PARADISE

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Rita is a Syrian refugee whose family has escaped the conflict to Arizona—but not without a cost. Her mother was killed back home, and her father and brother carry bullet wounds that have dramatically shaped their lives in the States. Facing xenophobia and racism at school and work, Rita and her brother struggle every day in the face of systems and individuals who fail to support refugees and immigrants.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Rita privately suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, which manifests itself in various ways, though no one in her family or at her school is aware of it. How might we do better to help recent immigrants or refugees suffering from PTSD? What are unique barriers people like Rita may experience to seeking or getting help?

2. There are numerous instances in the story where “the system” fails Rita and her family. What would it take to build a society that does not fail refugee families? What might those systems look like?

3. Seeing Paul’s art on her door is an important moment for Rita. How do art and storytelling help create empathy?

4. How might people be more like Paul and do better to help recent refugees acclimate and feel less isolated?

5. The notion of being saved by a hero appears in both “Paradise” and “The Plague Doctors.” What has been the role of heroes in your life? How have heroes in your life and in society more broadly helped and harmed us?