*Kite Runner* Chapter 11 Close Reading

IT CAME TO ME on our way home. Taheri, I knew I’d heard that name before.

“Wasn’t there some story floating around about Taheri’s daughter?” I said to Baba, trying to sound casual.

“You know me,” Baba said, inching the bus along the queue exiting the flea market. “Talk turns to gossip and I walk away.”

“But there was, wasn’t there?” I said.

“Why do you ask?” He was looking at me coyly. (#1)

I shrugged and fought back a smile. “Just curious, Baba.”

“Really? Is that all?” he said, his eyes playful, lingering on mine. “Has she made an impression on you?”

I rolled my eyes. “Please, Baba.”

He smiled, and swung the bus out of the flea market. We headed for Highway 680. We drove in silence for a while. “All I’ve heard is that there was a man once and things... didn’t go well.” He said this gravely, like he’d disclosed to me that she had breast cancer. (#2)

“Oh.”

“I hear she is a decent girl, hardworking and kind. But no khastegars, no suitors, have knocked on the general’s door since.” Baba sighed. “It may be unfair, but what happens in a few days, sometimes even a single day, can change the course of a whole lifetime, Amir,” he said. (#3)

LYING AWAKE IN BED that night, I thought of Soraya Taheri’s sickle-shaped birthmark, her gently hooked nose, and the way her luminous eyes had fleetingly held mine. My heart stuttered at the thought of her. Soraya Taheri. My Swap Meet Princess.

1. What does the word “coyly” mean, and what does this coy look reveal about Baba’s understanding of Amir’s question?

2. What does this piece of gossip reveal about Afghani honor, family, or reputations?

3. How does this line take on multiple meanings? To what else is Baba—either knowingly or unknowingly—referring?

4. Do you think Baba knows what Amir witnessed that day? Why or why not?