

Ali Shams

In "Ali Shams, Martyr!" the narrative opens with the protagonist reflecting on his work at a chicken breeding farm in Fort Wayne, which operates more like a laboratory than a traditional farm. The farm's goal is to produce chickens that can grow quickly and efficiently, essentially turning grains into protein. The description emphasizes the unnatural environment of industrial chickens, which are bred to survive without immune systems and live solely in controlled conditions.

The protagonist recounts his life routines, including taking his son Cyrus to school. Their limited time together is marked by shared moments like cooking meals and watching movies at home, creating a simple yet poignant father-son bond. Cyrus is portrayed as a bright, independent child who, despite his young age, demonstrates maturity and curiosity. The father's memories of his own childhood intersperse these everyday domestic scenes, connecting his past experiences and the lessons he has absorbed over time.

The work culture on the farm is explored through descriptions of the daily tasks, such as gathering and washing eggs. The protagonist's interactions with his coworkers, who are mostly fellow immigrants, reveal a microcosm of shared struggles and cultural exchanges, as they communicate in English and discuss food from their respective backgrounds.

Cyrus's growth parallels the father's monotonous yet reflective existence, and the boy's achievements—a thirst for knowledge, including chess and various subjects—are a source of pride. The father's musings reveal a deep contemplation of existence, anchored by a hadith about finding purpose through suffering. He reflects on the nature of human experience, the continuity of personal struggle, and the simplicity and harshness of life, illustrated through an ancient complaint discovered by Cyrus.

Ultimately, the chapter portrays a cycle of life characterized by hard work, familial love, and existential pondering, as the father navigates his routine while cherishing his son's intelligence and joy amidst the burdens they bear. He concludes with a resigned acceptance of life's challenges, viewing each day as a necessity with little room for complaint, embracing the mundane realities of their shared existence.