in faith and the falling dictator sees God brought



down with him. The country disintegrates and either establishes a new dictatorship or substitutes a new myth: liberty, equality and fraternity - the option Rushdie highly recommends.

When forced to flee the capital, Raza remembers the story of the white panther in circulation at the time of Isky's arrest and he shudders with recognition and fear. The stories had died quickly when only one unreliable witness said it was black-haired, otherwise furless and walked funnily. Nobody then believed, Raza realizes, that this beast is Time's ghost: Sufiya Zinobia. Her return comes when Asgari the sweeper woman complains about Omar watching the attic window every day, scattering pine kernel shells and preventing her from doing her job. That Beast should come and finish off such inconsiderate people, she complains. Omar is troubled all day and that night during his 40 winks dreams about Sufiya Zinobia on all fours, naked.

In the following weeks, Omar shakes off his lifelong lethargy, prowling the city seeking information about the panther. The tale is again being told throughout the vast East Wing and reaches the capital. Man-eater stories, always popular, take on a new twist: the beast can tear a man's head off and drag his insides out through the hole to consume them. Vigilantes cannot kill the now mythological beast, said to be able to fly or dematerialize or grow larger than a tree. Omar tells no one about his suspicions, but he sees Sufiya Zinobia cunningly skirting the cities where advanced weapons might threaten her. Sufiya Zinobia's palms and soles are callused and the hair Bilquis once cut is now long and matted. Her pale bare body is lacerated, her eyes are fiery and she stinks of death. Omar is shocked to find joy in her being free. She has risen above everything she had not wanted to hear. She has discovered nobility in savagery. He is angry with himself for still calling her Sufiya Zinobia, because she is the Beast. He cannot help himself, however.

Omar shares the secret with Raza Hyder, as the president forces the three generals who thwarted the coup to pray beside him, thanking God for having Russia invade the country to their north. The attack will cause the Great Powers to support Raza's regime. Joking about the Americans and their fat ambassador, the generals nearly forget to tell Raza that Haroun has shown up in Cabul. Great news, the president unexpectedly replies: a royal flush. The confused generals explain Haroun has set up a terrorist group, Al-Iskander, armed by the Soviets and trained by the Palestinians. This, the president exults, will convince the people that the Popular Front is nothing but a bunch of assassins. The quartet again prostrates, giving thanks to God.

Raza is thus in a good mood when Omar enters his office, but behind closed doors, as Omar reveals his speculations and researches, Raza turns grey with fear. He has deceived himself that Sufiya Zinobia is dead. Isky whispers in Raza's ear: she is a turbulent river, inundating everything. Raza asks Dawood what barriers he can erect to withhold his daughter, but the angel of the right says nothing.

In Raza's fourth year in office, the white panther closes in on the capital. Raza's generals assure him the murders and animal slayings are just Al-Iskander terrorism, but he remains aghast at his inability to resist his rebellious flesh and blood. If search



parties kill Sufiya Zinobia, the shame of her being identified will bring him down. If they fail, she will continue circling until she reaches his room. Omar also feels menaced. Raza finds Dawood's silence as oppressive as Isky's gloating. Raza understands God has left him to his fate and he despairs.

Rushdie still deems Haroun a buffoon, but he is now a successful terrorist. Rani and Arjumand are allowed to make public statements condemning Haroun's activities. The gang hijacks a civilian aircraft at Q., distracting attention from the white panther murders. General Raddi conceives a plan to lull Haroun into remaining on the ground until the Harappa women are released from Mohenjo. Raddi feeds the terrorists well and is able to arrest them as they sleep off their heavy meal. Raddi hurries to announce his success to the president, but finds him and Omar staring out the attic window in silent despair. Raddi is certain the headless murders will now cease, but the killings continue, indiscriminately, in a ring around the two capitals. Panic mounts and the media finally take up the story. Raza and Omar agree the last act is at hand. Sufiya Zinobia has petrified her adversaries and she will close in on her intended prey. They must run for their lives or die, abandoned by God.

Asgari vanishes and tells the newspapers Sufiya Zinobia is the panther, whose escape from her father's house was withheld from the authorities. Raza orders his generals to jail the journalists, but they inform him this would be unwise. Instead, the generals lift all press restrictions and all the fatal connections in Raza's life are published. Raza predicts that within a day or two he is sure to be arrested. An angry crowd gathers around the Hyder compound and Raza wonders how the Beast can allow the mob to do its dirty work. Servants like rats flee the house. Raza counts his 27 well-fed grandchildren disguised in rags as they make their escape. Omar pleads with Raza to try to escape, but he is crushed and unable even to weep. Bilquis brings burqas she has sewn and tells the two men to put on the shapeless shrouds. His son became a daughter, she says, so he too must change shape. Raza is passive as he is dressed and they make their way into the night, through the mob and the ring of troops. Omar knows where they must head. Sufiya Zinobia does not attack the empty palace and she is never again seen in that part of the country. She waits a while for her revenge.

## Part 4 Chapter 12 Analysis

"Stability" ends Part 4 "In the Fifteenth Century." President Raza Hyder uses Islamic fundamentalism to shore up his regime, but, as Rushdie says in an aside, religion imposed from above never works. The truth that Sufiya Zinobia is the Beast terrorizing the countryside gets out to a freed press and the only escape for Raza and Omar lies in donning the burqa.



## Part 5

### Part 5 Summary

It is almost over. Omar and the Hyders head for Q., eating little, drinking as much as possible, scarcely speaking and trying to look innocuous. No one expects the president to be dressed in women's clothing, riding an old bus, but the land is exploding with demonstrations. As they near the border, Omar's vertigo returns, remembering Farah Rodrigues and Shahbanou and returning to the Edge of the World and Nishapur. At the depot in Q., the bus driver realizes he is carrying two men disguised as women and the other riders begin mocking and tormenting them. Bilquès in a clearly female voice calls shame down upon them, however and the bus driver silences everyone, in order to maintain the honor of his vehicle. After midnight, the trio makes its way through town and ascends Balloch's dumb waiter.

Omar's mothers sigh, as they understand who has come into their presence. Three identical, innocent smiles seem somehow menacing. Omar is ordered to boil tea, to serve it on heirloom china service thought to be long lost and to fetch some dried out cake. Bilquès removes her burqa and her eyebrowless sleep-starved face is a death mask, save for spots of red color on the cheekbones. *Takallouf* forces Bilquès to make conversation, but she has lost the knack. "Once there were giants," she begins, carefully and wistfully. "Now the pygmies have taken over, however." She points at her husband and relates how he has shrunk. The Shakil sisters agree. Bunny remarks that there are angels still around. This strikes Omar as odd. He wonders why the mothers do not mention Babar and then realizes they are lulling the visitors into a sense of security before they force him to kill his half brother's murderer, now delivered into their hands.

In the morning, Omar awakes to the sound of Bilquès slamming windows. His mothers are watching, supporting one another but not interfering. They stop Omar from interfering even though the air in the sealed-up house is growing thick as mulligatawny soup. Munnee observes that Bilquès has suffered much and is welcome in their home. Omar feels claustrophobic. Bilquès collapses and Omar diagnoses malaria before passing out beside her. At that instant, Raza awakes from a dream in which Sindbad Mengal, chopped into pieces and reassembled incorrectly, makes Old Razor Guts realize he too will soon be sliced up. He passes out, shivering with fever and the Shakil sisters gather to watch.

Shaking with cold fire, Omar cannot discern reality from dreams. Bilquès raves about her daughter's brain fever being visited on her parent in the city of her shame. Rodrigues appears, holding a dead baby. During moments of lucidity, Omar tells his mothers what anti-malarial drugs to procure and realizes he has been given medications, but he suspects placebos. Maybe the mothers are willing to let malaria claim their son along with the Hyders. Omar thinks he hears shots, explosions and breaking glass outside the windows; perhaps the hotel is on fire. Despite the shutters, grey ash from the dead hotel gets inside Nishapur. The mothers tell him to rest and not worry. Omar sees the



Impossible Mountains coming down to infect the plains. He feels the motor inside his chest refusing to work any longer. The mothers have moved their swing seat beside his bed - surely a hallucination, given its size. The specter of Bunny says the house is steadily losing rooms. Sad how life treats old people, Chhunni agrees. They should have Sanforized the house, fumes middle-Munnee. Without walls, they will blow away in the wind.

Omar comes to in the four-poster bed where his grandfather died. His mothers and their swing are gone. He feels strong as a horse and gets up on feet that no longer hurt. He wanders through a house that has actually expanded and holds places he has never been. Omar sees colleagues in a Mount Hira operating room, inviting him to view their patient. Trampling pine kernel shells, he panics and runs for his bed, but finds himself at a wedding banquet where the bride wears a noose around her neck. The guests, dressed in rags, stare at him when she announces he should have stayed dead. Hobbled by his obesity, Omar tries to run but cannot move. A white, wet shroud falls over him and he realizes he is in bed. Hashmat Bibi's voice comes from a cloud: only children always live too much in their heads; but Omar had not remained an only child.

Bilquīs sits beside Omar and blames the brain fever on the cakes he served. Omar feels obliged to defend his mother's hospitality, but Bilquīs smashes every piece of china. Raza appears in uniform with a monkey on each shoulder, one, Dawood-like, has hands clasped over its mouth; another Isky-like, holds hands over its eyes. It is judgment day, Isky the monkey announces. Omar remembers dreaming about the future: generals quarreling, public disturbances, Great Powers shifting ground and the army unstable. Arjumand and Haroun are set free and take power together. God falls and is replaced by the myth of the Martyr Iskander. Shamelessness and shame abound and the earth cracks at Mohenjo, where Rani remains. Because of the shawls, Arjumand has placed her under guard.

Chhunni tells her gasping, beached whale of a son there is a terrible family secret he must know. Relations had broken between his great-grandfather, Hafeezullah and great-uncle, Rumi, when each married a woman the other found unsuitable and the former claimed his brother's wife was a whore. The wife took revenge by claiming he was bitter over being turned down for an extramarital fling. Uncle Rumi in turn wrote an anonymous poison-pen letter to Hafeez claiming the latter's wife was having an affair with a famous sitarist. She confessed at once. Hafeez took to his bed and died telling his infant son, "This motor will not run any more." Munnee tells Omar he has repeated these words in his fever. Shakil brothers harm their brothers and Omar treated his brother's memory no better.

The mothers are turning on Omar the shame they forbade him to feel as they released him into the world. His brother's father was an archangel, Chhunni whispers, making the boy too good for this world, but Omar's maker was a devil out of hell. The mothers have never mentioned his father before and Omar realizes they hate him more terribly than he can bear. During his short life, Babar had never been permitted to forget he was inferior to his elder brother and he fled into the mountains. Omar married into Babar's murderer's family. He wears his mothers' hatred like a necklace of discarded shoes.



Raza awakes at dawn to find the sickness is gone and Isky silent. Crows caw outside but the song is sweet. Raza realizes the sisters have let him stew in his own disgusting juices for days, untouched and vows vengeance on the witches. Throwing his disgusting linen out the window, he takes a shower and dreams of returning to power and restoring relations with the wife who has rescued him. Even Sufiya Zinobia may be only a hallucination. He will nurse Bilquìs day and night. No one answers his demands for help finding clean clothes and Raza begins searching for his wife, wearing only a towel around his waist. Raza finds Bilquìs by smell. She too has been left untended. Beneath the stench of waste, Raza smells death and the realization feels like a hangman's knot smashing into the back of his neck. He begs Bilquìs to stop acting. She is not intended to die. He looks up to see the Shakil sisters holding scented cloths over their noses. Chhunni points her grandfather's antique blunderbuss at Raza's chest. Munnee holds a scimitar and Bunny a rusted but pointy spear. "Go ahead," Raza says; God will judge them all. There is no shame in killing him, Bunny reflects. It is only the execution of a corpse. Munnee adds there is no God. Chhunni orders Raza to lift Bilquìs from her filth and as he does his towel drops. Ordered into the dumb waiter, Raza is amazed he is to be set free, but Munnee reminds him how well he is known in town. Chhunni explains that Balloch had followed their detailed instructions on equipping the dumb waiter. Raza understands nothing and asks them to stop wasting time. Sindbad Mengal flashes into Raza's mind as the sisters in perfect unison pull levers releasing 18-inch stiletto blades that chop Raza into pieces.

A hurried Talvar Ulhaq demands Omar sign a full confession before they can discuss pardon. Omar asks which of his many sins to confess. The evidence is clear and Omar had motive and opportunity. Omar objects he left his swordstick behind, but Ulhaq holds it before him, along with portions of Raza's body. Omar cries his mothers must have done it and then confesses, just as Ulhaq fires a shot through Omar's heart. Omar tumbles into the black fire consuming his cell.

It is several days before the residents of Q. realize the front doors of the Shakil mansion are open, which must mean something important has happened. They discover a pool of blood below the dumb waiter and invade the sisters' palace, tearing the place apart looking for the inhabitants. Eventually the mob comes to its senses and grows half-ashamed and half-proud of their ransacking. They discover the Hyders' bodies but no one ever sees the Shakil sisters again.

That night, an old man lies in a four-poster bed, satisfied to be alive. Invaders confront him. Police follow and allow him to dress. He drinks some limejuice and then hears strange screams. Something is roaring up the stairs. He waits for her like a bridegroom. The door blows open and he welcomes his long-expected wife, naked on all fours and caked in blood, mud and excrement. Omar's eyes cannot resist meeting hers. Husband and wife reach for each other and Omar's body falls away, headless. The Beast fades, leaving Sufiya Zinobia unsteady on her feet and blinking stupidly. The house explodes and Sufiya Zinobia is consumed in a fireball. A silent cloud rises in the form of a giant headless man, one arm lifted in a gesture of farewell.





## Part 5 Analysis

"Judgment Day" returns the action to Q. and Omar's ancestral home. Malaria suspends Omar and the Hyders between feverish dreams and reality. Omar realizes his mothers intend to get revenge for Babar's murder but he is not the chosen agent. The dumb waiter does the dirty work. Omar is arrested for Raza's murder and he faces a confusing double death - administrative at his brother-in-law's hand and mystical at the hands of the Beast within Sufiya Zinobia.



# Characters

## Omar Khayyam Shakil

The novel's protagonist, who feels himself "not even the hero of his own life," is an anti-hero. He has three mothers but no known father. From birth, he feels his life is inverted and peripheral. His materially privileged childhood is marred by isolation from the world and he lives in a fantasy he never fully overcomes. He educates himself as best he can from books and while gaining freedom at age 12 to attend school, remains a voyeur. A mentor, Eduardo Rodrigues, convinces Omar to study medicine, but vanishes after marrying the first love of Omar's life, Farah Zoroaster, whom Omar has hypnotized and may have impregnated. Omar becomes a world-famous immunologist, but also a reprobate human being, leading the rich playboy Iskander ("Isky") Harappa into a life of debauchery. Only when Isky wants to enter politics does he sever relations with loud-mouthed, indiscrete Omar. Fat and ugly Omar, who sleeps only two and a half hours a night, suffers terrible vertigo, dreaming about falling off the world's end.

Attending professionally to another friend's dim-witted daughter, Sufiya Zinobia Hyder, Omar falls in love and marries, but he is not allowed to have normal relations with his wife. Instead, her ayah, Shahbanou, comforts him when they think Sufiya Zinobia is asleep and Shahbanou becomes pregnant. She is fired, but Omar rises to some nobility by providing her (and his mothers) support. Isky and Raza both rise to political supremacy in the country, but each are overthrown in coups. Omar, who has been keeping Sufiya Zinobia sedated for fear of the Beast he sees lurking within her, helps his in-laws, Raza and Bilquîs Hyder, escape to sanctuary in his ancestral home. There, suffering malarial nightmares, Omar realizes his mothers intend him to kill Raza, the man who murdered the half-brother Omar never met. The mothers do the deed themselves, but Omar is arrested for murder and executed - or beheaded by the Beast that has taken over Sufiya Zinobia.

## Sufiya Zinobia ("Shame") Hyder Shakil

The novel's second protagonist, Omar's mentally retarded patient and wife. Sufiya Zinobia is the oldest daughter of Raza and Bilquîs Hyder. By family legend, Sufiya Zinobia, who was intended to be a boy, blushes at birth when her sex is determined and debated. Before her second birthday, Sufiya Zinobia develops brain fever that is cured by a folk healer, leaving her mentally slow for life. Her parents ignore her, particularly after a second daughter, Naveed, is born. Sufiya Zinobia is known as "Shame," while Naveed is "Good News," and receives all the attention. A hot wind and a lifetime of negligence combine and Sufiya Zinobia at age 12 while sleepwalking tears the heads off 218 turkeys. She faints of shame and Omar Khayyam Shakil treats her for an immunological disorder. The fat old man falls in love and proposes marriage. At Naveed's wedding, Sufiya Zinobia attacks the groom and she is again hospitalized. Omar sticks with her and they are married quietly.



Raza prevents the couple from living together as husband and wife and the infantile realization that she should be having children with her husband allows the Beast slumbering within Sufiya Zinobia to escape. She dons one of her mother's burqas to seduce and then murders four young men, ripping off their heads. Raza discovers the evidence and destroys it, but he and Omar know something is very wrong. They drug Sufiya Zinobia and confine her in the attic for two years. Shortly before her father leads a coup and seizes power, the Beast overpowers Sufiya Zinobia, she escapes and begins a rampage of indiscriminate killing that circles the capitals and becomes the stuff of legend. She is a white panther. When Raza is overthrown and flees to Omar's boyhood home, the beast in Sufiya Zinobia follows and after her parents' death, she climbs the stairs for a last, fatal confrontation with Omar Khayyam.

## Iskander ("Isky") Harappa

Omar Khayyam Shakil's handsome millionaire playboy friend, an orphan and radical thinker, who becomes Prime Minister of Pakistan, leads a coup that puts him in the presidency and is in turn overthrown and killed by his protégé, Raza Hyder, Omar's father-in-law. Isky and wife Rani (née Humayun) have one daughter, Arjumand, nicknamed the "Virgin Ironpants." The spouses grow distant and Rani is settled on the Harappa's remote family estate, Mohenjo as Isky takes p with a mistress, Atiyah ("Pinkie") Aurangzeb. Feeling the call to politics, Isky abandons his licentious life - and with it both Omar and Pinkie - and Isky's foreign policy expertise (advocating Islamic Socialism) brings him into the cabinet.

Realizing discontent with the government is growing, Isky resigns his post and leads the opposition party, the Popular Front, to a dubious electoral victory. A military coup confirms Isky's power and he promotes friend-and-enemy Raza Hyder general in charge of the army. Arjumand is her father's closest advisor, stand-in at parades and worshiper. Irregularities during the next election move Raza Hyder to overthrow Isky. After a brief but generally comfortable house arrest (denied only cigars), Isky insolently and profanely insults Raza and is sent to prison. Evidence is produced implicating the former prime minister in the murder of his hated cousin and Isky is condemned to death. He spends two years in a horrible death cell and is on the verge of having his sentence commuted when his cursing so provokes Raza's adjutant, Major Shuja, that the latter shoots him through the heart. His corpse is hanged and returned home for burial. Widow Rani realizes the hanging was staged and soon Isky's tomb becomes a site for pilgrimage and miracles. His cult is managed from Mohenjo by Arjumand. Isky's spirit settles into Raza Hyder's head, urging him to follow the political doctrines of Machiavelli.

## Raza ("Old Razor Guts") Hyder

Omar Khayyam's father-in-law and, at the end of his life, President of Pakistan. Raza and wife Bilquïs (née Kemal) have two daughters, Sufiya Zinobia (nicknamed "Shame") and Naveed (nicknamed "Good News"). As a captain, Raza rescues and marries Bilquïs Kemal in Delhi and installs her in the family home in Karachi.



Victory over absent Indian forces at Aansu-ki-Wadi won him the nickname "Old Razor Guts" and promotion to major. As a colonel, he commands the troops putting down the Needle Valley rebellion. There he falls under the influence of the evil mystic Maulana Dawood, who directs Raza's first overthrow of an opponent, Minister Gichki. Learning Sufiya Zinobia is suffering brain fever in Q., Raza goes there and from Dawood hears rumors of an affair between Bilquìs and Sindbad and (apparently) has him murdered.

During the last days of his posting in Q., Raza leads the expedition that kills Omar's rebel brother Babar. After ten years, Raza rises to the rank of brigadier general and after a closed meeting with the president, emerges as National Minister of Education, Information and Tourism. Rumors of corruption in Q., force him back into uniform, in a go-nowhere training position. Raza is rescued by Iskander Harappa and put in charge of a hapless army, which he succeeds in re-inspiring. Raza is given no choice but to overthrow Isky and is convinced to have him tried for murder. When Isky is murdered while on death row, his spirit takes up residency on Raza's shoulder, competing with the spirit of Dawood for control. Dawood wins and Raza commits his government to radical Islamic policies that eventually incite the generals to rebellion. Deposed and fearing for his life, Raza dons a burqa to flee with Bilquìs and Omar to Omar's boyhood home. There, Omar's mothers watch the three endure the fevers of malaria, waiting for their chance at revenge. Bilquìs dies and a naked Raza carries her into the dumb waiter and apparent freedom. Daggers installed in the dumb waiter allow the Shakil sisters to slice the Raza Hyder into ribbons.

## Bilquìs Kemal Hyder

Omar's mother-in-law, Bilquìs is orphaned at 18 when her father blows himself up in his failing movie theater and meets Raza Hyder in a refuge for Muslim women, naked from the blast, which permanently removed Bilquìs' eyebrows. Raza and Bilquìs marry and she is installed in the Hyder family dormitory in Karachi, where she is treated as the "poor-thing." Bilquìs demands a home of her own and moves into officer housing. There she conceives a son destined for greatness but stillborn. A second pregnancy results in another daughter, Sufiya Zinobia. Mother and daughter accompany Raza to Q. and they are left alone as the colonel is assigned to defend the gas fields. Bilquìs is rumored to dally with Sindbad, a theater owner met on the train and she conceives again, perhaps by Raza, home on furlough when Sufiya Zinobia falls ill from brain fever. Another daughter, Naveed ("Good News") is conceived in Q. under suspicious circumstances that are never mentioned.

The birth renders Bilquìs unable to bear more children and Raza never sleeps with her again. Bilquìs, whom winds torment irrationally, begins wearing the burqa all the time. Sufiya Zinobia's second breakdown results in the decapitation of a flock of turkeys and Bilquìs cuts off her daughter's hair as punishment. At Good News' wedding, already marred by a change in groom and street rioting, Sufiya Zinobia assaults the groom and Bilquìs declines further. Sufiya Zinobia's wedding to Omar Khayyam is muted. When Good News commits suicide, Bilquìs begins sewing shrouds. Bilquìs appears at Raza's side during weekly televised devotions and when he is overthrown in a coup, dresses



him and Omar in burqas to secret them out of town to seeming safety in Q. There, in Omar's ancestral home, all three fall ill with malaria and Bilquès dies, unintended. Raza, whom the Shakil sisters are determined to kill for the murder of their son Babar, is made to carry Bilquès' filthy corpse to the dumb waiter, where they are slashed to ribbons by automatic knives.

## **Rani Humayun Harappa**

The orphaned wife of rich playboy Iskander Harappa and cousin of Bilquès Hyder, Rani bears a daughter Arjumand ("Virgin Ironpants") before being replaced in her husband's affections by Atiyah ("Pinkie") Aurangzeb. She spends her time exiled in Mohenjo, the Harappa country estate in Sind, crocheting shawls, but continues to love her husband and when he enters politics she stands beside him on the podium. When the fallen prime minister is hanged and his body returned to Mohenjo for burial, Rani tears the shroud over his face and discovers he does not exhibit the postmortem signs of hanging. Under house arrest, Rani continues making shawls and locking them in a trunk, which she eventually sends to Arjumand as "The Shamelessness of Iskander the Great," with a note signed by her maiden name. Rani remains in exile even after Raza Hyder is overthrown and murdered. Arjumand, who reveres her father's saintly memory, does not want the shawl maker's version of the past being spread.

## **Asgari**

The Hyder family's disgruntled sweeper woman who alerts the media to Sufiya Zinobia's house imprisonment and escape

## **Marshal Aurangzeb**

The nearly senile army commander-in-chief, whose alluring wife Atiyah ("Pinkie") takes up with Iskander Harappa. The marshal dies conveniently during the affair, but his fame lives on to protect Pinkie during her manic turkey project.

## **Atiyah ("Pinkie") Aurangzeb**

The thirty-something wife of the army's senile chief-of-staff, Pinkie is always on the lookout for pleasure and picks Iskander Harappa over Raza Hyder at a party. Pinkie keeps Isky until his fortieth birthday, when he decides to reform his ways in order to enter History. Rejected by her lover and widowed, Pinkie decides to raise turkeys in Karachi's most desired residential area and dies under unrevealed conditions, her name forgotten by her former lover.



## Farida Balloch

The widow of Yakoob, Farida believes the Shakil sisters caused his mysterious death. Farida is determined to hang a necklace of shoes around Omar's neck on his first day at school as a sign of infamy. Farida breaks with her best friend Zeenat Kabuli after their lover, Muhammad Ibadalla, dies in a three-way knife fight involving Zeenat's husband and Farida's brother Bilal.

## Mistri Yakoob Balloch

Q.'s handyman, hired to build a dumbwaiter for the Shakil mansion, Yakoob dies under mysterious conditions soon after the project's completion.

## Bariamamma

The ironic nickname ("Big Mother") given by the Hyder family to their tiny, blind, toothless matriarch, who is Raza Hyder's maternal grandmother.

## Noor Begum

The chief organizer of progressive women's demonstrations against Raza Hyder's radical Islamic reforms. Eventually Raza finds a suitably pious pretext for arresting Noor.

## Bilal

Farida Balloch's loud-mouthed brother, named for the Prophet Muhammad's muezzin (crier), Bilal sounds off at Omar's first day of school and later dies in a three-way knife fight with his sister's lover and a rival's husband.

## Maulana Dawood

Q.'s notorious religious fanatic who rides around town on a motor scooter threatening damnation for various offenses against Islam. The ancient holy man meets Raza Hyder and warns the colonel not to trust Minister Gichki, a godless smuggler. Dawood is present when Omar asks for the hand of Sufiya Zinobia Hyder and rails against such a godless act, but later decides the two should go to hell together. Accompanying the Hyderys to the new capital, Dawood mistakes the plains for Arafat and the city for Mecca. He influences Hyder both while he is alive and after his death, as a voice in his ear debating Iskander Harappa's secular ghost, to impose the strict Islamic policies that eventually lead to Hyder's overthrow and demise.



## Ghaffar

The peasant boy who describes the white panther in terms that convince Omar it is Sufiya Zinobia.

## Aladdin Gichki

The State Chief Minister who dispatches Raza Hyder to put down an uprising in Needle Valley. Dawood warns the colonel not to trust Minister Gichki, a godless smuggler. Small, crop-haired, flat Chinese-faced Gichki stands up to Raza's demand for carte blanche in dealing with the rebels and is warned the army cannot long be restrained.

## Gulbaba

The cheeky, half-blind, deaf, pistachio-eating servant at Mohenjo whom Raza Hyder mistakenly slays after a sleepless night tethered to a post in the Harippa's front yard.

## Sir Mir Harappa

Iskander Harappa's late father, who sires an unnamed son with one of his prostitutes. His grandson and namesake takes vengeance on his cousin Isky by sacking Mohenjo.

## Little Mir Harappa

Iskander Harappa's cousin, who seeks revenge on him by sacking Mohenjo. Little Mir owns Daro, the adjoining estate, just over the northern horizon and comes to sack Isky's estate as vengeance on their mutual grandfather, for whom he is named. Little Mir's wife dies in childbirth, leaving him to raise son Haroun himself. The boy is as obstinate as his father and tries to aggravate him. Eventually the son murders his father and uncle Isky is implicated, causing his fall from office and ultimate demise in a prison cell.

## Haroun Harappa

The obstinate, eldest son of Little Mir, betrothed to Good News Hyder. He hates his domineering widowed father and does anything he can to aggravate him. Haroun grows up outrageously spoiled, but rejects everything his father gives him. Spurned by Naveed Hyder and spurning Arjumand Harappa, Haroun enters Popular Front politics as a party goon. At Isky's instigation, Haroun murders his father and flees the country to avoid the death penalty. Haroun surfaces in Soviet-invaded Afghanistan, heading a terrorist group "Al-Iskander," dedicated to his uncle's memory. The terrorists are duped into a bloodless surrender.



## Hashmat Bibi

The Shakils' 102-year-old woman servant who wills herself to death after Omar practices hypnosis on her.

## Muhammad Ibadalla

Q.'s mail carrier, a follower of Dawood; he is nevertheless involved sexually with the widow Balloch and her best friend Zeenat Kabuli. With the widow's brother and Zeenat's husband, Ibadalla perishes in a three-way knife fight.

## Zeenat Kabuli

The wife of the leather maker and best friend of the widow Farida Balloch, who provides the ingredients for a necklace of shoes to hang around Omar's neck on his first day at school. Zeenat breaks with her best friend Farida Balloch after their lover, Muhammad Ibadalla, dies in a three-way knife fight involving Zeenat's husband and Farida's brother Bilal.

## Mahmoud Kemal

The father of Bilquès Hyder, the ostentatiously-dressing owner of a movie theater. His misleading nickname, "Mahmoud the Woman," originally meant only that as a widower he had to be his daughter's mother as well as father, but came to be used as a sign of weakness, shame and foolishness. When Mahmoud announces a double-bill, one film appealing to Muslims and one to Hindus, everyone boycotts his theater and Mahmoud, sitting alone, bombs the building, killing himself.

## Sinbad Mengal

The fat-lipped youngest son of the man who manages cinema in Q., Sinbad makes a pass at Bilquès during the trip to Raza's new command. They are observed attending the movies nightly in Raza's absence and Sinbad's mutilated remains are found. His name is never mentioned by the spouses but his ghost haunts their relations as the possibility remains Sufiya Zinobia may be his daughter.

## Chand Mohammad

Q.'s ice vendor who sells departing Omar a block of ice to make his train ride to Karachi more comfortable and tells him, obliquely, that Farah the Ice Block has returned.





## **Anahita ("Anna") Muhammad**

The provisional name Rushdie assigns to an attractive, vivacious, 16-year-old Londoner when he decides to write a novel about shame. He starts this novel after London is shaken by the true story of a Pakistani father who murders his only child, a truly beloved daughter, for dishonoring her family. He abandons this story and combines Anna with two other real (but unnamed) characters to create Sufiya Zinobia.

## **General Raddi**

One of three army officers (with Bekar and Phisaddi) who uncover a coup against Raza Hyder and are rewarded by promotion to general. Raddi has a knack for saying the wrong thing. He conceives a plan to counter an airplane hijacking by Haroun's followers.

## **Eduardo Rodrigues**

The English teacher who with his protégé Farah Zoroaster rescues Omar on his first day of school and becomes his mentor. Omar arbitrarily adopts Rodrigues as his ersatz father and the mysterious, white-clad figure steers Omar towards studying medicine. Rodrigues accepts responsibility for Farah's pregnancy and they leave town, but Rodrigues remains part of Omar's psyche for life. His ghost follows Omar throughout his life.

## **Farah Zoroaster Rodrigues**

The daughter of a customs agent who later in life laughs telling how an adolescent Omar Khayyam Shakil suffered vertigo and fainted when a cloud came down to the road around their jeep. Farah is two years older than Omar and filthy-mouthed. She is known as Farah the Parsee, "Disaster," and "The Ice Block." Town gossips decide she and the teacher Eduardo Rodrigues must be perverted lovers. Farah returns home, childless and husbandless and is eventually accepted by her crazed father.

## **Chalaak Sahib**

Q.'s pawnbroker who gradually buys the Shakils' treasures via the dumb waiter.

## **General "Shaggy Dog"**

A general known only by his nickname, Shaggy Dog refuses to use troops on rioting civilians, leaving Iskander Harappa in charge of the civilian government. After an enormous invasion of East Pakistan fails, resulting in the independence of Bangladesh, Shaggy Dog is blamed, but is spared a war crimes trial on condition that he accepts house arrest.



## Shahbanou

The Hyders' 19-year old Parsee ayah, hired to take care of the children on their return to Karachi. Hard work has made the fragile Parsee look 43. When Raza Hyder's rules prevent Omar and his wife from having normal sexual relations, Shahbanou offers Omar her services nightly. Pregnancy costs her her job, but Omar continues to support her.

## Hafeezullah ("Hafeez ") Shakil

Omar's great-grandfather who learns from his brother Rumi of his wife's infidelities. Hafeez takes to his bed and dies telling his infant son, "This motor will not run any more."

## Rumi Shakil

Omar's great-uncle who tells his brother about his wife's infidelities.

## Old Mr. Shakil

The reclusive, foul-mouthed and sacrilegious father of the protagonist's three mothers, after 18 years of widowhood in Q., he died in his great bed and left the daughters unexpectedly impoverished. He raised them with iron Muslim morality and kept them uneducated.

## Chhunni Shakil

The protagonist's eldest mother, the hear-no-evil sister, Chhunni becomes vacillating and torn when the trinity is broken at Omar's 12th birthday. Chhunni holds an ancient blunderbuss as the sisters confront Raza Hyder for the murder of their second son, Babar.

## Hunnee Shakil

The protagonist's middle mother, the see-no-evil sister, Hunnee becomes petulant and histrionic when the trinity is broken at Omar's 12th birthday. Hunnee holds a scimitar as the sisters confront Raza Hyder for the murder of their second son, Babar.

## Bunny Shakil

The protagonist's youngest mother, the go-ahead-and-speak sister, Bunny grows prematurely grey and puts on regal airs when the trinity is broken at Omar's 12th



birthday. Bunny holds a spear as the sisters confront Raza Hyder for the murder of their second son, Babar. She informs pious Hyder there is no God.

## **Babar Shakil**

Omar's half-brother, born to three reunited mothers two years after he leaves Q. for medical school. He lives in his older brother's shadow as long as he can bear it and then flees to the Impossible Mountains to join a revolutionary band. Before his 22nd birthday, he is shot dead by Raza Hyder. The guerrillas call him "The Emperor" in honor of the Mogul. Shortly before his death, the guerrillas notice Babar giving off a yellow light and budding tiny wings. Babar's mothers wait patiently for revenge on Hyder, who falls into their clutches when Omar leads him to ostensible safety in his ancestral home.

## **Major Shuja**

General Raza Hyder's seven-foot tall adjutant, who informs Iskander Harappa of his overthrow and arrest, advises Raza Hyder on restoring honor to the army, murders Isky in a fit of anger before he can be hanged (or pardoned) and accompanies Isky's body home for burial. When Raza learns the confederates are planning a coup, they disappear.

## **Captain Talvar Ulhaq**

The tall, dashing, mustachioed star of the Police polo team who tempts Naveed/Good News Hyder away from her betrothed, Haroun Harappa. Ulhaq is clairvoyant (a useful gift for police investigators) and knows Naveed will bear him a profusion of children. Ulhaq is allowed to replace Naveed's fiancé, Haroun Harappa, at the wedding. His father-in-law puts him in charge of the Federal Security Force (FSF), which is discredited before Hyder's fall and Ulhaq, father of 27 children before his wife commits suicide, arrests and executes Omar Khayyam for Hyder's murder.

## **Naveed ("Good News") Hyder Ulhaq**

Raza and Bilquès' second daughter, Naveed is plain-faced, long- and thick-haired but soaked in love by her mother to make up for the shame of dim older sister Sufiya Zinobia. The possibility of her being the illegitimate daughter of Sindbad Mengal is quietly rumored but never spoken. Good News is betrothed for political reasons to Haroun Harappa whose wealth she appreciates and whose defects she is determined to reform, until she is seduced by the dashing Captain Talvar Ulhaq. Breaking the engagement at the eleventh hour causes a scandal and their wedding is a social disaster. Talvar is clairvoyant and determined to the best son-in-law possible and within a few years, Naveed is the mother of 27 and pregnant again. She commits suicide rather than face more pregnancies.



## Mr. Zoroaster

Farah's customs agent father who loses his mind in the hot desert after his daughter gets pregnant and leaves. Naked, he calls upon God to destroy the world with fire. He eventually allows his daughter back into his home to keep his job from being lost, as he can no longer function.



## Objects/Places

### The Impossible Mountains

The Shakil family's name for what the tribal residents call the "Roof of Paradise," frequently rent by earthquakes. The mountains were the protagonist's first sight of the world.

### The Loo

The hot afternoon wind that terrorizes Bilquìs Hyder.

### Mohenjo

The Harappa country estate in Sind. Arid and treeless, Mohenjo is the site of Rani Harappa's exile after Isky began his affair with Pinkie.

### Nishapur

The nickname that the sisters give to their massive house after their son Omar's birth, after the home of his famous namesake, the poet/philosopher/scientist Omar Khayyam.

### Q.

A remote border town between Pakistan and Afghanistan where the protagonist was born and raised. Q. consists of two parts, the Old Town bazaar, where colonialized natives live and the foreign-dominated Cantt, marked by the domed Hotel Flashman. In between stood the enormous fortress-like Shakil mansion, which before Old Man Shakil's death controlled 85% of the region's arable lands.



# Themes

## Shame

Shame, or rather the Arabic *sharam*, permeates this novel. The author intrudes on the narrative to explain that *sharam* holds an encyclopedia of nuance: embarrassment, discomfiture, decency, modesty, shyness, etc. The protagonist is introduced to the concept at age 12, as a narrow commandment not to feel shame. His mothers appear to be rebelling against their strict Islamic behavioral training. Omar is bewildered by the new concept and is told by his mothers, it makes you hot, it makes you cold; it makes women cry and die; it makes men go. As 30 years pass, *sharam* attends pregnancies, births, family tensions, political machinations, religious zealotry and deaths, until we again see Omar, a great physician but degenerate human being. *Sharam* has been expunged from his vocabulary. He treats professionally and falls in love with the novel's the second protagonist, Sufiya Zinobia, nicknamed by her mother "Shame." Pervasive *sharam* becomes incarnate. Born a puny, blushing female rather than a strapping, heroic male and soon rendered mentally retarded by fever, Shame is ignored by her parents, in sharp contrast to her sister Naveed, nicknamed "Good News."

The author confides that wanting to write about *sharam*, because as an Easterner he could understand killing shameful children in a way Westerners cannot, he combined three news stories into the single character of dim-witted, innocent Sufiya Zinobia and filled her with the unfelt shame of the world. *Sharam* within Shame is incarnate as a Beast that makes her, while sleepwalking, behead first a flock of turkeys and later a quartet of young men. In between, the Beast goes dormant. *Sharam* is seen resulting inevitably in violence. The second attack demands father and husband join forces to control her and Sufiya Zinobia is locked away and kept drugged. Both men feel shame awaits them. When Sufiya Zinobia escapes and begins a the reign of terror, her father is shamefully removed from his presidential office — and more shamefully runs for his life in a woman's burqa to Omar's childhood home. There, Omar's mothers turn on him the shame they forbade him to feel when they released him into the world. Shamelessness and shame both abound and the earth cracks at Mohenjo, where the widow Rani Harappa remains, having denounced her husband's political career in a series of shawls. Flames consume the protagonists after a final face-to-face meeting and *sharam* is set free.

## Religion

*Shame* depicts, in the meeting of Raza and Bilquìs Hyder, the 1947 partitioning of the Indian subcontinent. Muslims, including the author's relatives, flocked northeast and northwest to form the two geographical nation of Pakistan separated by a thousand miles of hostile enemy territory (India). The intense hatred among religious factions is shown sinking down to the level of what films are shown in theaters. Raza Hyder, as he rises from captain to general (and eventually president) is conscienceless but rigidly



pious, as is shown by the *gatta* callous on his forehead, the mark of regularly making the ritual prostrations required during daily prayers in Islam. He takes his bride to an old-fashioned village setting where shame (*sharam*) regulates everything in life.

The novel's second protagonist, Sufiya Zinobia Hyder Shakil, is nicknamed "Shame," because as a first-born she failed to be male and is mentally retarded. A wild mystic, Maulana Dawood, gains Raza Hyder's ear and induces him to implement fundamentalist policies, including the burqa and *shariyyah* law, which gives the author an opportunity to discuss how religion suffers when used as a political tool by those seeking to consolidate their own power. In the end, the burqa saves Raza Hyder as he flees mob and army after a coup, but still he gets his just desserts for killing Omar's terrorist brother years earlier. Omar's grandfather did not believe in God, but raised his three daughters in Muslim godliness; they too reject God and Omar only thinks of the Almighty when all human attempts to control the Beast within Sufiya Zinobia fail. Christians are stereotyped as immoral and two Parsee girls are treated sympathetically until they are found pregnant out of wedlock. Religion - Islam in particular - is shown as causing discord, fanaticism, war and brutality as inevitably as *sharam* ends in violence.

## Literature

*Shame* is a highly literary novel. One protagonist, Omar Khayyam Shakil, is named for the famous Persian poet, whose most famous work, the *Rubaiyat*, is better known and appreciated in English than in the original. Ironically, Omar is destined for a life of science rather than literature; his half-brother, Babar, 20 years younger and never met, writes erotic poetry interspersed with bile about his years growing up in his brother's shadow. Babar dies a political terrorist, very much not in keeping with his heroic name. Translation as a literary and a sociological process is explored in an author's aside. Other literary works are mentioned by name or discussed in the novel, including Nikolai Erdman's *The Suicide*, Nicolo Machiavelli's *The Prince* and Georg Büchner's drama *Danton's Death*.

The story of Abraham's sacrifice, common to the Hebrew Bible and the *Qur'an*, though with major differences, is mentioned, using the Hebrew name for the prophet who holds the two religions together. *Shame* is purposefully made to sound like a medieval tale, although it is set in the late 20th century and the second half is largely an examination of fairy tales. Sufiya Zinobia is Sleeping Beauty during the time her father and husband seek to control her, but this motif gives way for lack of a kissing prince to Beauty and the Beast. The author includes a long aside on how Beauty and Beast can come together in an arranged marriage, invoking the help of the radical, silvery-haired Great Living Poet, unfortunately deceased, in understanding the riddle. Rushdie notes that mere novelists need a poetic muse.



# Style

## Point of View

*Shame* is told in the third-person by an author who frequently intrudes into the narrative. He explains how the novel would be different if it were a true story about Pakistan, laments his introducing characters as vile as Omar Khayyam Shakil and as pitiable as Sufiya Zinobia Hyder Shakil to be its heroes, explains how he invented Sufiya Zinobia as a composite of three characters from the newspapers and vents on various political, social and religious topics. Thus, Salman Rushdie, prize-winning novelist, forced into hiding in London after the furor caused by his *Satanic Verses*, is very nearly a character in the novel, in which he claims will be his last exploration of the Eastern mind.

## Setting

*Shame* is set in Pakistan in the 1980s, with flashbacks to 1947 and the author's tongue-in-cheek proviso that it is not a historical novel. He mentions historical figures like Zulfikar Ali Bhutto but then fictionalizes their stories of coming to power and falling to the coups which traumatize the nation's political history. The partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947 and the secession of Bangladesh are discussed in some detail. The old and new cities of Karachi are the setting of much of the action, with author's disclaimers that this is a work of fiction, as is the hero's frontier hometown of Q., which Rushdie refuses to identify as a real place. Several times Rushdie states that he has given the novel a mythical, medieval air, assisted by use of the Hegira calendar, by which the 15th century commences in 1980 C.E.

## Language and Meaning

*Shame* jumps forward and backward with jolting frequency and is frequently interrupted by author's asides dealing with history, culture, linguistics and religion. Arabic words are frequent, along with terms common to the entire Indian subcontinent ("bibi," "ayah," "begum"). Establishing quickly that the protagonist Omar Khayyam Shakil inhabits in an upside down, marginal world from the moment of birth, the author is able to move freely between reality and fantasy. The language and imagery are rich and complex and much of the text tongue-in-cheek. In the final chapter, Rushdie has Omar and the captives Hyders contract malaria, which allows him within their minds to wander in and out of feverish disorientation, but the motif in fact is used throughout the novel.

## Structure

*Shame* is divided into five parts. Part 1 "Escapes from the Mother Country" consists of three chapters chronicling Omar Khayyam Shakil's bizarre boyhood, which leaves him feeling upside down and marginalized. A failed adolescent romance leaves him a





misogynist as he heads off on scholarship to study medicine. In Part 2 "The Duellists," Omar disappears, as the senior generation of Harappa and Hyder families and Omar's future wife are introduced and shown to be staged for conflict. In Part 3 "Shame, Good News and the Virgin," Omar returns as an internationally renowned physician and the second protagonist, Sufiya Zinobia is shown gradually being inhabited by the Beast. The Harappa and Hyder children emerge as significant figures and in general, the masculine theme is feminized. Part 4 "In the Fifteenth Century," we watch the rise and fall of Iskander Harappa and Raza Hyder, with Omar again a secondary character. Part 5 "Judgment Day," returns the action to Q., Omar's birthplace and the enormous building in which he grew up. Unwittingly, Omar delivers the fallen Raza Hyder, his half brother's murderer, into his mothers' clutches. The Beast controlling Sufiya Zinobia tears the head off one protagonist before the room in which Omar's father died is consumed by flames.



## Quotes

"This word: shame. No, I must write it in its original form, not in this peculiar language tainted by wrong concepts and the accumulated detritus of its owners' unrepented past, this Angrezi in which I am forced to write and so for ever alter what is written... *"Sharam*, that's the word. For which this paltry 'shame' is a whole inadequate translation. Three letters, *shin rè mìm* (written, naturally, from right to left); plus *zabar* accents indicating the short vowel sounds. A short word, but one containing encyclopaedias of nuance. It is not only shame that his mothers forbade Omar Khayyam to feel, but also embarrassment, discomfiture, decency, modesty, shyness, the sense of having an ordained place in the world and other dialects of emotion for which English has no counterparts." Part 1 Chapter 2, pg. 33.

"This was the time immediately before the famous moth-eaten partition that chopped up the old country and handed Al-Lah a few insect-nibbled slices of it, some dusty western acres and jungly eastern swamps that the ungodly were happy to do without. (Al-Lah's new country: two chunks of land a thousand miles apart. A country so improbable that it could almost not exist.) But let's be unemotional and state merely that feelings were running so high that even going to the pictures had become a political act. The one-godly went to these cinemas and the washers of stone gods to those; movie-fans had been partitioned already, in advance of the tired old land." Part 2 Chapter 4, pgs. 57-58.

"But she was also admired, grudgingly, because the family had a high opinion of Raza, the women admitted that he was a good man who did not beat his wife. This definition of goodness alarmed Bilquìs, to whom it had never occurred that she might be beaten and she raised the subject with Rani. 'Oh yes,' her cousin-in-law replied, 'how they all hit! Tharaap! Tharaap! Sometimes it does your heart good to watch. But one must also watch out. A good man can go bad, like meat, if you do not keep him cool.'" Part 2 Chapter 5, pg. 73.

"Well, well, friendship is a bad word for the thing between Raza and Iskander, but for a long time after the incident of the stake it was the word they both used. Sometimes the good words can't be found." Part 2 Chapter 6, pg. 112.

"But even more appalling was my realization that, like the interviewed friends etc., I, too, found myself understanding the killer. The news did not seem alien to me. We who have grown up on a diet of honour and shame can still grasp what must seem unthinkable to peoples living in the aftermath of the death of God and of tragedy: that men will sacrifice their dearest love on the implacable altars of their pride. (And not only men. I have since heard of a case in which a woman committed the identical crime for identical reasons.) Between shame and shamelessness lies the axis upon which we turn; meteorological conditions at both these poles are of the most extreme, ferocious type. Shamelessness, shame: the roots of violence." Part 3 Chapter 7, pgs. 117-118.

"Omar Khayyam suffered an attack of vertigo so severe that he was sick in the back of the taxi. (Over that, too, I draw a fastidious veil.) Once again others had acted and by so



doing had shaped the story of his lie: Babar's flight, Hyder's bullets, the exaltation of Mir Harappa and the resulting alteration in Iskander added up, as far as our hero was concerned, to a kick in his personal teeth." Part 3 Chapter 7, pg. 137.

"But Haroun was as obstinate as his father and did not so much as give the puppy a name, so that in the bitter heat of the Daro sunshine the puppy had to forage for its own food and drink, contracted mange, distemper and curious green spots on the tongue, was driven mad by its long hair and finally died in front of the main door to the house, emitting piteous yelps and leaking a thick yellow porridge from its behind. 'Bury it,' Mir told Haroun, but the boy set his jaw and walked away and the slowly decomposing corpse of the unnamed pooch mirrored the growth of the boy's loathing for his father, who was thereafter forever associated in his mind with the stench of the rotting dog." Part 3 Chapter 8, pgs. 153-154.

"O glee of female relatives in the face of unconcealable scandal! O crocodile tears and insincere pummeling of breasts! O delighted crowing of Duniyazad Begum as she dances upon the corpse of Bilquîs's honour! And the fork-tongued offers of hope: Who knows, talk to her, many girls panic on their wedding eve, yes, she'll see sense, just try only, time to be firm, time to be gentle, beat her up a little, give her a loving hug, O God, but how terrible, how can you cancel the guests?" Part 3 Chapter 8, pg. 172.

"Begum Naveed Ulhaq, the former Good News Hyder, proved utterly incapable of coping with the endless stream of humanity flowing out between her thighs. But her husband was relentless insatiable, his dream of children had expanded to fill up the place in his life previously occupied by polo and owing to his clairvoyant talents he always knew which nights were best for conception. He came to her once a year and ordered her to get ready, because it was time to plant the seed, until she felt like a vegetable patch whose naturally fertile soil is being worn out by an overzealous gardener." Part 4 Chapter 10, pg. 218.

"In those days the Chief Martial Law Administrator's home had begun to resemble an orphanage more than a seat of government, owing to Good News's inability to stem the annual flood of children issuing from her loins. Twenty-seven children aged between one and six puked, dribbled, crawled, drew with crayons on the walls, played with bricks, screamed, spilled juice, fell asleep, tumbled down stairs, broke vases, ululated, giggled, sang, danced, skipped, wet themselves, demanded attention, experimented with bad language, kicked their ayahs, refused to clean their teeth, bulled the beard of the religious teacher engaged to teach them handwriting and the Quran, tore down curtains, stained sofas, got lost, cut themselves, fought against vaccination needles and tetanus jabs, begged for and then lost interest in pets, stole radios and burst into top-level meetings in that demented house. Meanwhile Good News had expanded yet again and she was so big that it looked as if she'd swallowed a whale. Everyone knew with a terrible certainty that the progressions was continuing, that this time no fewer than eight babies would be produced and that next year there would be nine and after that ten and so on, so that by her thirtieth birthday she would have given birth to no fewer than seventy-seven children; the worst was still to come." Part 4 Chapter 11, pgs. 238-239.



"Nobody does anything for just one reason. It is not possible that Omar Khayyam, for so long shameless, was made brave by a twinge of shame? That his guilt over the Shahbanou business made him say, 'There is a treatment,' and so face the worst danger of his life? - But that is undeniable, what I do not attempt to deny, is that courage was shown. And courage is a rarer thing than evil, after all. Credit where it's due. "But what confusion swept over Raza Hyder! A man who has decided to do away with his daughter for religious reasons does not relish being told he has been too hasty. " 'You're a fool,' General Hyder told his son-in-law. 'If the devil comes out again she will tear off your stupid head.'" Part 4 Chapter 11, pg. 248.

"Reappearances of the dead must be offset by disappearances of the living. A hangman: poof! And Pinkie Aurangzeb. And I've saved the worst for last: on the night of the Harappa hanging, Omar Khayyam Shakil discovered that Sufiya Zinobia, his wife, Hyder's daughter, had escaped. "An empty attic. Broken chains, cracked beams. There was a hole in the bricked-up window. It had a head, arms, legs. "'God help us,' said Omar Khayyam, in spite of his uncircumcised, unshaven, unwhispered-to beginnings. It was as though he had divined that it was time for the Almighty to step forward and take charge of events." Part 4 Chapter 11, pg. 253.

"the third option is the substitution of a new myth for the old one. Here are three such myths, all available from stock at short notice: liberty; equality; fraternity. "I recommend them highly." Part 4 Chapter 12, pg. 267.



## Topics for Discussion

What does *Shame* reveal about Rushdie's views on Islam?

How does Rushdie deal with the history of Pakistan?

How is the *gatta* used in the novel?

Why is Pinkie selected as the turkey farmer?

Why is the function of the 27 Hyder grandchildren in the novel?

What is function of the dumb waiter in the novel?

How do the author's frequent intrusions into the novel effect the flow and understanding? Is it a useful technique?

How is the historical Omar Khayyam treated in the novel?

How are the Great Powers (US and USSR) pictured in the novel?

How has your conception of shame been expanded by this novel?