

Monday

In the chapter titled "Monday," we follow Cyrus Shams as he processes the emotional aftermath of his mother Orkideh's death, revealed through a New York Times obituary which he discovers while walking in Prospect Park. After saying goodbye to his friend Sang, Cyrus checks his phone and finds a message from Sad James prompting him to read the article about Orkideh, the Iranian American visual artist who, in her final days, had chosen to engage the public in discussions about death at the Brooklyn Museum, seeking to leave a personal imprint in her farewell.

Cyrus immerses himself in Orkideh's poignant words, reflecting on her life—her struggles as an Iranian artist in America and her relationship with creativity and mortality. Her narrative is filled with both a rejection of her imminent death and a demand for understanding from her audience. Confronted by her musings, Cyrus grapples with his emotions, feeling both anger and pride in the legacy she has left behind.

While seated on a park bench in a moment of isolation, he finds himself praying for an end to the emotional turmoil of navigating life without her. This raw yearning is interrupted by a call from Zee Novak, who expresses his condolences and concern for Cyrus. Their conversation unveils the depth of their friendship, showcasing Cyrus' regret over how he's treated Zee, illuminating his realizations of love and loyalty.

As they meet in the park, Cyrus begins to share his experiences of the day, which encompasses the intensity of his grief and the weight of his mother's legacy. Zee listens attentively, demonstrating an understanding and compassion that makes Cyrus feel lighter, as if he hasn't been neglected in his struggles. Together, they reflect on the beauty of the world around them, embodying an appreciation for life, art, and friendship intertwined with the harsh realities of existence.

Their profound dialogue meanders through themes of virtue versus depravity, the absurdity of life's burdens, and the liberating notion that realness often lies beyond irony. As they witness fantastical events in nature, including wild horses and surreal changes in the atmosphere, Cyrus contemplates readiness for what lies ahead.

In this shared companionable silence, a moment of prayer reverberates, where Cyrus experiences warmth and connection through their bond, culminating in a transformation that offers hope within the ache of loss. The chapter reflects a deeply felt exploration of grief, art, and the significance of human connection amidst life's transience.