Cyrus Shams

In this chapter, titled "Cyrus Shams," we encounter a deeply introspective character, Cyrus, who yearns for a divine encounter after years of silence from God. His surroundings—a grimy bedroom in Indiana, replete with a mattress that reeks of urine and air freshener, reflect his desolate state. Lying on the mattress, he stares at a flickering light bulb, hoping for a sign that feels monumental enough to compel him to abandon his current life of chaos and addiction.

Cyrus contemplates the nature of faith, questioning why significant figures like the Prophet Muhammad and Saul received clear divine revelations while he had been left in the dark. For Cyrus, these experiences seem unfair since they transform faith from conviction to mere obedience, granted by observable miracles. He believes that it is unjust for others to go through life without similar encounters, feeling forsaken and trapped within their crises.

His moment of potential divine interaction arrives as he passionately requests God to reveal itself to him; he promises to exchange it all for a fresh start, even fantasizing about buying a camel and making a pilgrimage to sacred places. Just then, a brief flicker of light occurs, prompting him to question its authenticity. He battles with the effects of his substance use throughout the day—alcohol, marijuana, and other pills—but remains skeptical about whether it was a hallucination fueled by his desperate hopes or a genuine sign.

Lying there in a haze of cigarette smoke, Cyrus seeks further confirmation of this fleeting miracle, yet nothing follows. He grapples with the irony of needing clear signs from an all-knowing deity, reflecting on the chaos permeating his life and surroundings—scattered laundry, empty bottles, and unfinished books. This moment leads him to a critical decision, encapsulating his yearning for clarity amid confusion, desperation, and the haunting question of faith—a palpable tension between his spiraling existence and the divine he longs to understand.