

The girl at the checkpoint

Characters: M is a 23-year-old Afghan girl, eager to learn and attend university. R is a local Taliban commander. M approaches Commander R at the checkpoint nearby her university, which has recently been closed to girls.

M: Excuse me, Sir. Can I talk to you for a moment?

R: (looks surprised) Yes, what is it, young lady?

M: I noticed that all educational centers for girls are closed, and I want to understand why we can't continue our education. I have only one semester left to reach my goal.

R: It is a new rule. Girls should learn at home. This is for your safety and to preserve our traditions.

M: But Sir, my father taught me that science is light. Without universities and professors, how can we see clearly in the dark? If we are far from books and teachers, how can we learn?

R: Your father is wise, but there are different ways to acquire knowledge. You can learn to cook, sew and manage the house. This is respectable.

M: Yes, but I wish to become a teacher. I want to educate people with science and knowledge. I want to help the children and youth of my country. So that the light of knowledge is in their eyes. Isn't this also respectable?

R: (pauses, then speaks slowly) You speak with passion. It's rare and... it reminds me of my sister. She had dreams like you.

M: What happened?

R: She was never able to pursue her dreams. War... (his voice trails off) That's why we make these laws to protect you from the hardships of the world.

M: I know the world is hard, but being deprived of education does not protect us. It only makes us weaker against the struggles we must face. Isn't it better to equip us with knowledge and power?

R: (seems conflicted) You have a strong heart. It is not common to hear such words from a young person of this age.

M: Please reconsider allowing school and university for girls. Not just for me, but for all the girls in my country. Education will enlighten our ways and perhaps end this cycle of war and suffering.

R: I will think about your words. I don't make that decision alone, but I will talk to others.

M: Thank you, Sir. That's all we want - a chance to prove our worth.

R: You should go home now. It's getting late.

M: Yes, Sir. I must go.