

Maryam in the first two chapters

Look through the following quotations which all relate to Maryam and discuss what they show us about her character at the beginning of the novel. Think about what sort of impression Tyler is giving us. Consider whether Maryam changes through the text or not; why is this?

'Yaz-dan,' a woman called from the rear. It sounded like a correction. p.8

... she had raised her son by herself in a country where she would never feel like anything but a foreigner. p.15

(On being told by Bitsy that they were being invited over to rake leaves before supper): She wondered if this was some idiomatic expression having to do with socializing. Break the ice, mend fences, chew the fat, rake leaves ... (p.24)

(When Ziba tells Maryam she would like to serve the Donaldsons some of the traditional New Year's dishes):
Maryam would have been more than willing, ordinarily, but now she felt an inner pinch of resistance. Why should they have to put on these ethnic demonstrations? Let the Donaldsons go to the Smithsonian for that! She thought peevishly. Let them read *National Geographic!* (p.43)

(At dinner, after Bitsy tells Ziba she should wear black and white to help Susan's eyesight):
'And the beans and rice? How about those?'
'Excuse me?' Bitsy said.
'The black beans and the white rice. Are they for the sake of the babies' eyesight also?' (p.38)

(Remembering when she last left Iran):
... there'd been a problem with her exit visa, something inconsequential ... but she had felt a sense of panic that was almost suffocating. She had flet like a bird beating its wings inside its cage. *Let me out, let me out, let me out!* (p.47)

She had given away the carpetbag a month after she arrived, ashamed it wasn't Samsonite ... Only later did she understand that they had embraced the worst of the style ... (p.54)

(After Sami publicly laughs at Maryam for her arranged marriage):
'Oh, Sami.' She spoke very gently, to hide the outrage in her voice. 'You can't know everything about it,' she said ...
When Kiyam had told her, for instance, that her hair smelled like an Armenian church: what could Sami know about that? (p.59)