

# The violence runner

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



The Violence Runner Seung Woo (Mike) Son, 11A (Word Count: 799)

Throughout the history, there have been leaders of good and evil, moral and immoral, peaceful and violent alike. Sometimes, when the evil takes power and misuses it, the staggering impact they entail in the society can be appalling and outrageous. In Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*, Assef is exemplary of an evil leader who misuses his power and stands in the frontlines of crippling Afghanistan and its people into a pitch-black mist of chaos. First of all, Hosseini places Assef under the perfect setting in which the author bestows Assef the opportunity to develop his power as an antagonist in the novel. In the nineteenth century, Hazaras fails to rise against the Pashtuns in Afghanistan, and subsequently, discrimination against the Hazaras becomes prevalent in the society. In this type of environment, Assef naturally gains superiority over the Hazaras as a Pashtun and forms discriminative views and ethnic hatred towards them. It is even understandable for Assef to claim Adolf Hitler, the infamous dictator who relentlessly exterminated millions of Jews and other ethnic groups, to be a great leader, " a man with vision. " (Hosseini, page 40) This is because to Assef, Hitler is his role model; Assef believes that Hazaras should be exterminated from the face of the earth, as he is determined to ask Daoud Khan, the newly president, " to rid Afghanistan of all the dirty, Kaseef Hazaras. " (Hosseini, page 40) This way, Assef naturally develops his relentlessness and sadism that he fully makes usage out of. His violent mindset against the Hazaras leads him to later join the Taliban, in which he gains the position to freely kill Hazaras without punishment, and relentlessly ties up Afghanistan in a bundle of Taliban laws. As we can see, Assef uses his

superiority over the Hazaras that he gains from the society that he lives in, and manipulates it fully to dominate over the ethnic group. To control and frighten them he would often times use violence as his tool. Assef rules the streets of Wazir Akbar Khan section of Kabul with his notorious savagery and relentless violence. In the streets of the Wazir Akbar Khan, Assef's "word is law", and if the law is broken, then his stainless-steel brass knuckles are used accordingly as a punishment. (Hosseini, pag3 38) Here, Hosseini uses stainless-steel brass knuckles as a significant motif throughout the novel, and also a symbol of violence and dominating power. Whenever we see Assef performing violence on somebody, we can observe emergence of his brass knuckles. When Hassan defends Amir against Assef with his slingshot, Assef tells Hassan and Amir, "this doesn't end today, believe me." (Hosseini, page 42) This suggests that Assef is a relentless, merciless and vengeful figure, foreshadowing his later revenge against Hassan and Amir. The brass knuckles appear again towards the end of the novel, when Assef beats Amir miserably with his brass knuckles "flashing in the afternoon light," and thus fulfilling his warning and revenge that he had in his childhood. (Hosseini, page 288) These brass knuckles clearly represent physical domination on those who do not have such power; these multiple scenes of the recurring emergence of the brass knuckles suggest that violence is his power, his way to rule. Despite Assef's unbearable deeds of violence, he holds one power that not everyone has: the power to change one's life completely. Rape is a significant motif that is used throughout the novel by Assef. The reason why this motif is so crucial is that through rape, Assef destroys one's integrity, emotional stability and dignity, and fully dominates

them both physically and emotionally. Two significant cases would be Hassan's rape and the other, Sohrab's rape. By raping Hassan, Assef destroys two individuals: Hassan, who faces emotional trauma and breakdown afterwards, and Amir. Assef raping Hassan is the source of Amir feeling guilty and in remorse of not standing up for Hassan, and eventually leads him to make Hassan leave his family and ends up feeling guilty in his entire life, until he finds Sohrab alive and to redeem himself, plunges himself in the Taliban world to save Sohrab. Clearly, Assef held the key to change both lives. On the other hand, Sohrab's life is changed dramatically through rape. As a result, Sohrab loses speech ability and feels extremely guilty, as he claims himself to be "so dirty and full of sin." (Hosseini, page 319). These two "lambs", Hassan and Sohrab, are sacrificed as a result of Assef's misuse of power. Assef is clearly a violent man who holds the power in The Kite Runner. Assef makes full use of the power that he naturally gains in the society that he lives in, fully develops it and holds the key to change the society dramatically. He is the violence runner, to whom violence is always the solution to problems. Bibliography: - Hosseini, Khaled. The Kite Runner. New York: Riverhead, 2003. Print