

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
Mürüvet Esra Yıldırım, Ph.D.

Three and a Half Years with Nâzım Hikmet (1965)

Orhan Kemal (1914 – 1970)

OVERVIEW

Author and work Orhan Kemal, whose real name is Mehmet Reşit Ögütçü, is the son of Mr. Abdülkadir Kemali, who was a member of parliament and a minister. He was also the founder of the Public Republic Party, settled in Beirut after his party was closed. Orhan Kemal, who was in the last year of secondary school couldn't continue his education during this period. After returning to Turkey in 1932, he worked as a laborer, weaver and warehouse clerk in factories. He got married in 1937. While doing his military service in 1938, he was sentenced to five years in prison for opposing Article 94 of the Penal Code. In this work titled *Three and a Half Years with Nâzım Hikmet*, he recounts the three and a half years he spent with Nâzım Hikmet in Bursa Prison. Within a few hours of Nâzım Hikmet's arriving in prison, he becomes his cellmate. After this, Nâzım Hikmet is interested in his French and cultural development. However, that Nâzım Hikmet doesn't appreciate Orhan Kemal's poems disheartens him. In fact, the praise he expects from him is received by his friends Necati and İzzet, whom he sees as inferior to him. Finally, when Nâzım Hikmet says that he is successful in prose, he turns to prose. Thus, his path in his artistic life is redrawn. They follow the Second World War together. Nâzım Hikmet argues with Hitler supporters in prison whenever he finds the opportunity. He argues that Germany's victory will be a disaster for humanity. However, at the same time, he patiently listens to the stories of everyone who thinks the same or doesn't think the same and collects stories for his book titled *Portraits of People from My Land*. When he isn't writing poetry, he draws portraits of everyone in prison. When his wife Piraye visits him he makes a special effort to look more well-groomed than usual. When his wife doesn't listen to his advice, he becomes childishly stubborn. However, in his daily life in prison, he usually takes on the role of mediator between everyone. Apart from his wife Piraye, the other visitor who excites him is his mother. His mother paints his portrait every time she visits him. These days, he both poses for his mother and discusses art with her. Everyone in prison watches, finding it strange that an old woman is painting. During this process, Orhan Kemal witnesses how Nâzım Hikmet writes poetry and how he reflects the value he gives to people in his art. He meets his wife, Piraye and his mother. He leaves prison with many bittersweet memories with him but doesn't sever his bond with Nâzım Hikmet. They continue to write letters to each other.

CHARACTERS

Emin	Nâzım Hikmet's cellmate in Istanbul
İzzet	Orhan Kemal's cellmate
Necati	Orhan Kemal's cellmate
Piraye	Nâzım Hikmet's wife

SYNOPSIS

While Orhan Kemal is working on the criminal records in prison, he learns from a clerk that Nâzım Hikmet is coming. He is impatient to share this news with his friends and finds his friends Necati and İzzet, who also write poetry, and share the news with them. Unlike Necati, who knows Nâzım Hikmet from the prison in Istanbul, he doesn't get the reaction he expects from İzzet. Thereupon, he goes to another person who knows Nâzım Hikmet from the prison in Istanbul, Emin from Sarıyer. He listens to his memories about Nâzım Hikmet again. Within two hours, every inmate learns that Nazım Hikmet is coming. A few weeks later, Nâzım Hikmet arrives, and Necati introduces him to Orhan Kemal telling him that Orhan Kemal also writes poetry. At first, Orhan Kemal is uncomfortable with this. However, when Nâzım Hikmet wants to be his cellmate, he reads his poems to him. Nâzım Hikmet doesn't like his poems at all and criticizes them severely. He offers supporting him to improve his French and increase his cultural knowledge. Orhan Kemal accepts this willingly. They start working together. One day, he reads one of his poems to Nâzım Hikmet, and Nâzım Hikmet makes adjustments to his poem. Orhan Kemal really likes this edited version of his poem and reads it to Necati and İzzet. After this, they also start bringing their poems to Nâzım Hikmet. When Nâzım Hikmet praising their poems, he gets angry and stops studying. However, one day, Nâzım Hikmet organizes a poetry competition

between the three of them. When Orhan Kemal comes first in this competition, he is relieved. However, Nâzım Hikmet tells him that he should continue in prose instead of poetry. Thereupon, Orhan Kemal turns to writing novels. Nâzım Hikmet also paints portraits of everyone in prison. Since he has no income other than the small amount of money he receives from his mother and sister, he buys the looms sold by a prisoner and starts to run them. In this way, he earns enough income to support himself and his wife, Piraye, who is in financial difficulties. However, this initiative causes hostility from some prisoners. He escapes without any harm. In fact, he has many loved ones in prison. Orhan Kemal is released three and a half years later on September 26, 1943, but he continues his friendship with Nâzım Hikmet through letters. At Nâzım Hikmet's request, he names his son Nâzım.

EVENTS

He Is Coming

In 1940, Orhan Kemal, who is in prison in Bursa, works in the prison's clerk's office. One snowy morning, while the clerk he works with is going through newly arrived documents, he informs Orhan Kemal that his master is coming to prison. Orhan Kemal responds by saying that he has no master, the clerk then tells him that Nâzım Hikmet is coming. Orhan Kemal admires Nâzım Hikmet from afar. Excited by the news, he quietly goes to the cell to tell his two friends Necati and Izzet, who are also interested in poetry, the good news. Necati has served five years of his seven and a half year sentence and knows Nâzım Hikmet from the prison in Istanbul. Since he works in the prison's cleaning department, Orhan Kemal finds him in the visiting area and tells him the news. Necati doesn't believe him at first, then claps his hands like a child and shouts "Hooray!" He tells him that he should warn Izzet not to go up to him to read his poems because Nâzım Hikmet doesn't like to be disturbed.

When he goes to the ward, he finds Izzet reading a book there. As he approaches him to give him the news, Izzet looks at him with the dispiritedness of people who have nothing new to talk about. From the window behind him, mountains covered with snow can be seen. Orhan Kemal gets bored because he sees the same thing every time he looks at these mountains. However, he has been happier than ever since he learned that Nâzım Hikmet is coming. Izzet notices his joy and says that he is like in his first days in the prison. When Orhan Kemal tells him that Nâzım Hikmet is coming, Izzet says indifferently, "You be happy. What do I care." Orhan Kemal finds his state strange and is surprised that there can be people who aren't happy that Nâzım Hikmet is coming.

He goes up to the upper floors and sees Emin. Emin is a pickpocket and he also knows Nâzım Hikmet from the prison in Istanbul. As soon as he hears that he is coming, he gets up and starts telling his memories with him. Orhan Kemal has memorized these things and wants to tell the news to others, so he wants him to finish it quickly. Within an hour and a half, the whole prison is abuzz with the news of Nâzım Hikmet's coming.

Everyone is talking about urban legends about Nâzım Hikmet. It is said that when he takes a crying child in his arms, the child immediately goes silent. According to another legend, he goes into a coffeehouse, asks the poorest-looking man to take out the money from his pocket and put it together with the money in his own pocket. Then he divides the money in two.

The Fake Teacher

There is a man in prison who claims to have dropped out of his physics education in Germany and returned to Turkey, but whose physics knowledge is as good as that of a primary school graduate, and who is therefore ridiculed as a "fake teacher." He sometimes goes out accompanied by a guard and says that he is currently seeing relatives who are members of parliament. Orhan Kemal feels sorry for this man and lends him his own clothes on the days he goes out. However, he is questioned because of this man's false statements about him and is forced to clear himself. After this incident, he doesn't feel like making friends with anyone and can't trust anyone. In addition, someone is ambushed and stabbed almost every day in prison. Orhan Kemal, who has lost his spirit because of all this, finally starts to feel good again with the news that Nâzım Hikmet is coming.

Nâzım Hikmet Arrives

Weeks later, on another snowy morning, while Orhan Kemal is in the office working on his criminal records, Necati comes up to him excitedly and tells him that Nâzım Hikmet has just been brought in,

that he is now in the warden's office. When Orhan Kemal sees Nâzım Hikmet's bed, two suitcases and a basket, he thinks that he is a human being just like him, that he is busy with mortal things like everyone else.

A little later, their eyes meet. Necati introduces the two of them immediately. Nâzım Hikmet tries to have a serious expression but is not very good at it, saying, "I am Nâzım Hikmet." As he sees people he knows, he greets everyone one by one. As he and Emin hug each other, one of the guards says to the other, "What a great guy!" When Emin asks Nâzım Hikmet if he continues painting, Nâzım Hikmet shows the papers, notebooks, pencils, paints and the pictures and portraits he has drawn, without caring about the other belongings that are searched. From time to time, the manager and the clerk come up to them and at that time he tries to be serious again and talk to them. When they leave, he continues to introduce the people in the portraits he has drawn.

Same Ward

Orhan Kemal asks the chief guard to change his ward because he can't get along with Izzet. The chief guard places him in room 52, one of the isolation rooms on the upper floors, a week before Nâzım Hikmet arrives. In these rooms, people who disturb the peace of the prison stay alone for the number of days determined by the prosecutor.

After everyone leaves, Nâzım Hikmet, Orhan Kemal, and Necati are left alone. When Necati says that Orhan Kemal has very beautiful poems, Orhan Kemal says that he is just chattering. He is afraid of Nâzım Hikmet's reaction. However, deep down, he admires his own poems. Until Nâzım Hikmet arrives, he thinks that he is the greatest poet in the prison.

Since it is lunchtime, he cooks eggs with sausage. When everyone is about to eat from the same bowl with their own forks, Nâzım Hikmet objects to this, stating that this habit causes diseases to spread in Anatolia and explains the harms of eating from the same bowl. He asks how they get the food. When Orhan Kemal says that they have a grocery in prison where they buy on credit, Nâzım Hikmet asks how much he spent on the egg sausage. When Orhan Kemal asks why he wants to know this, he says that he wants to share the expenses. He takes out two and a half liras folded in eight from his pocket and says that he wants him to buy things on his credit on his behalf. When Orhan Kemal accepts this, he says that he doesn't like being alone at all and that if it is possible to stay in the same cell with him, he wants to do so. Orhan Kemal agrees. Then Nâzım Hikmet goes to the warden's office to ask for permission. When he returns, he is tired of constantly having doors opened and walking, so he asks how many doors are closed on them. Orhan Kemal says "six" because he counted the doors beforehand. Within two hours, he has both become close to Nâzım Hikmet and settled in the same cell with him.

When Nâzım Hikmet asks about his education, he is embarrassed and explains that he couldn't continue his education. Then he asks if he knows a foreign language. When he learns that he knows French, he asks him if he wants to improve it. Orhan Kemal answers positively. Thereupon, Nâzım Hikmet says that he wants to talk about social issues and first asks him what he thinks about World War II and then what he thinks of philosophy. Finally, he asks him to read the poems he has written. While Orhan Kemal is reading his poems, Nâzım Hikmet constantly silences him by making comments like "Disgraceful" and "Terrible" and asks him to move on to another poem. While Nâzım Hikmet questions why he writes poems about things he doesn't sincerely feel, Orhan Kemal is secretly happy that Necati and Izzet aren't with them at the moment. Nâzım Hikmet frequently mentions something called "realism" but he just listens without understanding anything.

After a while, Nâzım Hikmet tells him that it is his turn to read poems and asks him to criticize his poems mercilessly. After reading his poems, he asks him how he finds them. When Orhan Kemal says that he really likes them, he gets angry and puts his notebooks in his bag. He puts the tobacco in his pipe, lights it and offers to help him with French and other cultural subjects. Orhan Kemal accepts this offer.

Poetry Competition

Orhan Kemal studies for hours. Months later, he reads his poem titled "A Beirut Story" to Nâzım Hikmet. After listening to the poem, Nâzım Hikmet has him read it again and rearranges some parts. Orhan Kemal likes this new version of his poem more. After making peace with Izzet, he reads one of the poems Nâzım Hikmet rearranged in this way to him. After listening to the poem, Izzet doesn't

believe that he wrote it and says that he will also be friends with Nâzım Hikmet and have his poems corrected by him. When Orhan Kemal hears this, he gets very angry. He also reads his poems to Necati. However, Necati says that the poems don't resemble his own poems and asks if Nâzım Hikmet has corrected them.

Necati and Izzet then start reading their own poems to Nâzım Hikmet. As Nâzım Hikmet makes nice comments on them, Orhan Kemal is surprised and finally asks if he really likes the poems. Nâzım Hikmet says that he really likes them. Then, Orhan Kemal tells him that he doesn't do Necati any favors by saying he likes his poems because Necati couldn't even finish primary school but he thinks he is a real poet because of his praises. Nâzım Hikmet says he doesn't see any harm in this. Orhan Kemal gets angry and after Nâzım Hikmet leaves the room, he puts his books and notebooks away and sits in front of the window, looking at the mountains. When Nâzım Hikmet comes back to the room and wants to teach, he says he isn't ready for the lesson. For a while, he doesn't want to study because of his anger. Nâzım Hikmet tells him that they come from the same roots and that he knows him very well. One day, he asks the three of them to rearrange a six-line poem in the most appropriate form. All three of them fulfill this task and hand their poems to Nâzım Hikmet. Nâzım Hikmet takes the papers, reads them one by one and tells Orhan Kemal that he rearranged the poem in the most appropriate fashion. Orhan Kemal is very happy to win the competition.

Questions

While Orhan Kemal is in the prison yard, Nâzım Hikmet, holding the novel Orhan Kemal started to write in his hand, comes running to him in order to ask "Did you write this?" When he gets a positive answer, he says that he should write prose. He suggests that he write a short story and says that he can ask him anything he wants. Orhan Kemal asks him questions about Freud, Stendhal, and Balzac.

One day, he asks if he has ever entered a coffeehouse and shared his pocket money with a man he didn't know. Nâzım Hikmet swears that he has never done such a foolish thing. Another day, he asks what he thinks about the claim that Nâzım Hikmet imitates the Russian poet Vladimir Mayakovsky. Nâzım Hikmet goes to Ankara during the days of the national struggle. The misery in Anatolia touches him deeply, and he wants to write something about it. However, what he wants to write is something too free, broad, and comprehensive to fit into a poem written with syllables. Thus, he writes a free poem. Later, in Moscow, when he doesn't yet know Russian, he sees a few lines in a newspaper and asks whether they are poems. He learns that what is written is a poem by Mayakovsky. This is how he gets to know Mayakovsky.

A Poetic State

While Nâzım Hikmet is in sleep Orhan Kemal is studying at night. However, after a while, he suddenly jumps up and asks Orhan Kemal for his pen. He takes the pen and writes a few sentences on the wall next to his bed, returns the pen, goes back to bed and pulls the covers over his head. The next day, Orhan Kemal sees him in the middle of people pacing around, raising his hands in strange movements and muttering. Nâzım Hikmet says that one of the things that bother him the most is being watched by others when he is in this state. Indeed, one day, while he was a guest at a relative's house, he wanted to write a poem and when he started pacing around the room, the maid of the house told her master that their guest is crazy.

Orhan Kemal says that Nâzım Hikmet is a "believer" and that he values people and language is simplified in order to be understood by people. Although he opposes the revolutionary government imposing new words on people, he loves the word "extraordinary" and uses it frequently.

Sports

He argues that it is absolutely necessary to do sports because there is a lot of humidity in prison. They always go out to the garden and walk on sunny days. But Nâzım Hikmet exercises alone in his undershirt on such days. However, those who see him in this state find him strange and make fun of him. He is also bothered by this and gives up doing sports outdoors as he wants.

Weaving

When spring arrives, Izzet is released. Necati takes advantage of the Labor Law and goes to work until evening. Since the warden doesn't allow playing football because he thinks that marijuana can be

smuggled with a ball that goes over the garden wall, Orhan Kemal can't play football as before. When he can play and his team beats Nâzım Hikmet's team, Nâzım Hikmet gets very angry. One day, he even kicks Orhan Kemal.

After Necati is also released, Orhan Kemal is left alone with his studies. However, just studying and looking at an unchanging view tires him out. When he and Nâzım Hikmet look at each other without speaking, Nâzım Hikmet sighs and mutters that he still has twenty years to serve. Orhan Kemal knows that there is another reason for his troubles. His father takes care of him and his wife and daughter. However, Nâzım Hikmet has nothing but the small amount of money he receives from his mother and sister. Moreover, in the last letter from his wife, Piraye, she writes that she is afraid of getting tuberculosis because she has no money left to buy firewood in the winter.

One day, Ertuğrul, who is in prison for pickpocketing, tells them that a prisoner will be released in a few days and he has looms for sale and offered buying them and set up a weaving workshop. After thinking about it for a while, Nâzım Hikmet accepts the offer. Three looms are bought. However, buying yarn is a bit of a hassle. Only two packages of yarn can be bought for each loom. Although Orhan Kemal has nothing to do with these looms, Nâzım Hikmet allocates a share for him. In a short time, he becomes known as the "boss."

Three Prisoners

Some of the other loom owners are disturbed by the fact that Nâzım Hikmet is loved by the working prisoners, so they try to have him killed. A prisoner they hired tells Nâzım Hikmet about their plan. Another day, while Nâzım Hikmet is working on his book titled *The Portraits of People from My Land* in the garden, three prisoners chained by their feet watch him in one of the isolation rooms on the top floor. One of them says that a person who kills a man like Nâzım Hikmet can make history like Nâzım Hikmet. Another one objects to him, saying that none can kill such a kind man. The person who listened to this conversation tells Orhan Kemal about it. When Nâzım Hikmet learns about it, he says, "Is there anything else left to do to make history?" A few days later, the three prisoners are sent to different prisons in Anatolia and all three are stabbed to death.

World War II

In 1942, people say that Turkey will also be attacked and that prisoners can be sent to Central Anatolia to fight. Nâzım Hikmet argues that the German army needs to lose the war as a historical necessity. There are also prisoners who support Hitler. One of them is a man nicknamed "The Camel," who is six feet six inches tall weighing 110 pounds. Although he spent most of his childhood in Europe, he is a Turkish nationalist. He has a large amount of money in banks in Romania, but he can't withdraw it because it is blocked. He thinks that if the German army is victorious, he can go to Romania and get his money. Since he falls ill during the winter months, he can't go down to listen to the radio. For this reason, some prisoners make up false victories and get tips from him. Thus, the arrows he draws on the map at his bedside surround Moscow. The tea and cigarettes bought with his tips are drunk together. Sometimes Nâzım Hikmet also attends these meetings.

When Nâzım Hikmet asks him what will happen if the German army loses, he always objects. Even if Nâzım Hikmet gets angry with him, he doesn't show it. He usually listens to the news on the radio and draws crazy faces on the wall next to the radio. When the defeat of the German army is heard, everyone asks "The Camel" for the reasons as if he were responsible for the defeat. Some make fun of him. When Germany's defeat is certain, he suddenly becomes a democrat and starts supporting the Allies.

Nâzım the Benevolent

Nâzım Hikmet borrows money from someone else and lends it to someone else when he has no money in his pocket. Some of the prisoners occasionally make up excuses related to their health in order to see the outside. However, they ask Nâzım Hikmet to convince the warden. Nâzım Hikmet always deals with everyone the other prisoners are wary of on their behalf and gets the necessary permissions.

The chief officer falls in love with a prisoner in the women's prison, and the deputy chief officer falls in love with the female guard. The women's prison is a tiny building in the garden, and all prisoners get to know each other because they can see each other in the garden. One day, the head guard's wife

comes to his room and turns the whole place upside down. At that moment, Nâzım Hikmet is lying on his bed, smoking his pipe and reading a novel by Agatha Christie. The chief officer comes up to him and asks for his help. Nâzım Hikmet manages to calm the woman down. After leaving there, he finds the deputy chief officer leaning on the banister of the stairs watching the female guard. He takes him by the hand and brings him to the chief officer's room. Despite all the noise the deputy chief officer is so unaware of what has happened that when he sees the broken glass on the floor, he asks Nâzım Hikmet what has happened there. He is just an absent-minded lover. When he finds the opportunity, he sits alone with Nâzım Hikmet, drinks tea and cigarettes and talks about his love.

Piraye

Nâzım Hikmet's wife, Piraye visits him two or three times a year. If she has money, she stays at a hotel for a few days. When she visits him, they sit across from each other in the chief guard's or the warden's office. At those times, Orhan Kemal finds Nâzım Hikmet frivolous and even naughty like a primary schooler and his wife serious as a teacher.

Nâzım Hikmet irons his clothes for these meetings, has his shoes polished, has his hair cut, shaves his beard, and while Orhan Kemal is still in bed, he stands in front of him and asks him if he is presentable.

One day, when Orhan Kemal works outside in accordance with the Labor Law and returns to prison in the evening, he sees Nâzım Hikmet standing there thoughtfully. When he wants to know what happened, Nâzım Hikmet doesn't want to say anything, but because Orhan Kemal he insists, he tells him. His wife called him to tell that she checked into a hotel and would come the next day because she was very tired. Then, Nâzım Hikmet told her that he heard bad things about the hotel. So, she should go to another one, but she objected. At the end of the argument, Nâzım Hikmet said that he wouldn't see her as long as she was staying at that hotel. He walks around smoking his pipe without sleeping all night. When he is informed that Piraye has arrived in the morning, he doesn't want to see her. When Orhan Kemal tells Necati what happened, Necati laughs heartily. They both think that Nâzım Hikmet shows coyness. They go up to Piraye and greet her, but Piraye has to wait alone for a long time. After the warden and the clerk intervene, Nâzım Hikmet is convinced to see her.

On the evening, Orhan Kemal sees Nâzım Hikmet looking more distressed than usual. He throws his pipe on his bed and put on his pajamas. He leans his head against the window and watches the setting sun. He says that he has completed six years in prison, but that what he desires most at that moment is to be in Istanbul, in the house he furnished, to go out to dinner with his wife and son Memed, and to walk around. He desires these things so much that he is willing to give up ten years of his remaining life.

Nâzım Hikmet's Mother

Nâzım Hikmet's mother also visits him from time to time. Since she is a painter, Nâzım Hikmet sits across from her and she draws his portrait. Meanwhile, everyone from the warden to the guards and prisoners who find it strange that an old woman is drawing come and watch them and make a comment.

One day, Nâzım Hikmet shows his mother the paintings he made in prison after reading his latest work. His mother, who likes his poems, always finds a flaw in his paintings. Nâzım Hikmet listens to her technical comments with curiosity. After that, his mother starts drawing his portrait again. Nâzım Hikmet draws his pictures with a pencil and then uses oil-paint and brush. However, his mother only uses oil-paint and brush. From that day on, Nâzım Hikmet gives up on his pencil. But he criticizes his mother for drawing copies of things she finds beautiful and argues that the ugly sides of life should also find a place in her pictures.

Listening to Prisoners

When Nâzım Hikmet gets tired of poetry, he paints portraits of people in prison, including a Hitlerite prisoner nicknamed "The Camel." The events narrated by the people he paints provide material for *The Portraits of People from My Land*. When he reads his stories to a prisoner known as Ibrahim from Yaylalar, Ibrahim tells him that his story seems more real than what actually happened to him. Mehmet, who works in the prison infirmary, also provides material for the book by telling his memories of the city of Kocaeli during the years of the national struggle.

An old man from the Balkans who killed his son-in-law is also one of the prisoners Nâzım Hikmet listens to whenever he has the chance. He often goes up to his cell, sits on the edge of his bed, and listens to what he says without criticizing, taking notes. This old man's wife visits him every two months with a bag in her hand, and they sit somewhere in the prison yard and chat for hours. One day they hear that this old man has died. When they look at his dead body, he seems to be sleeping. Only his feet are yellow.

The Portraits tells the stories of many prisoners. After Nâzım Hikmet writes them down, he has prisoners from every social class in the prison read them and removes the parts that aren't understood because the only criterion for him is to be understood by the public.

One day, Orhan Kemal sees Nâzım Hikmet talking to a boy. The boy killed the neighboring landowner and was sentenced to fifteen years. He asks Nâzım Hikmet to teach him oil painting. Nâzım Hikmet accepts to give him lessons. The boy always sits next to him while he is painting, acting as an apprentice.

A Rabbit

Orhan Kemal is employed during the daytime according to the Labor Law. One day, a little boy brings a baby rabbit to sell to the workers. When the rabbit reminds Orhan Kemal of Nâzım Hikmet, and he buys the rabbit. In the evening, he finds him by the radio. Nâzım Hikmet jumps up when he sees the rabbit. He takes it in his arms, pets it, and shows it to everyone. He puts some milk in front of it, but the rabbit runs away, he gives it alfalfa, but the rabbit runs away again. He finally gives it water, but the rabbit is scared and steps aside. Nâzım Hikmet asks the other prisoners to understand why it isn't eating or drinking anything, but everyone is amused by this situation. They call Ertuğrul, who works in the infirmary, to find out the sex of the rabbit, but Ertuğrul thinks he is being made fun of and leaves. Finally, Mehmet examines the rabbit and says that it is male. After the rabbit wanders around the prison as it wishes for a while, it is taken by Nâzım Hikmet's wife.

Strawberry

When Nâzım Hikmet is given a box of strawberries, he happily comes up to Orhan Kemal with strawberries in his arms. They ask for powdered sugar and pick off the green leaves of the strawberries. When the powdered sugar arrives, he pours one layer of strawberries and one layer of sugar. Just as they are about to eat, Nâzım Hikmet is summoned by the administration. He asks that no one touch the strawberries until he arrives. Orhan Kemal is patient. Nâzım Hikmet runs back and sits down next to the strawberries. They eat them and finally collapse on their beds, full.

Exit

Orhan Kemal is released from prison on September 26, 1943. That night, he sits down and writes a poem to Nâzım Hikmet. When Nâzım Hikmet comes up to him with a glass of tea in his hand, he hands him his poem. After reading it, Nâzım Hikmet thanks him with tears in his eyes. The next morning, Orhan Kemal is released with his suitcase in his hand and goes to his five-year-old daughter, whom he left when she was a newborn.

Diary

Orhan Kemal shares some of his writings since most of the diaries he kept in prison are lost. These diary notes include trivial matters of daily life, such as the weather, the food they ate together.

Correspondence

Nâzım Hikmet corresponds with Orhan Kemal while in prison. He sees him as his son, his wife as his daughter, and their daughter as his granddaughter. When Orhan Kemal's wife gets pregnant, he asks them to name their son after him if they have one. Orhan Kemal and his wife name their son after him. When Orhan Kemal's novel comes out, Nâzım Hikmet writes to him that he read it many times and makes some technical suggestions.

THEMES

RELATIONSHIP

Friendship Orhan Kemal and Nâzım Hikmet turn their connection in prison into a real friendship. They don't break off their relationship after Orhan Kemal is released from prison. In fact, Orhan Kemal names his son after Nâzım Hikmet because Nâzım Hikmet wants it that way.

Betrayal Although Orhan Kemal trusts the man everyone makes fun of, nicknamed the “fake teacher,” enough to lend him his clothes, he loses his trust in the people in prison after learning that this person slanders him every time he goes out.

Kindness When both the prison staff and the prisoners have a problem, they ask Nâzım Hikmet for support. He borrows money for those who ask for a loan and gives them what they want. He mediates with prisoners who want to get out using health problems as an excuse, and also with the chief guard who has a falling out with his wife.

PSYCHOLOGY

Suffering When Nâzım Hikmet can't support his wife Piraye financially and after her visits, he gets distressed than usual. When he has no income other than the support he receives from his mother and sister, he can't do anything to help his wife buy firewood. When Piraye comes to visit him, he misses his home life more than anything. So much so that he is even willing to sacrifice years of his remaining life to achieve this.

FLAWS

Hostility As Nâzım Hikmet starts operating a loom, the other prisoners think that he is preventing them from earning. However, since Nâzım Hikmet is a beloved person, the person hired to kill him tells him everything himself.

The three new prisoners brought to prison mention that the murderer who kills someone as well-known and historical as Nâzım Hikmet will also be as historical, but they themselves are killed in the prisons they are sent to.

Stubbornness When Piraye informs Nâzım Hikmet that she is in Bursa to visit him, he asks her to stay in another hotel. However, Piraye opposes him by saying that the hotel has always been a safe place. Then Nâzım Hikmet doesn't want to meet with her as long as she stays at the hotel in question. The next day, the warden and the clerk intervene to convince Nâzım Hikmet to meet with her.

Jealousy In the first days of Nâzım Hikmet in the prison, Orhan Kemal openly competes with his friends, Necati and İzzet, who write poetry like him. He can't tolerate that Nâzım Hikmet, who doesn't appreciate his poems as he expects, appreciates the poems of uneducated people like them. Finally, when he wins first place in a poetry competition, he thinks that he has proven his superiority over them.

QUEST

Exploration Nâzım Hikmet collects stories for his poems from the prisoners. Even if he doesn't think the same things as them, when they tell their memories, he listens to them like a recording device and creates stories from those memories. He makes the prisoners read what he wrote and removes the parts that aren't understood. While doing these, he always tries to explore what the people like and understand.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. As a poet who listens to everyone patiently and creates fictional worlds from their worlds, what kind of an example does Nâzım Hikmet offer us in understanding the world of meaning of people with whom we disagree and in establishing a connection with them?
2. Nâzım Hikmet even paints a portrait of a prisoner nicknamed “The Camel” with whom he doesn't get along well because he is a supporter of Hitler. Is it possible to say that art can help us find a way to live together?