

## **That's how it was but not how it's going to be I: The Road (1966)**

Aziz Nesin (1915 – 1995)

### OVERVIEW

Aziz Nesin, whose real name is Mehmet Nusret Nesin, is a humorist and storyteller. He graduates from Kuleli Military High School in 1935, from the Military Academy in 1937, and from the Military Science School in 1939. *The Road*, the first volume of his three-part work titled *So It Comes, So It Will Not Go On*, focuses on the first twelve years of his life. His early years, spent with his mother and sister, are marked by both social and personal disasters. In many ways, not much changes in his life after his father returns home sick from the national struggle in Anatolia. His life exemplifies that of a poor family in Istanbul at the beginning of the twentieth century. Although his father participates in the national struggle, he is a devout man who supports the Ottoman sultanate and caliphate, views the reformist Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as an enemy, and maintains close ties to religious organizations. As an uneducated individual, his father aspires to improve their social standing through hard work and honesty; however, he is unable to succeed. Aziz Nesin's mother is also religious, yet she recognizes the educational opportunities offered by the new regime as beneficial for her son and opposes her husband for this reason. With her husband struggling to support the family, she finds herself forced to take care of her two children while also battling tuberculosis. During his early childhood, Aziz Nesin forms close ties within his father's sectarian circle. During this time, he studies subjects such as mathematics, geometry, and Arabic, becomes a hafiz, and begins to reject his childhood, trying to behave like an adult. He often feels alienated from his peers. He starts school late under the guidance of a religious neighbor boy who is older than him. Unfortunately, due to his mother's illness, he has to move to Heybeliada and leave school. While his father searches for treasure, Aziz Nesin begins attending Darüşşafaka, a school for fatherless children, with the help of his mother's stepfather. Although he receives the education his mother has longed for, he never fully adapts to his peers. He suffers the loss of his sister to malnutrition and his mother to tuberculosis. When his father returns from his treasure hunting, Aziz Nesin feels remorse for being a student at Darüşşafaka, as his father is still alive.

### CHARACTERS

Abdulaziz	His father
Cevat	Neighbor
Emine	Neighbor
Enver Atarifat	Engineer, manager
Faris Erkman	Lawyer, painter, writer
Fevzi	Neighbor
Galip	His father's friend
Hanife/Ikbal	Mother
Havva	Neighbor
Havva	His aunt
Hasan	Neighbor
Mehmet	Neighbor
Musa Kâzım Sezer	Football Player
Nevber	Neighbor
Reşide	Neighbor
Rıfkı	Teacher
Saadet	His sister
Salim	Mother's stepfather
Süreyya	Mother's stepmother
Şükrü	Teacher
Halim	Neighbor
Servet	Neighbor
Şaban	His uncle
Zehra	Neighbor
Zekâi	Teacher
Zekiye	Neighbor

## SYNOPSIS

In the early years of Aziz Nesin's life, he lives with his mother and his sickly younger sister, whose bones don't develop properly due to malnutrition. Later, his father, who participates in the national struggle in Anatolia, returns home ill and remains bedridden for several months. During this time, his mother supports the family by sewing while also taking care of her sick husband and children. The place they call home is actually just one of the rooms in a large house shared by other poor families as tenants. Even after his father recovers, their living conditions don't improve much. Financial difficulties force them to move frequently from one room to another in different houses. His father, an obstinate man, worsens their situation by lending money to others whenever he has any, believing that one day he will find treasure and become wealthy. He also maintains a strong spiritual connection with various religious orders. At his father's insistence, Aziz Nesin takes lessons in mathematics, geometry, and Arabic from a Rifai dervish named Galip, who lives in a lodge near their home. By the age of eight, he becomes a hafiz (one who memorizes the Quran). Spending most of his time with adults, he envies his peers who go to school and play games in the streets. However, his father insists on convincing him that he is no ordinary child, aiming to shape him into a great religious scholar. When the new regime bans lodges and religious orders, everything and everyone his father believes in suddenly loses their value. For example, Galip, once highly respected, becomes a factory worker. Affected by these changes, Aziz Nesin catches the attention of a devout young neighbor named Fevzi, who helps him enroll in school starting from the third grade. However, as his mother's illness worsens, doctors recommend that the family move to Heybeliada. During this period, his father departs once again to search for treasure somewhere in Anatolia. Since no other school accepts children his age as boarders except Darüşşafaka—a school that only admits children who have lost their fathers—his mother's stepfather helps him apply for the entrance exams. Aziz Nesin passes the exams successfully, and through a stroke of luck in the lottery among the successful candidates, he gains admission to Darüşşafaka. Although he accidentally loses his registration papers, he recovers them by chance and secures his place at the school. Shortly after starting at Darüşşafaka, his father returns, but Aziz Nesin loses his mother to tuberculosis. Feeling guilty for attending a school meant exclusively for fatherless children, he believes he is taking someone else's rightful place. Struggling with this guilt, he decides to leave Darüşşafaka behind.

## EVENTS

### *A Note on His Motivation to Write*

Aziz Nesin is often asked how he is able to write so much, so he states that it isn't the muses that encourage a writer to write, but the witches and goblins of inspiration such as a landlord, people he owes money to, or shoes with holes. He also attributes his ability to produce works in different genres to the fact that he has been in and out of different circles.

### *His First Memory*

His first memory is the fire. After his mother wakes him up, she takes the Quran hanging in a pouch on the wall at the head of the bed, kisses and puts it on her head and hangs it around her neck. Then she takes his sister in her arms. The reflection of the red flames fills the whole house. The door of the house is pounded. The glass of the window suddenly disappears. The door of the room is pushed open and the men who enter grab whatever they can get their hands on and go outside. Aziz Nesin's mother thinks they are people coming to help, but they are all looters.

His father isn't with them because he went to war in Anatolia. After his mother takes him and his sister out, she goes back into the house. She then goes out with her sewing machine and his sister's potty. Aziz Nesin feels like he is at a holiday party while watching what is happening. He isn't afraid at all. He wakes up the next morning in the cemetery. The cemetery is full of the items saved from the fire in the neighborhood and the people who are left homeless. The place that burned down is Yeni Çeşme in Kasımpaşa. For years, Aziz Nesin heard from many people that they had lost their home in that fire.

### *Those Two Incidents Told by Others*

Although this fire is Aziz Nesin's first memory, he listens to two incidents that are constantly told about him so much that he seems to remember them himself. One day there is a knock on the door, his mother comes downstairs in a new dress she has sewn for herself and opens the door. It is his father.

He kisses his mother at the door. Seeing this, Aziz Nesin immediately goes to the neighbors and tells them that his father kissed his mother. The neighbors laugh at him.

One day they go to a neighbor's house. Fish is brought to the table and distributed on everyone's plates. Aziz Nesin says that the fish is very good. Everyone approves him. He says it is very good again and everyone approves him again. After repeating this a few more times, he finally says that he would like some more fish on his plate because it was so good and gets angry with everyone because they don't understand why he repeats the same sentence.

#### *Baby Mice as a Source of Healing*

After the cemetery, they settle in a couple's single-story house. The man is a poor man who supports his family by selling spices in the market. Aziz Nesin watches him while he is chopping wood in the garden of the house in the winter. The man accidentally hits his foot with the axe and Aziz Nesin sees that the man's foot is split in two. Some bottles are hanging on the wooden walls outside the house. These bottles contain olive oil, and the baby mice caught in the house are thrown into these bottles. The baby mice melt in the sun and mix with the oil. This liquid is applied to the wounds. They apply this liquid to the man's foot, which is split in half.

#### *New House*

They move from this couple's house to a room on the ground floor of a two-story house in Kasımpaşa. The owner of the house who lives on the upper floor is a Kurdish porter and his wife is a black woman. There are two windows in their room. Both of them look out onto the stream. Behind the stream is a vegetable garden. There is a bed beneath the windows. Aziz Nesin climbs onto the bed and looks outside. There is a closet on the opposite wall. At night, they take their beds out of here to sleep. There is a hammock in the room, and Aziz Nesin's sister sleeps in it. Their mother embroiders the edges of headscarves during the day and sews clothes on the sewing machine at night. Aziz Nesin falls asleep at night to the click of the machine.

Auntie Havva and Uncle Hasan live in the room across from their room. They also have a hammock in their room for their baby. While Auntie Havva cooks, Aziz Nesin swings it. Since he doesn't like to sing lullabies, he puts the baby to sleep by reciting prayers. When the baby falls asleep, Aunt Havva gives him a slice of bread with cottage cheese spread on it.

#### *Holiday Clothes*

Aziz Nesin wears his first trousers and shoes on a holiday. His mother sews him black velvet trousers with mother-of-pearl buttons on the sides of the legs and a shirt. She ties a red silk bow on the collar of the shirt. Aziz Nesin puts on his holiday clothes and goes out into the street. While he is waiting, a boy pushes him into the stream. Since his holiday clothes got dirty, they make him wear his old clothes again.

#### *Servet*

One of the families who rent a room like theirs is Aunt Zehra and Mehmet. Mehmet beats Aunt Zehra's daughter from her first husband, Servet, every evening. Aziz Nesin's mother, feeling very sorry for this girl, takes her to their room some evenings. During these evenings, Servet gets under the covers, runs his hands over Aziz Nesin's body, then presses his hand to her chest and falls asleep. One day, Servet is kicked out of her house. After a while, she visits her mother wearing clothes that make her look ten years older than she is. She leaves her a bag with some money and is never seen again. Aunt Zehra's son from Mehmet goes to Europe after finishing high school.

#### *Mother's Slap*

The handsome son of the landlord calls out to Aziz Nesin every morning as he goes to work. Aziz Nesin replies "Ha!" and then runs out of the room. Although his mother always tells him that he should say "yes, sir" and not "ha," he forgets this rule. Finally, one morning, his mother pulls him into the room and slaps him. After that, when he hears someone call him, he runs out of the room saying "Ha!, Sir!"

#### *What Desperation Makes You Do*

Aziz Nesin's three-year-old sister develops a bone disease because she can't eat well. Their mother is told that in order for her daughter to recover, she should leave her next to a gravestone in the cemetery when the evening prayer is recited, go home without looking back, and wait until someone comes to bring the child home. Their mother warns his sister not to cry, and one evening they go to the Çürüklük Cemetery between Kasımpaşa and Beyoğlu. The dense cypress trees make the

cemetery even darker, so the gravestones look even bigger. When the evening prayer is recited, his mother leaves his sister next to a gravestone, holds Aziz Nesin's hand, and goes home without looking back. During this time, his sister doesn't cry at all. Since his mother's face is veiled, Aziz Nesin can't see the trouble she has been going through to keep from crying on the road, but when they get home, she throws herself down on the cushion and sobs.

Since they haven't heard from his father for years, they think he is dead. This time, the women tell his mother about a well of intention. If the person looking into the well sees the reflection of the lost person, the person is alive. If he is dead, nothing is seen or a coffin is seen. His mother takes him and goes to this well in Eyüp with two women. Although she tells him not to come near the well, he can't stay still and looks into the well secretly. He sees his father. However, neither his mother nor the two women with them see anything. Aziz Nesin can't say that he saw his father because he looked at the well secretly.

#### *Father*

One day, the door is knocked. When Aziz Nesin opens the door he finds a man with burnt hair, eyebrows, and eyelashes. He gets scared and calls out to his mother. The man says, "Son, don't you recognize me?" and takes him in his arms. He is his father. Before the enemy retreated, they put his friends and him in a mosque and poured gasoline on them, and he saved himself at the last moment.

He lies in bed for months without knowing himself. Sometimes he asks for a blanket because he is cold. His mother covers him with everything she finds. In order to take care of him, she sews more clothe and does more lacework. One day, his father asks his mother for jackal plums. His mother goes to the garden on the other side of the stream to get them. His father gets up the next day after eating the plums. He tells everyone for years that jackal plums cured him. Even though he only ate a handful, he thinks that he ate a kilo of plums.

#### *Death of His Sister*

One day, his sister dies. While his father carries his sister's body in a small coffin, he thinks it's a game and stands in the doorway of Aunt Zehra's room and laughs. He thinks his sister will be left in a box in the cemetery, where she will get better and come back to them. Then they put him in the room. His mother comes up to him to tell him that his sister is dead and that he shouldn't laugh. He feels ashamed at that moment, thinking he did something bad.

#### *The Vicious Rooster*

Their neighbor, Hasan grows vegetables in the garden of the house and puts his hoe in a place where Aziz Nesin can't reach it. The owner of the house has chickens and a rooster in a cage at the garden. Aziz Nesin is upset that the animals are kept in a cage, so he opens the cage door and lets them out. The rooster pecks him. One day, Aziz Nesin's face is covered in blood because the rooster attacks him more than usual. Then they try to slaughter the rooster. Then Aziz Nesin promises not to open the door of the cage again because he doesn't want the rooster to be slaughtered. The rooster is saved. One day, he secretly goes out to the garden, shakes the pole on which the hoe is standing, and the hoe gets stuck in his forehead. He pulls it out with his hand, but his face is covered in blood. He goes up to their room, and the women inside start to scream. At that moment, he starts to cry because of their reaction. The women put some salt and tobacco on his wound and wrap it up. He never goes out to the garden again after that day. Although they think he has come to his senses because his head was hurt, he keeps his word because he is afraid of the rooster being slaughtered.

#### *Plucking Flowers*

One day, he plucks a flower from the garden for his mother and brings it to her. His mother goes out into the garden with him, saying let's pick some more flowers. She shows the flowers and says that they have a life too, they look better on their branches, they die in the water in the glass, and she stands over a flower and tells him, "If you have the heart, you can pluck it."

#### *Circumcision*

The most beautiful house along the stream is the house where Hafez Recep lives. Hafez Recep sings because he has a beautiful voice. Aziz Nesin's father gets very angry with him saying that he is committing a sin by singing. The wedding of the son of the landlord is held in the garden of the house. Aziz Nesin's father doesn't have money to have a circumcision ceremony, so Aziz Nesin has his

circumcision done at this ceremony. The groom becomes his kirve meaning godfather. According to tradition, a kirve will protect the child throughout his life.

The only person who gives a gift after the circumcision is the old woman living in the house next to Hafez Recep's house. The gift is a carved wooden camel. Its hump is a lid, when you lift the lid there is an inkwell inside. When Aziz Nesin sees the inkwell, he forgets the pain of circumcision.

#### *In Lieu of Report Card*

Aziz Nesin puts on his first fez when he goes to the neighborhood school. First, he learns to read the letters and then the surahs. Their instructor is a Tatar woman. He memorizes many Arabic surahs and prayers that he doesn't know the meaning of. One day, they memorize Surah Al-Inshirah and the instructor makes him read it. Its last sentence is "Ve llâ rabbika fergap," meaning "And hope only in your Lord."

As soon as he says "fergap," the teacher says "fergap, take the fez" and removes the fez from his head with her long stick. He is surprised. He is ashamed to ask for his fez back and goes home crying. Since he always hides his tears from his father, he wipes his tears before entering home. He tells his mother that his instructor took his fez. His mother happily says, "My son has come to 'fergap'!" In this way, Aziz Nesin learns that when children come to Surah Al-Inshirah, their instructors take their fezzes and send a kind of report card to their families, and that in order to get the fez back, they have to present a tray of pastries or baklava to the teacher. His mother presents a tray of pastries to the teacher and gets his fez back.

#### *The Lost Bag*

His mother sews a thick cloth bag for him. He carries the bag under his arm because he is freezing in the cold. One day when he comes home, he can't find his bag under his arm. He has dropped it on the ground but couldn't notice it because of the cold. His mother immediately sews a new bag for him. However, his father remembers this incident differently. According to his father, he had bought his son an expensive bag, but his son lost it, so he bought a new one.

Whenever Aziz Nesin hears his father tell the story of this bag, he listens to him smilingly without correcting him. He states that he learned much later that most people were ashamed of their poverty, and that there were people who were ashamed of their wealth. After the military coup of May 27, 1960, while on the ferry with a friend who owned a newspaper, his friend said he was going to sell his car. When Aziz Nesin asked why he was going to sell it, he explained that it was a Cadillac and that he was ashamed because it attracted a lot of attention.

#### *Kos Halva*

In Aziz Nesin's play, *Could You Come for a Moment?* a child named Misa sells a musical instrument made by her father on the streets. One day, when she doesn't bring her daily earnings to her father, her father gets angry. Her mother says, "Don't insist, maybe the child bought kos halva." All the translators who translate this play into languages such as German, English, and Greek write to Aziz Nesin asking him what kos halva was and why the child ate it instead of chocolate.

When Aziz Nesin attends the neighborhood school, there are always street vendors in front of the school gate. While most of his friends eat candy, hazelnuts, and peanuts, he doesn't eat anything because he doesn't have money, but he doesn't envy anyone. He just craves kos halva every time. One day, when his friend offers him his own kos halva, he doesn't want it. Because his mother always tells him that it is rude to ask for something from someone else.

One day, while his mother and father are sleeping, he takes some money from his father's vest pocket. He takes his cloth bag and sets off. He buys kos halva from a vendor on the street. Just as he is about to bite it, two children start jostling and knock him to the ground. The kos halva falls from his hand and into the puddle on the ground. He picks up the wet kos halva and stares at it. The child who previously offered him some kos halva comes up to him and asks for some. Although Aziz Nesin tells him that the kos halva fell into the water, the child doesn't care and takes and eats it all by himself.

When he returns home, his father asks him what he bought with his money. He can't understand the question at first because he has forgotten the money he took. When he figures it out, he bows his head down. His mother tells his father, "Don't insist, maybe he bought some kos halva." His mother and father saw him taking money from his father's vest pocket, and then his mother secretly followed

him. As in this incident, when he commits other misdeeds, they never embarrass him; they just point out to it as if it were something unimportant and let it go. Thus, Aziz Nesin understands his mistake better.

#### *Uncle Galip*

Aziz Nesin's father takes him to the mosque whenever he can. After the noon prayer on a Friday, he meets the man who is reading the Quran because he likes his reading and invites him home. This person is Ali Galip from Gereede. He is a dervish who knows Arabic, Persian, French and mathematics, and writes poems. He starts to give lessons to Aziz Nesin upon his father's request.

He lives in a small room of the Çürüklük Lodge in Kasımpaşa, so he gives lessons there. Aziz Nesin envies the children he sees playing outside on his way home after class. He imagines that he will grow up to be very rich and fill one of the rooms of his multi-room house with toys because he never gets to live his childhood.

Uncle Galip loves smoking hookah so he sometimes goes to coffeehouses with him. Some people who see Aziz Nesin solve math problems quickly think that he is praying because they don't know the math terms. Some nights, his father picks him up from the coffeehouse. On the way back, they go to the market and buy bread. Sometimes they also buy ice cream.

One evening, he boards a ferry with Uncle Galip. Galip tells a joke to some of the passengers. Haji Bektash Veli gives three carpets to one of his disciples and asks him to take them to Ahmed er-Rifai. The dervish takes the carpets and sets off. However, when he runs out of money, he sells one of the carpets, thinking that Ahmed er-Rifai doesn't know that he is bringing three carpets. Some more time passes; he is penniless again and sells another one of the two remaining carpets. Months later, he arrives at Ahmed er-Rifai's house with a single carpet on his back. He presents the carpet. Ahmed er-Rifai opens the window next to him and shouts, "Oh brother Haji Bektash, did you send me one carpet?" A voice is heard from the window, "I sent not one, but three carpets, brother." The dervish, who has been hungry and thirsty on the road for months, can't resist and says, "You big bastards, since you are so close to each other, why didn't you give the carpets through the window, you made me travel so far hungry and thirsty, and on top of that you made me commit a sin and made me a carpet thief?" Aziz Nesin states that the phrase "big bastard" was frequently used in conversations during those years. Everyone listens to this joke carefully.

They are immersed in their conversations and don't notice that the ferry has just docked at the pier in Kasımpaşa. As the ferry is leaving the pier, Uncle Galip jumps off the ferry, but Aziz Nesin can't. When he returns to Kasımpaşa after visiting all the piers on the Golden Horn on the ferry, he finds Uncle Galip waiting for him angrily. That day, Uncle Galip tells him that he will also give him gymnastics lessons from now on. But his father objects. According to him, gymnastics is the same as eating pork and drinking wine.

Aziz Nesin becomes a hafiz at the age of eight thanks to Uncle Galip. When he puts on his robe and turban and reads the Quran in the mosque after the noon prayers, the listeners both cries and are surprised that he knows the tajweed at that age. After a while, he starts giving Arabic and tajweed lessons to an imam for fifty cents a week. During this period, when he receives fifty cents a week, the rent of their house is one hundred cents a month.

One evening, they go to the house of a major to whom Galip is giving math lessons. The major asks him math problems. Aziz Nesin answers them all correctly. The major is impressed by how much the little boy knows and starts to cry. Aziz Nesin, who is still a little boy, can't make sense of this and thinks he has done something wrong and cries himself too.

This was the biggest source of conflict between his mother, who doesn't want her son to be a hafiz, and his father, who believes that studying in a secular school will make his son an infidel. In fact, his mother resists his father about something, even though it means that she can be subjected to violence for the first time. All the women around them are constantly subjected to violence by their spouses. Neighboring women often tell his mother how they are subjected to violence by showing the bruises on their bodies. In other words, violence against women is common. However, although she is a woman who prays five times a day and fasts, she wants her son to study at school. When Uncle Galip learns about this argument, he gets angry with Aziz Nesin's father and starts teaching him French instead of Persian.

### *Violence*

There are many black women in Istanbul. These women, referred to as “sister,” “nanny,” and “milk mom” in the Ottoman Empire, are usually brought from places like Egypt, Abyssinia, and Yemen and sold in slave markets. After the Republic, these women gather in a rural area on one day in May and hold a ceremony. Istanbulite women watch their dancing ceremony. Aziz Nesin and his mother go to watch them on such a day. They have a picnic, and the black women join them toward the late afternoon. However, Aziz Nesin’s mother is always uneasy. She always wants to go home because she doesn’t want to enter the house after the evening prayer. When they finally return home, the evening prayer is being recited. His father attacks his mother as soon as they enter. She is covered in blood and taken to the hospital.

His mother always goes out in her black chador and covers her face with a veil. When they go out, they don’t walk side by side. His father walks in front of them with both hands behind his back. One day, when the three of them go to the market, his mother wants to buy thread for the lace she is embroidering on the headscarves. She goes into a haberdashery run by a Greek or Jew. Since she can’t clearly see the things the seller is showing, she lifts her veil. When they return home, his father attacks her because she opened her veil in the presence of a non-Muslim man.

### *Hanife’s Story*

Aziz Nesin’s mother Hanife is from the Annaç village of Perşembe district, formerly called Vona, in Ordu province. Her mother gives birth to her while her father is in the army. Four years later, her father returns but is drafted again. In the meantime, her mother is pregnant with her second child. She can’t do anything because she is pregnant. The village women go up to the mountains and cut wood, carry the wood on their backs to the market, sell it, buy the household supplies and go home. However, this journey, which they go on foot, takes three hours even by bus. Her father comes back but her mother, who is breastfeeding, can’t do anything so he takes a second wife. The second wife, Güllü is a strong woman and rushes to everything. However, Güllü always torments six-year-old Hanife.

When one of the villagers goes to Ordu, he learns that the major on duty at the port wants to adopt a child. Hanife’s father walks barefoot up and down the hills and slopes to the major. Major Salim and his wife Süreyya love Hanife very much. However, Hanife’s mother can’t stand her absence and leaves the house with her baby. She takes shelter with a relative in another village. Her baby dies here due to malnutrition. She marries someone else and has other children. Hanife’s father regrets giving his daughter to a stranger. He goes to the major’s house to get her back. He takes Hanife back and goes out. Hanife walks for a while without talking to her father and then runs back to her new home and family. Her father returns to the village alone. He has two sons. But he is called up for military service again. He is martyred in Gümüşhane. Salim becomes the director of the Heybeliada Naval School in one of the Princes’ Islands. Thus, Hanife moves to Istanbul with him.

### *The Story of Abdülaziz*

Aziz Nesin’s father Abdülaziz is from the village of Gölve in the Şebinkarahisar district of Giresun. His father Mehmet is the imam of the village. He has six children, three boys and three girls. Abdülaziz is his second last child. Since the village’s soil isn’t fertile, most of the men in the village work in Istanbul. They usually find jobs in Bebek and Ortaköy. Abdülaziz’s older brothers Mustafa and Şaban are also in Istanbul. When Abdülaziz is eleven years old, he joins them. His handsome and flirtatious older brother Şaban always takes the money he earns from him. Since he is a small child, he can’t resist him.

Still, he has his own little interests. He sees some shiny black things being sold in baskets at the grocery stores in Bebek. Since he doesn’t know what they are, he envies those who buy them whenever he sees them. When he has some money, he goes to the grocery store with a paper bag in his hand and buys half an oka (1 oka is 1 kilo 282 grams). He goes to the pier with a paper bag, sits down across the sea and puts one in his mouth. What he eats is a bitter and salty black olive. He dislikes it so much that whenever he tells this story, he says he throws the paper bag into the sea. However, Aziz Nesin states that he either ate it or gave it to someone else.

Abdülaziz works in the mansion of an Egyptian family in Bebek. One of the young women in the mansion arranges one of the instructors in the mansion to give him lessons for a few months. In the meantime, he sends money to his father through acquaintances who go to Gölve. When he is sixteen,

he hides his gold coins, takes some gifts, his bed and quilt and goes to the Tophane pier. From there, he will get on a boat to go to the ferry that is anchored far away.

When he is about to get on the boat, Şaban comes up. He asks how much money he has. Since Abdülaziz can't lie, he tells the truth. When Şaban wants to see where he hides the gold coins, he takes out the gold coins. Şaban takes all of them and walks away. Abdulaziz takes his belongings and goes to the ferry by boat, but he doesn't even have money left for the journey. Seeing his situation, one of his acquaintances asks what he was planning to do with the money his brother seized. When he learns that he was planning to give it to his father, he lends him the same amount of gold coins that Şaban took. Abdulaziz takes the debt, goes to his village and delivers the gold coins to his father. When his father wants to marry him off to a girl in the village, he can't object to his father. However, after returning to Istanbul, he never sees his wife again. He works for two years to pay off his debt.

#### *Ikbal and Abdülaziz*

Abdülaziz marries several more times in the meantime, but he soon separates from all of them. In fact, one of his marriages lasts only one night. Over the years, he becomes a man loved and respected by his circle. Since he is uneducated, he always tries to compensate for this deficiency with his intelligence. He becomes an aide-de-camp to one of Abdulhamid's pashas. However, the pasha, who is Albanian, somehow angers both of his aides, and they hang him from the ceiling by his feet. The pasha later exiles them both to Fezzan.

Later, he becomes the head gardener and food clerk at the Naval School on Heybeliada. His only concern is to move up the social ladder. That's why he tries to speak well. Major Salim appreciates his honesty. That's why when he asks for his girl's hand, he agrees to their marriage. Since it is a tradition to change the names of adopted children, Hanife is now Ikbal. They get married in 1913. Salim and his wife Süreyya give them a sewing machine, a console, two bell-shaped lamps, and five gold coins as a dowry. Their first child dies. They name their son Nusret, which means God's help, because he is born in 1915, during the Battle of Gallipoli.

#### *Because of Sin or Stinginess?*

Aziz Nesin spends his days alone at home while his mother is receiving treatment in the hospital. His father comes home in the evenings. When his hair grows long, he goes out to the barber. Every time he goes to the barber, he has his hair cut short. Because his father claims that women having their hair cut short and men growing their hair long commit a sin. He also always has his hair cut short. Aziz Nesin says that this has nothing to do with sin, and that when hair is cut short, people go to the barber less often, and therefore spend less money. That is why his father says so.

One day, he goes to the barber but forgets to tell the barber that he wants to have his hair cut short. When his father sees his hair longer than he likes, he gets very angry. Then, Aziz Nesin goes to the bathroom and cries secretly. The next day, he decides to run away from home. As soon as his father leaves home, he runs out into the street. He plans to beg like other children who beg on the streets. However, he walks up and down the street but he can't bend his neck and beg. In the afternoon, he gives up and returns home because he is very hungry.

#### *Occupation*

Istanbul is under occupation. Aziz Nesin often sees Senegalese guards walking on the street and is afraid of them. Mothers believe that occupation soldiers leave bombs in the form of chocolates or toys on the roads, so they warn their children not to take anything they find on the road. Aziz Nesin's family also believes this. His father is a drill instructor at the Kalender Agricultural School, so he stays in its dormitory. Since the dormitory is by the sea, one day he gets on a boat nearby and sets out to sea on his own. When the students see him in the boat, they rescue him.

As his mother is in Haseki Nisa Hospital, they visit her on Fridays. On a Friday, while going downhill from Saraçhanebaşı to Aksaray, Aziz Nesin finds himself under a truck. The people around immediately pull him out from under the truck. The police arrive. His father says he will sue the driver, but the police say he can't do it because the truck belongs to the British occupation army and the driver is Greek. His father is forced to take him and continue walking towards the hospital.

In order to make him happy, his father buys him a vest from a man who sells old cloths. He puts the vest on immediately and feels like a grown up man. His father warns him not to tell his mother that he

was run over by a truck. When they go to the hospital, his mother sees the vest he is wearing and tells his father, "You have turned the boy into an orphan!" Whenever they remember this incident, his father tells them that he saved him from being crushed by pushing the truck back on his own. Aziz Nesin doesn't object to this either. Because he also believes that his father was powerful enough to push the truck back on his own.

#### *The Scary Man on the Boat*

His mother is released from the hospital but is not cured. While going to the house of a woman who had the same disease and was cured with a medicine, they get on a boat. On the boat are his mother, a woman and two men. After a while, one of the men tells the other that he can cut the boat in half. No one says anything. Then, he says he can cut off his finger and throw it into the sea. He pulls the thumb of his left hand and cuts it off and asks, "Shall I throw it into the sea?" The woman shouts, "Don't do it!" When the man claims that he can even cut off his head and throw it into the sea, the boatman rows quickly and approaches the dock. As they get home in the evening, he doesn't mention the man on the boat because he is afraid that his father will be angry with his mother. However, his mother does. His father says that the man is probably a juggler.

#### *In the Dervish Lodge*

One day a week, he goes to the dervish lodge in Çürüklük with his father. The sheikh is a handsome man who has Kurdish and Arab origins. He has two wives; Şâver and Vesile. Şâver has the upper hand in the lodge, but Vesile is a dull character and has two sons. The older one is handsome and charming like his father, while the younger one is reserved.

They perform dhikr in the lodge. Aziz Nesin is wearing a white dress, a white cardigan, and an "arakiye" with a signature on his head (arakiye means a headdress that absorbs sweat). They all get excited while performing dhikr together. There are about ten dervishes who constantly whirl. One of them is Aziz Nesin. While whirling, he feels as if he is going to rise to the sky and never gets dizzy or stumbles.

On another side, about ten or fifteen dervishes pierce their cheeks with skewers. The skewer that is pierced in one cheek comes out in the other. However, no blood comes out. Some people stab two or three skewers into each cheek. There are wooden poles on all four sides of the lodge, and other dervishes with wooden mallets hammer those with swollen cheeks onto these poles by hitting the ball of the skewer with the mallet. The dervishes continue to recite the dhikr without moving from the poles they are nailed to. The dervishes on the furs spread around the lodge continue to recite the dhikr, saying "Ya Hayy, ya Kayyum." Then this turns into "Allah, Allah." When the euphoria reaches its peak, many swords with verses engraved on them brought out. Some of the dervishes pass the sharp edges of the swords over their tongues. The sheikh stands up and opens his waist from under his robe and cloak. He lies face down on the sharp edge of the sword, which the two dervishes hold by the hilt and sharp tip, with his stomach touching it. The sheikh is paraded around the lodge with his head hanging from one side of the sword and his feet hanging from the other side. In other words, it is shown that the sword doesn't split the sheikh in two.

One day, Aziz Nesin also stabs his cheek with a skewer. As his father encourages him, he thinks about what Uncle Galip said about believing. Uncle Galip said that Musa could walk through the sea because he believed that he wouldn't drown. So, he isn't afraid at all when they stab his cheek with the skewer. After the skewer comes out of his cheek, the sheikh puts his saliva on the hole in his cheek. It is believed that his saliva is a cure for everything.

The upper part of the wall opposite the altar where the sheikh sits on his fur is caged. From here, foreigners in Istanbul, the French, Germans, even Greeks, Jews, and Armenians of Istanbul, watch them. However, it is hidden that there are spectators. Nevertheless, when there is a wealthy audience, some light fire in their mouths. In circuses, people who put fire in their mouths use some chemicals that don't burn them, but dervishes use real fire because Aziz Nesin has seen them even cook eggs on this fire. However, he states that this is also a trick he doesn't know.

What is meant by all this is that no sword, bullet or fire can touch the people of this order. They only die a natural death. The enemy army can't kill the people of the order. Aziz Nesin says that this belief is deeply embedded in the social accumulation and that is why there are many people who believe

that the Battle of Gallipoli was won by the sheikhs and dervishes, not by the soldiers who fought alongside Ghazi Mustafa Kemal.

#### *Forces of Order*

The struggle in Anatolia divides the country into two: National Forces and Forces of Order. The first are those who support the fight in Anatolia, the second are those who support the sultan. The occupation forces in Istanbul give one lira per day to Forces of Order. Aziz Nesin gives an example from a diary kept by Uncle Galip to show that daily expenses of a middle-class family cost 50-60 cents. Most of the lodges support Forces of Order. For example, the eldest son of the sheikh is a member of Forces of Order. However, Aziz Nesin later understands that Uncle Galip, who is from this lodge, supports Mustafa Kemal Pasha. But he can't understand why his father, who is devoted to the memory of Abdulhamid and supports the sultan until the end, goes to Anatolia to fight.

Later, he concludes that his father only wanted to save the caliphate and the sultanate, but Mustafa Kemal Pasha became his enemy when he destroyed what he and others like him wanted to save. However, the lodges, most of which supported Forces of Order, took to the streets as nationalists to welcome the nationalist army that came to Istanbul when the war in Anatolia ended up in victory.

#### *The Injustice to Uncle Galip*

Uncle Galip doesn't participate in these demonstrations at the lodge. Aziz Nesin thinks that the wisest person in the lodge is Uncle Galip. Before the sheikh prays, Uncle Galip recites various prayers. The sheikh prays and dervishes start to whirl. Finally, everyone leaves. Only well-respected people remain. They go to a large room upstairs. Here, they talk and read poems.

Aziz Nesin's house is raided many times and his writings in the house are taken away. They are never brought back. He comes across some of his notebooks at second-hand bookstores and buys them. Among the notebooks taken are the notebooks of Uncle Galip. One of these notebooks remains in his possession. He reads the poems written in it and shares a poem. This poem explains that someone who is devoted to Allah must abandon worldly things.

Aziz Nesin states that the first injustice he encountered in his life was that Uncle Galip couldn't have the life he deserved. Everyone praising Uncle Galip's knowledge lives a more comfortable life than him. Galip is a reserve officer in his youth, works as a police officer for a while but later can't find a decent job. Many of his acquaintances say that they can help him become a teacher, but everything remains in words. He writes letters and petitions to his acquaintances but nothing comes of it. His only wish is to take his mother, who lives in Gereede, with him and then get married. When Aziz Nesin's father calls Uncle Galip a spendthrift because he smokes hookah in the coffeehouse, he gets angry with his father because Uncle Galip lives a simple life.

#### *A Controversial Woman*

Everyone from his father's village calls each other "uncle" regardless of age. The richest person who addresses him like this is the janitor of an old inn. He is in love with a woman living in Şişli who is famous for her beauty. This woman is known as "the Şişli Beauty," whom Aziz Nesin remembers as "Mediha," but later he learned from a newspaper article that her name was "Meliha," for whom many men shot each other.

In order to help his fellow countryman, Aziz Nesin's father makes this woman recognize him as a fortune teller and come to his house to have her fortune told. In those days, ink is dropped on a child's thumb while the child looks at this drop the fortune teller recites prayers and asks the child if he sees certain people. The child sees people or objects in the ink drop. Sometimes, water in a bowl or glass is used instead of ink. Aziz Nesin knows all of these because his father sometimes tells fortunes.

On the day the woman arrives, he looks at the water and answers yes or no to his father's questions. The woman seems pleased with the answers he gives. Finally, she tries to pay his father, but his father refuses. He says he does it for good. This time, the woman empties her patent leather bag and gives it to Aziz Nesin. After the woman leaves, his father tells him that he gave the wrong answers to the questions he asked him. Shortly after this incident, Meliha, the Şişli Beauty is shot and killed.

#### *Taking a Bath*

There are only a few apartments in Istanbul, so the people living in these are considered rich. Also, since men and women dance, drink and gamble together, the apartments are seen as places of immorality. But unlike apartments, there are no bathrooms in the houses. Aziz Nesin's mother washes him in a basin. One day, she takes him to a hammam. However, as he looks at the naked women, women don't want him in the hammam.

There is a folk song that is considered immodest at the time; "Don't let the cans rattle, oh oh/Don't let the neighbors hear, oh oh." Aziz Nesin thinks that the folk song is considered immodest because it implies that the womanizer who is with the neighbor woman steps on the cans and makes noise. However, the truth is different. When couples who make love at night want to perform a ritual ablution, they boil water in a can. However, if the can rattles, since the houses are adjacent, the neighbors hear and understand what is going on in the house. When apartments become widespread, this song is forgotten.

#### *His Father's Esoteric Interests*

His father's beard and robe always bother his mother. However, this isn't the only source of her discomfort. His father is also interested in some "secret sciences" related to finding lost things, searching for treasure, treating the sick, summoning jinns, and performing magic. He learns the things he doesn't know from Uncle Galip. Uncle Galip recommends a method recommended by the prophet to those who want to have a son. Accordingly, the person would place his hand on the belly of his pregnant wife and say some prayers.

Aziz Nesin questions why Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, didn't apply this method and emphasizes that he himself had no sons. In fact, his sons Kasım and Abdullah, born from Hatice, and his son Ibrahim, born from his Egyptian concubine Mari, died, and he had no other sons. After noting these, he says that Turkey has improved, but its social background is full of these reactionary traditions.

#### *First Slap*

Aziz Nesin's father bargains so much while shopping that Aziz Nesin is both embarrassed and bored of going to the market. He doesn't buy even a bunch of parsley without bargaining. One day, his father and he go to Mahmutpaşa because his mother wants a cotton reel. They go around to all the reel sellers one by one but no one sells it below sixty cents. They reach the seller at the top of the hill. When his father is bargaining with the seller he says that all the sellers are selling it for fifty cents, at that moment Aziz Nesin intervenes to correct his father and says that all the sellers want sixty cents. As soon as he says this, his father slaps him, then buys three reels and holds his hand. They walk together without saying anything.

#### *Poverty during the Feast*

When the feast arrives, children are dressed in new clothes, but Aziz Nesin is not given anything new. His mother is very upset about this situation, so she tells him to have his fez molded. Aziz Nesin goes to the fez molder. The molder takes his fez and pours water from the jug next to him into his mouth and spits it out on the fez. He removes the tassel from the comb of the fez. He puts the wet fez on a wooden mold. He places the hot mold made of yellow metal on it. Steam rises from the fez. The fez is molded. The molder puts the tassel on and gives the fez back to him.

The fez is hot, still smoking, and smells like a mixture of oil, sweat, dirt, and soil. When he gets home, his mother puts his fez in the closet. She washes him well in the basin and then puts him to bed. She starts to sew something for the feast. His father comes home late because he can't buy anything for his wife or son for the feast. He gets angry with everything because he can't bear this shame. She tells him to stop sewing and go to bed. She cries. Aziz Nesin secretly listens to them in bed.

Before his father returns from the Eid prayer, his mother dresses him in the Eid dress she has sewn. When his father arrives, his mother and he kiss his hand. There is nothing for breakfast other than tea and stale bread. Aziz Nesin eats his bread, which he has softened by dipping it in his tea. Sometimes, some guests bring Eid candy during Eid, but they keep it to offer for the next guests.

During Eid, children go door to door, kiss hands and collect money or handkerchiefs. However, this is forbidden to Aziz Nesin. He only kisses the hands of those who come to the house, but when some guests try to give him pocket money, he runs away. During this Eid, one of their guests wants to put

money in his pocket, he runs away, but his father tells him to take it. He listens to his father and takes the money, but he runs out because he is embarrassed.

There is a stationery store near the pier. When he passes by it, he often stands in front of the glass window and examines the books, shiny construction papers, rulers, and compasses. He runs there to buy ink with his money. His father makes ink with the soot he collects from the kitchen chimney, but this is a bad ink. The other good ink is erased by licking. This is where the expression "licking the ink" comes from. He tells the stationer that he wants ink. The stationer gives him the ink. He looks for the money in his pocket but can't find it. He realizes that he dropped the money because his mother didn't fix the hole in his pocket. He leaves the ink back. He looks for the money he dropped on the roads he passed but can't find it.

#### *A Conversation with a Psychologist*

The only neighbor he visits on Eid is the old woman who gave him an inkwell for his circumcision. When he visits her, he meets a tall and well-built young man who barely seems to fit in the room. This man is so engraved in his memory that whenever he sees the magnificent German consulate building, he remembers this young man.

This young man is the woman's son who studies psychology in the USA. The woman tells her son to talk to Aziz Nesin as if he were an adult. The young man does so, but Aziz Nesin doesn't understand much of what he says. However, he is interested in psychology and asks what it is good for. The young man tells him that when he talks to him, he always runs his hand through his hair and that psychology helps him understand why he does this. Then Aziz Nesin gets curious and starts to question why he puts his hand in his hair. The young man replies that it might be because he is bored of the conversation. He is very embarrassed that the young man figures this out. His face reddens.

#### *The Joyful House*

The house of a cyclist living in their neighborhood is a big one. One night, he goes to the cyclist's house. It is crowded inside. The young cyclist makes everyone laugh by doing imitations. Aziz Nesin has so much fun that tears flow from his eyes. At that moment, he thinks to himself, "This is what a house should be like." His family doesn't laugh much in their home. Throughout his life, he can never forget the joy he witnessed in the cyclist's house that night and always wants to have a house like that. However, he never has such a joyful house. For years, after dinner, he sits at his desk and continues to work. When he doesn't do this, he feels like he's committing a crime.

#### *Shattered*

They load their belongings onto a horse-drawn carriage while moving from their home to another. However, as with every move, something gets lost, and their mother and father argue. Aziz Nesin wishes to be a person who has spent all his memories in a single house, since his family always rents rooms and fits there throughout his childhood. For example, there should be the marks of his height on a door's jamb. However, his own memories are scattered from the horse-drawn carriage to the ground with every move. His past is shattered and scattered on the streets.

#### *New House, New Information*

Their new house is actually just a room like the previous one. Their neighbors, Halim and his wife live in the other room. Halim sells milk and yogurt until noon. In the afternoon, he ferments yogurt. When night falls, his wife's screams are heard. One night, after drinking too much marijuana and wine, he mutters, "It smells like blood." After this, Aziz Nesin listens to the women's whispers and learns that there is such a thing as sexual perversion and that Halim is a pervert.

#### *The Joke That Makes You Cry*

During Ramadan, the iftar tables are filled with jam, cheese, olives, and pita made by his mother. His father eats a few bites for iftar and smokes a cigarette, then performs the evening prayer and continues eating. When they go to the neighbors' house in the evening, his mother spreads their beds on the floor so that they can lie down and sleep immediately when they return. When they return from a visit, Aziz Nesin enjoys throwing himself on the bed as soon as he walks in the door.

One evening, when they return from a visit, he throws himself on the floor like this as soon as the door opens. However, his mother hasn't made the bed. All three of them laugh at his state. After he gets into bed, his mother tells him that they found him on the street and that he isn't actually their child. At first, he doesn't want to believe it, but his mother repeats it. Since his father doesn't like jokes, he

expects him to tell the truth. However, when his father says the same thing, he starts to cry. His mother can't stand his crying and explains with wet eyes that they are just joking. When they fall asleep at night, he sees in his dream that his mother has grown very tall. He wakes up and looks at his mother and father sleeping. His mother really does look tall. He lifts the blanket and holds her feet. Her feet are as cold as ice. He is scared. Because he has heard that the dead grow taller. He screams, "Mom!" His mother wakes up and asks if he is dreaming. Then, he pulls the blanket over his head.

#### *The Heaven of the Neighbor's Daughter*

Aziz Nesin gives lessons to the daughter of a neighbor they visit at night because she wants to become a hafiz. Whenever he goes to give lessons, the girl sends her mother away from home and stays alone with him. She puts him to bed, lies down next to him and while moving his hand over her body, she recites the verses she has memorized. While doing this, she says, "Heaven is like this, we are in heaven." At the end of the day, she wants to recite the prayer of repentance. Aziz Nesin is disturbed by what the girl does, so he doesn't go to her house to give lessons again, despite his father's insistence. However, he doesn't tell anyone about what happened.

#### *Baklava*

His mother doesn't want him to fast because he is a child, and his father wants him to fast on the first and last day of Ramadan, but he fasts without fail. He has difficulty waking up for suhoor because there is rice and fruit stew on the table every night. One night, when he doesn't want to wake up, he hears his father say, "There is baklava" and jumps up immediately. However, there is rice, yogurt beans and fruit stew on the table. He asks where the baklava is. His father doesn't understand anything.

#### *In the Absence of the Father*

His father often goes on trips without telling them where he is going. The reason for these trips is to search for treasure. When he goes searching for treasure, they have financial difficulties. They go to the house of his uncle in Bebek. His uncle, Şaban has a lot to pay for what he stole from his father, but they don't want him to. On the second day in his house, he gets sick. He has measles. There is a storm outside. However, his uncle tells his mother to go their home. His mother wraps him in a blanket and takes him in her arms, and they start waiting at the tram stop in Bebek under the snow. Both snowflakes and his mother's tears fall on his face.

#### *Cold Sores*

He frequently has cold sores on his lips. The only cure for cold sores is tinsmith mud. So he goes up to a tinsmith shop with a container, the tinsmith is cleaning copper pots to be tinned in a pit with his bare feet. He takes a handful of mud from the mud under his feet and puts it in the container in his hand. His mother applies this mud to the sores on his face and the sores dry up. However, they soon come back.

#### *Being a Child for a Day*

Aziz Nesin has no child friends. He always spends time with adults. Since it is his duty to shake the tablecloth after eating, one morning, he goes out after breakfast to shake out the tablecloth. When he sees his peers playing games on the street, shouting and screaming, he just stands there. And somehow he joins them.

They draw a circle on the ground, put a can in the middle and then stone the can. Then they play hide and seek. They go far away from home and play leapfrog. They gamble with notebook-shaped cigarette paper containers. That's why he is left with two *Kibar Ali* brand cigarette paper containers. When it gets dark, they disperse. He is left with a few cigarette paper containers in his hand and marbles in his pocket. He starts to get scared because he is in the courtyard of a mosque far from his home. At that moment, he remembers the tablecloth. When he gets home, he hits the doorknob with fear. His mother opens the door but doesn't say anything. Her eyes are swollen from crying. He hides the cigarette paper containers and marbles somewhere.

After washing him in the basin, his mother dresses him. After a while, his father comes and asks if he has returned home. His mother says he has returned as his father has been looking for him all day. When he sits down to eat, his father asks where he was. He answers that he was playing with children on the street. His father says that he might be hungry and wants him to eat something. However, the

next day, he throws his cigarette paper containers and marbles in the trash. Then he tells him that he won't play with a ball and marbles like other children because Hazrat Ali was martyred and that his head was cut off from his body and played with like a ball, and his fingers were cut off and played with like marbles.

#### *Undressing Woman*

One day, Halim's apprentice comes running home and tells Aziz Nesin that there is a woman who undresses in front of everyone who gives her forty cents on the street. Aziz Nesin is curious about the woman and follows the apprentice. He starts running with his clogs. They run from Kasımpaşa to Şişhane. However, the woman isn't where she was before. When the apprentice asks a man where the undressing woman has gone, Aziz Nesin is embarrassed and acts as if he isn't with him. He regrets what he has done and runs back home. On the way, he thinks that the woman is probably old, crazy and poor and asks what kind of person would want to see such a woman naked. He asks the apprentice who comes home after him if he could see the woman, and the apprentice tells him that the police took her away while she was about to undress.

#### *A Frightening Dhikr*

Some days, they go to other lodges. Each lodge has a day of dhikr. One night, they go to one of the inns in Beyazıt with his father and Uncle Galip. That night, the Iranians have the Muharram ritual. First, the dhikr begins as in every lodge. Then they undress from the waist up and start hitting their shoulders with chains that have knobs on them and things that resemble nails on the knobs. While hitting the chains, they chant "Ya Hasan, ya Hussein!" As the blood starts to flow from their backs, it splashes onto each other's faces. Aziz Nesin watches this in fear while sitting between his father and Uncle Galip. When he whispers to Uncle Galip that the men will die, Uncle Galip tells him that those who die for this cause are martyrs. He falls asleep in his father's arms in the small hours.

#### *The National Army in Istanbul*

In the morning, they dress him in his white dress, tie a black belt around his waist, put his arakiye on his head (arakiye means a headdress that absorbs sweat) and give him his halberd like a Rifai dervish. His father puts on his turban and robe. They go to the lodge in Çürüklük together. All the dervishes of the lodge line up in front of the door with tambourines and cymbals in their hands. As the handsome eldest son of the sheikh, one of the members of Army of Order leaves the door his stepmother Şâver pats him on the back. The sheikh steps forward and they set off, playing the tambourines and cymbals.

Each lodge has its own crowd and can be distinguished by the colors of their turbans. When they arrive at the Third Ahmet Fountain in Sultanahmet, the dervishes of all the lodges begin to wait in groups. A little later, Refet Pasha, who is at the head of Mustafa Kemal Pasha's victorious army that has arrived in Istanbul, greets the people on a white horse. While the Pasha smiles at everyone and blows kisses like an artist, Aziz Nesin can't believe that he is a soldier. Refet Pasha seems to smell of lotion and cream, not gunpowder and fire. He looks so handsome and well-groomed. The colored lithograph of the Pasha in this state hangs on the walls of coffeehouses and barber shops for years.

A few days later, the members of Army of Order begin to be caught. The handsome eldest son of the sheikh escapes to Europe. With the skills he learned in the lodge, such as sticking a skewer into the cheek and lying on a sword, he becomes a famous illusionist in France. Years later, he returns to Turkey and gives interviews. However, he returns to Europe again.

#### *New House, New Neighbor*

Aziz Nesin's family moves to a new house in Cerrahpaşa. The owner is a black woman. She lives downstairs. Upstairs, there are two rooms in the large hall. They live in one, and Hüseyin and his wife Nevber, their son Cevat and daughter Cemile live in the other. Nevber was also an adopted girl, just like his mother. However, when she goes out, she wears like a lady. Like all women, she ties a cloth bag around her waist. These bags hanging from the skirt of a chador look very ugly. However, Nevber hides her bag under her skirt, just like ladies do. Only women called "tango" who live around Beyoğlu carry their bags in their hands. They aren't considered favorably either.

Since Hüseyin is unemployed, there is always conflict in their house. When Nevber wants to ask the family that previously adopted her to find a job for her husband, his mother and he accompany her to a mansion in Bebek. Each compartment on the tram is separated by a cherry-colored curtain. Women sit

in the front section and men sit in the back section. Some of the women don't know where to get off or can't see clearly under their veils, so they are left as their husbands get off. This is why fights sometimes break out between the driver and men.

They enter the mansion. Aziz Nesin is affected by the colorful reflections of the sunlight seeping through a window made of colorful glass. When he sees a rocking chair, he sits on it and starts rocking. However, when he sees his mother frowning and getting angry at him, he immediately gets down from the chair.

When they leave the mansion in the evening, Nevber says that she was adopted when she was seven years old, that she was married when she was seventeen, that is, she worked for exactly ten years, that she needs to receive a lot of money if she is given ten liras per month, and that even if they had given her fifty liras, her husband would have started a business. His mother listens to these calmly, as if thinking about something about her own experience.

Hüseyin finds a job in Eskişehir after a while and leaves, and is never heard from again. One day, Cevat comes home and asks his mother for money to buy a newspaper. Nevber doesn't want to give it to him because they don't buy newspapers. Cevat insists by saying that the newspaper is in color. Nevber gives him the money. Cevat comes with the newspaper. Only the name of the newspaper is printed in red and there is a red and black line on the front page.

Since Nevber has financial difficulties, she goes to the countryside with his mother and collects all kinds of herbs to cook. She only makes cucumber salad for lunch, but she decorates it with dill and parsley, and keeps the olives in olive oil with thyme and other fragrant herbs. She mixes black pepper and salt and puts it on a slice of bread. All these make her table look like a rich person's table to Aziz Nesin.

Nevber finally sells her earring and buys a tray and a table for her son to sell bagels. Cevat wakes up early in the morning, buys bagels from the bakery and sells them all by noon. When Aziz Nesin wants to sell bagels like Cevat, his mother doesn't let him. His father wants to make him a clergyman, so he tells him that a clergyman can't sell bagels. However, one morning he leaves home with Cevat. They buy bagels from the bakery together and go to a crowded place like the front of a factory. When Cevat shouts "Fresh bagels!" he imitates him. The bagels run out in a short time.

One day, Cevat asks him if he wants to smoke. Although Aziz Nesin says he won't, Cevat puts one cigarette into his pocket. When they return home, Aziz Nesin climbs the hollyhock tree in the garden of the house. At that time, Cevat tells his mother that he smokes. When he comes home in the evening, his mother asks him if he smokes. He has long forgotten the cigarette in his pocket, and when he says he doesn't, his mother checks his pocket. When she finds the cigarette, she gets angry. In order not to give Cevat away, he says that a friend of him gave him one cigarette to hold and he forgot it in his pocket.

### *Exploring Social Differences*

Right across from their house is a mansion surrounded by stone walls. Aziz Nesin looks at this mansion from the window of their room on the second floor and questions what kind of people live in it, how they eat, how they go to the toilet, how they take a bath, how they laugh, how they get angry. In the evening, their rooms get dark, and if the curtains in the mansion are left open, light leaks out. However, it doesn't resemble the light leaking from their gas lamp. The shadows of those passing in front of the light reflected on their windows don't resemble their shadows either.

An old couple lives in the room downstairs. The man had to give up begging when he became bedridden. His wife started to beg instead. The man groans where he lies all day. When the woman comes home in the evening, she moans even more because she is angry with him for wetting himself. As Aziz Nesin is immersed in the lights of the mansion in the evening, he listens to the groans of this old man. When the adhan is recited in the evening, his father asks his mother to spread the fur on the floor. His mother spreads the fur on the floor. His father comes and prays on his fur in the dark room. When his mother brings the lamp from the sofa into the room, he draws the curtain. However, his mind is on the mansion. Then his mother starts to pray.

He questions why men and women make different movements while praying. For example, why do men raise their hands while women hold them on their chests? After the prayer, his mother puts the beds on the floor and they lie down. His father asks if she has spread sticky grass around the bed. The

bedbugs that come out at night stick to this grass. However, some bedbugs climb the wall and jump on them from the ceiling. Aziz Nesin wakes up in the middle of the night after his mother and father wake up in pain from being bitten and throw the bedbugs they have caught into the burning lamp.

Children's laughter can be heard from behind the stone walls surrounding the mansion. Some evenings these children go out to play, but they don't look at other children playing in the street. They practically ignore them. But Aziz Nesin realizes that children playing in the street behave differently in the presence of the children from the mansion. They seem to want to show themselves to these children of the mansion and make them like them. He is disgusted by their state. However, he also likes the clean appearance of the children of the mansion.

He can't approach either the children of the mansion or the children of the neighborhood. However, these two groups of children who ignore each other pay attention to him when he goes out with his can to fill up from the public fountain in the evenings. While the children of the mansion laugh, the children of the neighborhood make fun of him and sometimes even throw stones at his can. At these moments, he feels smaller than usual.

There is a girl among the children of the mansion who is older than him. Every time this girl sees him in front of Auntie Reşide's house at the beginning of the road to the fountain, she hits him. Aziz Nesin can't hit her as he looks at her beautiful clothes and clean face. He just shouts, "Don't do it, don't do it." One evening, when the girl attacks him again, the door of Auntie Reşide's house opens and his son Saim comes out. After chasing the girl, Saim tells Aziz Nesin that he sees him getting beaten by that girl every evening from the window and that no matter what, he should never get beaten by a girl.

Thus, Saim teaches him his first lesson in fighting. If someone is picking on him, he should throw the first punch and continue to hit him over and over again. If he is a very big person, he should kick him in the knees. After that evening, the girl isn't seen for a few evenings, but one evening she appears again and starts hitting him. At that moment, Aziz Nesin's eyes look for Saim in the window of Auntie Reşide's house, but no one is seen. When Aziz Nesin tells the girl that he will hit her back if she continues to hit him, the girl laughs. Thereupon, he takes out his anger by kicking his can full of water. The water splashing from the can hits the girl. Then the girl starts running, screaming.

A little later, the children of the mansion and the children of the neighborhood surround him. The biggest boy among the mansion children asks if he is ashamed of picking on a girl. He says he didn't hit her, but they don't listen. The neighborhood children start throwing stones at his can. At that moment, he remembers the fighting lesson he learned from Saim and punches the mansion child and continues to hit him repeatedly. When the boy falls to the ground, they roll together. After he gets him under him, he gets up and takes his can, the children separate into two and walks between them. When he gets scolded by his mother who says she watched what happened from the window when he comes home, he hides in the toilet and cries. That night, as his father is throwing bedbugs into the burning lamp again, the man groaning downstairs groans differently and his father says that he has learned very well what the groan of death is when he was in exile and fighting in Anatolia. In the morning, there is no sound from downstairs. The man is indeed dead. His father reads the Quran for the old man.

In the evening, he goes out to carry water from the fountain again. This time, neither the mansion children nor the neighborhood children turn to look at him. He feels grown up as he walks towards the fountain. He wonders if Saim saw how he beat the boy. They run into each other a few days later. He asks him if he saw how he beat the boy. Saim says he did. This statement bothers Aziz Nesin a lot. He complains that throughout his life, those who taught him how to fight either watched from behind or never looked back when he got into a fight.

### *Tired Horses*

Since in Cerrahpaşa, it is no longer possible for him to take lessons from Uncle Galip, who lives in Kasımpaşa, every day. He can only walk from Cerrahpaşa to Kasımpaşa two or three days a week. His mother doesn't want him to go because she thinks this route is difficult for him, but his father wants him to go because he is very afraid that he will forget the verses he has memorized. So, he sets off after breakfast. After passing many places, when he reaches the slope leading to Şişhane, he always lingers there. What lingers him are the horses carrying loads.

No horse carriage can climb the slope without stopping and resting. The drivers start whipping the horses before they even reach the slope so that they can climb this slope quickly with the terror of the whip. However, this isn't the case. Four or five carriages always stop on the slope. The drivers whip the horses, the horses' eyes almost pop out of their sockets. Some horses' foot bones break, the drivers squat down next to them and cry. No matter what, when the horses can no longer carry their loads, the coachmen have to shoulder them one by one and carry them themselves. Aziz Nesin, who is now bored with the lessons, spends most of his time squatting on the side of the hill and watching these horses. For the rest of his life, whenever he feels the weight of responsibilities of life on his shoulders, he remembers these horses and thinks how no different he is from them.

#### *The Lodges Are Closed*

Since Mustafa Kemal Pasha has the lodges closed, they no longer gather to perform dhikr as they used to. The rooms in the lodge are rented out. Şâver, the older wife of the sheikh, can't buy anything without bargaining with the vendors when shopping at the market. When she wants to buy meat, she buys the bad kind. Mustafa Kemal is constantly talked against in homes because he has the lodges closed. It is said that he is Jewish, blind in one eye, and that he will destroy Islam. Aziz Nesin's father always refers to him as "Blind Kemal."

Uncle Galip isn't the same as before. However, despite the closure of the lodges, he supports Mustafa Kemal and argues that the country needs to be Westernized in order to be civilized. He even wants to take on a job to contribute to this. However, this is not possible. He starts working in a factory in Cibali for thirty-five cents a day. After becoming a worker, he comes to visit them with a fez on his head but he doesn't wear as he used to. He has a collarless shirt, a jacket with pockets full of books, and linen trousers with torn knees. He looks changed, tired and old. He wakes up early in the morning and walks to the factory. Since he walks back in the evening, he passes out from exhaustion as soon as he reaches his room in the lodge. Moreover, he has lice because he can't wash. His mother gives him some of his father's clothes. His father also gives him some money to go to the hammam. Aziz Nesin goes to the hammam with Uncle Galip. They have a bath. However, when they are about to leave, Uncle Galip realizes that the money in his pocket has been stolen in the hammam. His mother boils his lice-infested clothes in a cauldron. In the morning, he sees that Uncle Galip has gotten up before sunrise and gone to the factory.

#### *His Father's Approach*

His father asks him to recite the surahs he has memorized because he doesn't want him to forget them. Since Aziz Nesin can't remember the surahs, he opens the Quran and recites the surahs in the room while his father sitting in the hall and listens to him. When his mother enters the room and sees him reading from the Quran that is open in front of him, she tells his father that he is reading from the book. However, his father objects to her, doesn't get up and comes into the room, implying that he is sure that his son recites the surahs from memory. Aziz Nesin states that by doing this, his father makes him feel how much he trusts him and that being a trusted child has a positive effect on him.

#### *Biscuits*

A woman from their neighborhood comes to visit with her baby. While Nevber, his mother and the guest woman are sitting on the sofa, the guest woman's one-year-old baby starts to whine. The woman asks Aziz Nesin to buy biscuits for the baby. However, she tells him that the baby can distinguish between cheap and expensive biscuits and that he spits out the cheap one, and tells him to buy the expensive ones. Aziz Nesin goes out with the money he takes from the woman.

While walking, he sees the crazy person in the neighborhood who begs everyone to say "Mother, ten coins." Rumor has it that this young man doesn't accept more than ten coins given to him and returns the rest. Thinking that it isn't possible for the little baby to distinguish biscuits, he gives him forty coins to test him. The young man takes the money and puts it into his pocket. In this way, he realizes that rumor is wrong. He buys many cheap biscuits to make up for the money he gave to the young man. He eats a few of them himself on the way. When he gets home, he is afraid that the woman will understand that the biscuits are the cheap ones, but the woman doesn't understand anything. She gives one biscuit to the baby, but the baby doesn't eat and spits it out. The woman says, "Didn't I tell you?" He thinks it's a miracle that a baby can distinguish biscuits like that.

#### *On Selfishness*

When Uncle Galip comes to break his fast during Ramadan, he finds him even older and sees him complaining about other people for the first time. He complains about the selfishness of the workers in the factory. As always, he tells what he wants to say with a joke: A hodja goes on a journey, runs out of provisions, but there is no village or town in sight. Finally, he arrives in a city. He knocks on the first door he sees. This is a Bektashi lodge and it is just the time to eat. They invite him to the table. The hodja sits at the table where there are forty people, and they give him a wooden spoon that is two yards long (a yard is 68 cm). The hodja can't understand how to eat with a long wooden spoon, so he either sticks the tip of the spoon into his own or someone else's eyes. Seeing him in this state, the Bektashi father tells him that spoons are made long so that everyone can feed each other, that he is supposed to feed the person across from him with that spoon, and that the person across from him is supposed to feed him, and that the more the person across from him is full, the more he will be full, and that those who only think of themselves will remain hungry at that table.

#### *Wooden Spoon*

While they are about to sit down for iftar, his father sends Aziz Nesin to the grocer to buy a wooden spoon for Uncle Galip because it is sunnah to eat with a wooden spoon. However, he can't find a wooden spoon in any of the grocers close to their house. So he goes to the shops in more distant places. He is very offended that his father makes him walk around the streets like this even though he is fasting. He thinks that he is being treated very unfairly. Finally, he finds a wooden spoon in a very old shop and buys two. The moment he leaves the shop, iftar cannon is fired. The lamps on the balconies of the mosques are lit. He starts to cry because he has to walk around the streets like this at the moment he needs to break his fast at home. He enters home after wiping his tears. His father says that he didn't know that he was fasting and is very upset that he sent him out on the streets while he was fasting. When Aziz Nesin sees his father upset, he realizes that he didn't tire him out on purpose and becomes very happy. After the evening prayer, his father starts to complain about Mustafa Kemal Pasha as usual. However, Uncle Galip insistently defends the necessity of Westernization for civilization. His father can't understand how a wise man like him can side with a man like Mustafa Kemal Pasha.

#### *For the Sake of Independence*

When Uncle Galip is dismissed from the factory, Aziz Nesin starts taking lessons from him again. One day, his mother doesn't prepare lunch for him his father gives him some money. He gets excited because he can eat something outside for the first time and doesn't go up to Uncle Galip until noon. He wanders the streets looking for a place to eat. He goes to a cheap restaurant and eats beans and rice. He decides to not to take a lesson that day. If they ask him at home in the evening, he will say that he couldn't find Uncle Galip. However, after a while, his bowels get upset and he starts looking for a toilet on the street but can't find one. He barely makes it home and says that he couldn't find Uncle Galip at home as he planned, that he waited a bit for him and that's why he is late.

#### *Uncle Galip's Illness*

Uncle Galip comes home in a fever. Aziz Nesin's mother prepares a bed for him in the hall and makes soup. Nevber, who lives in the other room, is uncomfortable with Uncle Galip staying in the hall. She says that she is disgusted by his feet, which protrude from under the quilt. She isn't wrong because Uncle Galip's body is dirty since he can't bathe. When he learns what she says, he is very offended and says that a person should have clean heart. But he doesn't believe his own words because he feels bad because of his situation too.

#### *Religious Certificate*

Aziz Nesin's father receives a religious certificate from the sheikh. With this license, he can establish a lodge and become its sheikh. Uncle Galip, who is also a calligrapher, writes the certificate. They eat a lot of meat at the ceremony held in their one-room house. The certificate is placed in a tubular tin box. This document, which will never be of any use, is of great value to Aziz Nesin's father.

#### *Journey with Uncle Galip*

Uncle Galip is looking for a job to make ends meet. Aziz Nesin goes with him to visit the sheikh of one of the closed lodges in Tekirdağ. There are many Gypsy families on the deck of the ferry they board from Istanbul. The officer verbally attacks them because one of them didn't buy a ticket. When one of the women begs the officer and says "brother," the officer gets angry and says that she is a Gypsy and that he can't be her brother. Aziz Nesin feels resentment towards the officer at that moment.

Whenever he encounters injustice, he imagines that he is a great man and that he can eliminate all injustice.

Finally, they arrive at the office of the sheikh who is a lawyer in Tekirdağ. They go to the lodge at night. Uncle Galip is greatly respected here. They chat and talk at night. While Aziz Nesin is lying alone in a room of the lodge, he is very pleased with the lamp burning on the small table by his bedside. Every time he reaches out to the lamp, he watches his hand shine. However, one night when he goes to the bathroom with the lamp, he wets his hand and touches the hot lamp. The lamp goes out when the bottle suddenly cracks. He falls down the stairs while trying to return to his room in the dark. Because of the noise, many people come out from all over the lodge with lamps in their hands. When they return to Istanbul, they learn that Nevber found the address of her missing husband and that she has gone to him with her son and daughter. Since the room is empty until a tenant is found, they start using it.

#### *Feridun's Wife*

A friend of Aziz Nesin's, whom he calls Feridun because he doesn't want to reveal his real name, has a very beautiful wife. However, the woman is both very jealous and very ambitious. She accuses Feridun, who is a ticket collector on the tram, of doing this job to harass women passengers. Aziz Nesin secretly listens to everything the woman tells his mother. When his mother talks about the difficulties of earning a living, the woman says that this job doesn't suit her husband because Feridun has very beautiful handwriting. Ottoman Turkish is so difficult that there are very few people who can write without mistakes even among high-ranking officials.

Feridun quits his job on the tram at his wife's insistence. The garden of the crowded family house they stay in is full of tires. Because of this interest, he makes velocipedes. When he rides it, everyone looks at him as if he is crazy. Since his wife can't get along with his family, they leave the family house and move to a small place. He can only bring two of his velocipedes.

When he gets fed up with unemployment, he starts shoemaking. His first customer is Aziz Nesin's father. His business goes well, he has a good income. However, his wife isn't satisfied with this. Therefore, Feridun closes his shop because of his wife who wants him to be a clerk. He starts working as a clerk who seals water containers and records how many bottles each water seller buys in a hut by a fountain on the Emirgan hills.

One day, Aziz Nesin goes to their house with his mother to visit them. Since they live in a remote place, they will stay there for the night. After lunch, when the woman starts to tell his mother something in whispers, he immediately starts to listen to her. The woman brings and takes food to her husband every day. One day, while she is taking food, two water sellers block her way in a deserted place and attack her. When Aziz Nesin's mother hears this, she suddenly changes her attitude. She gives up staying there for the night. The woman insists that they stay, but it is no use. When they return home late at night, his father asks why they are back and not spending the night there. Despite his father's anger, his mother doesn't say anything about what the woman told her.

#### *Tango*

His mother prepares a bed in the empty room for a beautiful and fancy woman. In those years (1923-1925), people start to dress differently. Most men have a thin cane and wear tight-fitting short trousers and short jackets. They address each other as "mon cher" when they talk to each other. The female equivalent of this type of man is "tango." This woman is one of them. She has a chador, but it doesn't look like his mother's chador. It is the color of a dusty rose. It also has flower prints on it that are a little darker than a dusty rose. Her skirts reach a little below her knees. There is a big bow on the back of the skirt. Her hair is visible on her temples.

This woman loves Aziz Nesin very much. One day, after they have lunch together, everyone leaves the table. However, Aziz Nesin eats melons until he feels bloated. The weather is very hot. When Aziz Nesin can't see anyone, he opens the door of the empty room where Nevber used to stay. The woman is inside, her underwear is off, and she is leaning forward and doing something. When he sees her like that, he is stunned. The moment the woman notices him, she pulls down her skirt, saying that she is looking for fleas in her underwear. From that day on, he can't talk to her as easily as before.

#### *Zekiye and the Bastard*

His mother is taken to the hospital again. Normally, visitors are allowed one day a week, but he visits his mother every day. He doesn't want people to think that he is neglected because of his motherlessness, so he starts getting ready an hour before leaving home every day. His mother hides everything she has left from lunch. The nurses and orderlies don't say anything when they see him eating in the hospital.

However, there is a woman who looks after him these days; Zekiye. She is an Arab woman who lives in her own house in a dead-end street a few blocks away. She has a very old husband. This man sits by a fountain with his basket and waits for customers to carry him loads. While waiting here, he ignores Zekiye's acquaintances. In the evening, he leaves his basket at the coffeehouse and comes home. Zekiye washes him and puts him in his pajamas. Pajamas are a very modern piece of clothing in those days. Even in the houses of the rich, there are very few men who have pajamas.

When he goes to their house with his father at night, he sees that the man has taken on a completely different personality. He is like a retired civil servant and always talks about serious matters. However, when he sees him next day by the fountain, they pretend not to know each other again. Rumor has it that, this old man is actually begging there.

Despite their poverty, their house is so clean and livable that Aziz Nesin always envies. One day, a little girl starts to live in this house. The girl's mother comes once a week, loves her daughter and leaves. It is said that this woman works as a maid in a brothel. That is why he gives Zekiye a lot of money for looking after her daughter.

Just these days, Aziz Nesin hears children on the street calling each other "bastard." Some women also call naughty children "bastard." He learns that "bastard" is used for children whose father is unknown and that this girl is a "bastard." He also learns that a child living on their street is from a man her mother had an affair with and that a child born to an unmarried man is also called "bastard." He thinks that "bastards" are different kinds of people, that they are cunning, liars, cheats, and can never be good people. That's why he looks for similarities between these two different "bastards." They both have tiny faces and tiny eyes. Throughout his life, whenever he sees a child who looks like them, he thinks they are "bastards."

One day, Zekiye comes to their house with this little girl. She sweeps and tidies up their room. While she is sitting cross-legged in the hall and peeling cucumbers, a black cat appears. Whenever Aziz Nesin sees this cat, he shouts "Arab." When he does the same thing again, Zekiye stops in her tracks. Then she pulls herself together and says that she isn't offended by this, but if he does the same thing in front of someone else, she might be offended. Zekiye makes a salad and puts olives on it. She places a bunch of dried mint on a plate and sprinkles black pepper and salt on it. These are delicious eaten with fresh bread. However, Aziz Nesin never eats any of the salad because the little girl dips her bread in the salad water. In fact, he never eats from that plate again. When his mother comes home from the hospital and asks him why he doesn't eat from that plate, he says, "The bastard ate salad on that plate, mom." When his mother explains that no one becomes a "bastard" willingly, he thinks about it and decides not to blame anyone for it. But he still can't eat from that plate.

#### *Olives*

Since it is later understood that his mother actually has tuberculosis, doctors apply different treatments. They don't allow her to eat anything salty. When his father and he visit her, she says that she craves olives, even though she normally doesn't like them. They bring him a paper bag of olives. When they visit her the following week, she laughs and says that she hid the olives under her bed to eat at night, that a cat had eaten all the olives and left the pits in front of the bed.

#### *Freckled Girl*

One day, Aziz Nesin finds a chicken in their garden. Although his mother says that the chicken must belong to someone, he doesn't let it out. He names it "Freckled Girl." The next day, the chicken's owner, Aunt Reşide, comes. But when she sees how much he loves the chicken, she decides to give it to him as a gift. Aziz Nesin has many chickens over the years, they move to Heybeliada, sell their eggs there, buy sheep and they sell them too and then buy a house.

#### *Debt*

His father is owed by a man named Nihat, who is a customs officer and lives on Heybeliada, but he can't go and claim his debt. His mother tells his father to take the man to court, but his father objects because he thinks it would be shameful. His mother has a box. She opens it and takes out dozens of promissory notes. All of them are debts that his father gave to others and can't reclaim.

His father wants his mother to go to Heybeliada to claim his debt. His mother says that she won't go anywhere because but she doesn't have any decent clothes to go out with. She has many acquaintances in Heybeliada where she spent her childhood. Moreover, she is empty-necked because they sold her jewelry to lend it to someone else. Despite everything, in the end, his mother and he go to Heybeliada and stay as guests at Nihat's house for fifteen days.

While they stay as guests, Aziz Nesin admires Nihat. Nihat wears a suit, goes to work in the morning and comes home in the evening. Aziz Nesin is proud that his father has such a friend. However, Nihat states that he can't pay his debt because he doesn't have enough money. His father takes him to court because he believes that he hasn't paid his debt because he drinks raki every night and spends his money recklessly.

He wins the court case but when he learns that he will be given forty-eight banknotes instead of forty-eight gold coins, he objects. He is told that the regime has changed, that he paid the debt during the empire, and that there are now banknotes. He doesn't accept this explanation because forty-eight banknotes can't even buy four gold coins. These events fuel his hostility towards Mustafa Kemal Pasha and the new regime even more. He regrets suing Nihat for forty-eight banknotes, which aren't even worth four gold coins and doesn't take the money. Years later, when he hears that his son committed suicide because of a love affair and later that Nihat has passed away, he is very upset.

They know a coalman, Mehmet. He sends charcoal briquettes to their house by car in the winter but doesn't ask for any money in return. One day, he says he is short of money and asks his father for a loan. Since his father doesn't want to seem penniless to anyone, he sells his mother's jewelry that he gave his mother when they got married. When Mehmet wants to have a promissory note made for his debt, his father doesn't want any documents for his debt because he no longer trusts promissory notes. However, Mehmet pays his debt.

Aziz Nesin looks at the promissory notes that he inherited from his father and questions why his father lent so much money to people. Most of the people he lent money to were civil servants who earned more than him. He thinks that by lending money to them, he tried to heal the wound caused by being a less educated man than them.

#### *Mehmet Gets Married*

After the death of Mehmet's wife in the village, he brings his daughter, Nebiye, to Istanbul. Aziz Nesin's mother finds a woman for Mehmet to marry, and dresses Nebiye up so that the woman will like her. When the woman Mehmet is going to marry is at their house, Mehmet sends a sack full of various shoes. However, the shoes are so vulgar that the woman is almost on the verge of giving up on getting married. Aziz Nesin's mother says that Mehmet may have sent these shoes to see her reaction, and that men want to marry women who don't object to them. They get married.

#### *Debt Again*

Mehmet asks for a loan again, and this time he wants more. However, he can't pay it back because his business has gone bad. When his new wife leaves him, he is left alone with his daughter. They start living in a room he has built behind his shop. Aziz Nesin's father thinks that he can't pay his debt because he eats outside. Finally, Mehmet falls into bed. His father gives him a little more money every time he visits him. However, Mehmet can't recover from his illness and dies. This time, his father gives money to Nebiye, who runs the shop.

#### *Tree*

A little further down from Mehmet's shop, there is a shrine and a huge hackberry tree on top of it. Some people want to cut down this tree. Aziz Nesin's father doesn't allow it, saying that the saints won't leave them alone if they cut down the tree. The man trying to cut down the tree drives him away. However, he sees that shrine in his dream for three nights in a row. After telling these dreams to some shopkeepers, he takes an axe and climbs the tree. He plans to first cut the branches and then the trunk. However, as soon as he lifts the axe, he falls down. He is taken to the hospital. Later, someone else who tries to cut down the same tree sees the same shrine in his dream, and the shrine tells him in

his dream, "Don't cut down my tree, then I'll hurt your mother!" Aziz Nesin's father tells him all this with great pleasure.

#### *The Wisdom of Fur*

A friend of theirs, Fatma, takes Aziz Nesin to a tent theater on a Ramadan evening. This is the first theater play he has ever watched. In the play, there is an old head of a rich family. And there is Ibish, the classic servant in such plays. When the head of the family wears an old fur coat, he turns into a tyrant. Everyone in the house does everything he says without objecting while wearing that fur coat, and he asks everyone to do meaningless things. The audience falls off their chairs laughing at these moments. One day, Ibish wears the fur coat and takes revenge on him for all the ridiculous things he had done to him by wearing the fur coat.

The play is actually a satire on dictatorship. A few years later, Aziz Nesin writes a play inspired by this play. Years later, in 1971, as he is arrested, he thinks about the scene where Ibish puts the fur coat on his back and makes everyone in the house do meaningless things. He decides to deal with this subject himself and writes a play.

#### *Mother Also Lends Money*

His mother keeps the money, but his father keeps track of this money. One day, his mother's friend named Fatma asks his mother for a loan because her husband has left work. His mother secretly lends five liras. She is very afraid that his father finds out, so she wants to get her debt back as soon as possible, but Fatma doesn't pay her debt, even though she starts working as a cook in a house in Kadıköy. One evening, his father gives her mother some money and asks her to keep it. Aziz Nesin understands that his mother is very scared, but his father doesn't want to count the money as he normally does when he brings money home.

His mother learns the address of the house where Fatma works, but since she can't go to a strange house alone, she asks Aziz Nesin to go to that house and get the money. Aziz Nesin goes to Kadıköy for the first time and all by himself. Fatma comes to the door wiping her hands on her apron. She says that she can't pay her debt right away because she is working for three liras a month. However, a few days later, she brings some of the debt herself. Later, she pays the rest.

#### *Disgust from Pork*

They move from their house in Cerrahpaşa to a four-story, brick building in a place called "Langa" between Laleli and Yenikapı. The floor they rent has one room, a hall, a kitchen, and a toilet. They can hear the bells of the church. Their Greek neighbors live on the upper floor. One day, a cooking smell spreads down from that floor. Although Aziz Nesin has never eaten pork before, he makes a fuss saying that the neighbors are frying pork.

Although his mother says that it is the smell of onions frying in a pot, he can't believe it. He doesn't eat anything for two days because his stomach is upset. After this incident, he never eats pork in his life. Even though he feeds salami and sausages to his children and knows these things don't contain pork, he can't eat them himself. He attributes his situation to that he has heard many disgusting things about pigs, which his father calls "wicked."

#### *Coffee Maker*

After giving Arabic lessons to an imam in Kasımpaşa, Aziz Nesin's second job is working in a coffeehouse. He carries tea and coffee to the shopkeepers in the area. However, he has to quit because his mother doesn't want him to work in such an environment. In addition, his father also lends money to his boss but since he can't get his money back, he has to take him to court. The man's lawyer is also a turbaned cleric and shopkeeper in Aksaray that sells paper, rope, fabric, puppets, toys, etc. His shop is famous for not having been cleaned for years. Everything inside is covered in dust. Since there are very few lawyers in those years, such people can act as a lawyer in court.

The coffee maker claims that he gave him wood as payment for his debt. In fact, the coffee maker carried the scaffolding planks left over after the business center where he worked as a janitor was built. Although his father would have won the case if he had said he did not take these pieces of wood, he accepts that he did, but these pieces of wood are not payment for his debt. When he leaves the court, he gets angry at the turbaned cleric who is defending the man because he lied despite wearing a turban. Aziz Nesin's father is a man who never wants to believe that religious people can do evil.

That's why he is always surprised whenever he encounters such things. Two years later, when Aziz Nesin starts school, his teacher explains the importance of cleanliness and gives the example of the dirty shop of that turbaned teacher who defended the coffee shop. He criticizes both the shop and its owner in such a way that Aziz Nesin listens to him with pleasure as if he has taken revenge for his father.

#### *New House and Trees*

They move to a house with a large garden between Yenikapı and Laleli. After the mansion in the garden burned down, its owner died. The owner's wife became the owner of three separate single-story houses on the land of the old mansion. The woman is beautiful and lives according to her heart without paying attention to gossip. Her son from her first husband became a sailor. She has two more sons whose fathers no one knows. The woman earns her living from her two rented houses.

Their new house is large. His mother picks figs and mulberries from the fig and mulberry trees in the garden every morning. Sometimes they eat figs or mulberries under the trees and sometimes at home for breakfast. One day, Aziz Nesin climbs to the top of the wall in the garden to look down on the tree he always looks at from below. His mother gets angry when she sees him there and takes the ladder he uses to climb. He throws himself down to get down. His mother comes running to him in a hurry. In this way, he arouses his mother's compassion and escapes being scolded.

#### *Neighbor Girls*

Two sisters and their mother live in the house of other tenants. Different visit them every day. One day, the girls ask Aziz Nesin if he can read and write, and when they find out that he can, they ask him to write a letter on the condition that he doesn't tell anyone. All of them either have a spouse or lover in the army or in a faraway place. Their letters begin with expressions such as "my soul," "my one and only," "my only." The answers they receive usually begin with "my angel." Aziz Nesin points out that village men are hesitant to even write greetings to their wives in their letters, while men who have grown up in the city write letters to their lovers in this way.

#### *Childhood and Play*

Their house is at the dead end of a street that leans on a hill. There is a dilapidated mosque on the hill. Aziz Nesin plays alone here. He is reluctant to play with other children because he feels like he is doing something shameful when he mingles with them. An imam lives in the house opposite the garden gate. In those days, imams fold the skirt of their robes behind them, tie their hands behind their backs and walk like that. So when the imam leaves his house, the children start shouting after him, "Fold your robe!" Thus, Aziz Nesin says that imams no longer have the strength they used to have.

A song becomes fashionable in those days: His purse is made of velvet/His voice comes from coffeehouse/He sits and plays gambles/My beloved darling. The children all sing this song together and throw themselves sideways down the hill. Although Aziz Nesin can't join them, he also throws himself down the hill and falls, rolling down.

#### *Bribing Children*

One day, his mother picks figs from the garden, fills them in a basket and hands him the basket to take to Uncle Galip. He walks to the Unkapanı Bridge. There are gaps between the planks of the wooden bridge. Every time he passes by, he remembers a story his father told him: A man runs into a friend on the road. He asks where he is going. His friend answers that he is going to buy a donkey from the horse market. The man corrects his friend by saying that he should have said that he is going to the horse market and if God lets buy a donkey. His friend continues on his way. When he comes to this bridge, his foot falls into a gap and he drops his money into the sea. The two meet again on their way back in the evening. This time, when he is asked where he is going, he says that he is going home, if God lets he will work and save money, go to the horse market and buy a donkey from there, and return home.

A few children are undressed and jumping into the sea on the bridge. He is very surprised that these children are jumping head-first into the sea from such a height. He is afraid that they will mess with him and walks past them. When he reaches the hill where the horses are struggling, he squats down on one side and starts watching them. He watches them for a while and continues walking. While passing through a side street, he sees children playing. As it seems unbecoming for him to play with the children in his neighborhood, he feels comfortable because no one here knows him. Since none of

the children know that he is a hafiz or that he reads Arabic, they will see him as a child like them. Thinking this way, he joins in with them. In order to gain acceptance, he distributes some of the figs in his basket to them. There is a child who doesn't take the figs. This child, who is better dressed than the others, tells him not to distribute his figs and that the children won't let him stay with them after his figs run out. And indeed, it happens as he says. When his figs run out, they start pushing him around. He is forced to leave the basket there and walk away.

While descending the hill in Çürüklük, he finds enough money on the ground to pay a day's laborer. A little later, he finds a piece of paper with five liras written on it in another place. This time, he wants to join in with the children playing in an empty area. However, these children are older than him. Moreover, their language is very rude. He stops a paste seller on the street and orders colorful pastes for all the children. But after the pastes are finished, they chase him away.

He leaves with his head bowed. While passing by a stonemason's shop, he watches how gravestones are prepared. While passing by the herbalist's shop near the coffeehouse where he and Uncle Galip used to meet, he goes in and wants to ask what the paper with five liras written on it means because the herbalist's shop also sells contract papers. The seller says that the paper is a contract paper and buys it from him for five cents. Thus, he completes the day without delivering the fig basket to Uncle Galip.

#### *Secret Childhood*

His aunt Güllü, the youngest among his father's siblings, comes to Istanbul. His mother and he visit her house. His aunt wears a red dress with skirts that sweep the floor in the summer. There are colorful rose pictures on it. He feels a sense of superiority because of her style. He is proud to be from Istanbul. His aunt's house has a small garden. He plays there, secretly from everyone. In fact, he is afraid of being thought of as a child if he plays in front of others. Yet he is still a child of primary school age. For his game, he lines up pieces of tile side by side and puts small stones on them. These are beans, rice and chickpeas. He makes a scale by tying two pieces of cardboard to the two ends of a stick with a rope. There is a customer and a grocer. He is sure that his father would scold him by saying, "Are you a child?" if he saw him like this.

#### *Zeynep Khanum and Her Spouses*

They have an acquaintance named Zeynep. She is both a hardworking and cheerful woman. She was married off to an Arab when she was thirteen. The man left after a while. When he left, they married Zeynep to a Laz. The man was a boatman on the Golden Horn. He contracted tuberculosis after they got married and died. Then she married a handsome and honorable Kurd. Her Kurdish husband was an honest man who sold pastries in the morning and grapes in the evening. However, he was stabbed to death in the back. Since it wasn't considered appropriate for a woman to be alone, she married an Albanian friend of Aziz Nesin's father. The Albanian man was good but very old. He also barely speaks Turkish. When they go to visit them, he gives Aziz Nesin two chickens as a gift.

#### *Charlot*

Their house is very close to Şehzadebaşı. There are also cinemas in Şehzadebaşı. Since Friday is a holiday, it is cheaper in the mornings. Although his mother doesn't go to the cinema herself, she wants him to go. His father is completely against cinema. One Friday, his mother dresses him nicely, gives him some pocket money and sends him to the cinema. The cinema is full of primary schoolers because schools are closed that day. When he goes to the cinema on Fridays, he feels especially happy because he is considered one of them. His father is against the regime and the government and doesn't want to send him to school.

He gets to know Charlot by going to the cinema. Since it is a silent movie, someone plays the piano in the hall. However, the piano sound can't be heard because of the laughter. When the children in the hall laugh, he laughs too, but not because he finds the movie funny. Because he thinks it is necessary to laugh. He thinks how right his father is when he says that cinema is a farce.

#### *House Number Three in Süleymaniye*

When the doctor recommends that they live in a well-ventilated place because of his mother's illness, they move to a house in Süleymaniye. The door leads to the hall. An Arab confectioner lives in the room on the right, and a hunchbacked watchmaker with his wife and child lives in the room on the left. There is a staircase leading downstairs, but it is empty because it is too dilapidated to be used. There

is another hall on the upper floor. Emine, her husband, and their daughter live in the room on the left, and a knifemaker with his wife live in the room on the right. The room in the back is theirs. When you look out of the window, you can see part of Istanbul. It is a well-ventilated place with a beautiful view. His favorite person here is the hunchbacked watchmaker. He constantly repairs watches without taking any vacations. He chats with him as if he were a grown man. When he goes down to the garden in the mornings to his chickens, the watchmaker also comes and checks on all the chickens and tells him how many eggs each one will give that day. He is right in his guess every time. One morning, when he finds a small egg, he shows it to the watchmaker, and the watchmaker laughs and says that the egg belongs to a rooster, that some roosters lay eggs like that, and that from now on, he can no longer be a rooster and must be slaughtered. They slaughter the rooster. Another day, one of his chickens howls like a rooster. Then he says that the chicken must be slaughtered. They slaughter it. When his chickens are sick, the watchmaker once prepares medicine for them. Then they get better. Because of all this, he feels a fearful respect for the watchmaker, who seems to know everything.

#### *A Letter*

One day, a letter is delivered to their neighbor, Emine. A blank piece of paper is found inside the envelope. The hunchback watchmaker takes the paper and goes to his room with Aziz Nesin. He lights the gas lamp and holds the letter under the light. After a while, they see that the paper is a love letter. The watchmaker explains that the letter was written with onion juice and that a letter written with onion juice should be read under the light. However, there has been a mix-up. The letter was not sent to their neighbor, Emine, but to Emine, the daughter of the muezzin in the back street because their door number is also three. The daughter of the muezzin, Emine, is a young girl who dresses like a "tango," which isn't appropriate for that neighborhood. The hunchback watchmaker tears up the letter and makes him promise not to tell anyone about it.

#### *The Arab Dessert Maker Gets Married*

One day, they hear that their Arab neighbor, who is a confectioner, is getting married. The person he marries is a much younger and more beautiful girl. This young girl is married off to him by her family because she was raped by the son of the family she worked for. The dessert maker buys a lot of things for their room. He does everything she asks with pleasure. The young girl hardly leaves his room during the day. She constantly cleans their room. When she is free, she makes decorations with craft papers.

#### *Fevzi*

Next to their house are the ruins of a mosque and tombs. There is a young man, Fevzi, who cleans this mosque every day and goes up to its minaret to recite the adhan before every prayer. Fevzi lives with his brother Hamdi in the house of his two aunts. Their father is dead and their mother has married someone else. The whole neighborhood loves Fevzi, a senior at Davutpaşa Middle School. When it is evening, the lights around the tombs in the garden of the mosque are lit. Fevzi is the one who lights them. Whenever Aziz Nesin's father sees these lights, he says, "See, he is a Muslim boy!"

One evening, while he is with Fevzi in the garden of the mosque, Fevzi takes a long pole and connects the wire at the end of the pole to the electric wire on the street. He squeezes the lamps around the tombs into their sockets, and the place suddenly becomes bright. He turns off the lights that shine all night long so as not to be caught by a civil servant or an employee from the electricity administration when he comes to recite the adhan in the morning. When Aziz Nesin asks him how he does it, he says that they are also taught electricity in physics class at school. Aziz Nesin then becomes even more interested in school education.

Fevzi sometimes studies at their home, as Fevzi reads a book, he likes his books. But sometimes Fevzi also draws pictures. For example, he puts a glass in front of him and draws a glass looking very similar to a real glass. Aziz Nesin, who is impressed by him, also becomes interested in painting. He becomes so enthusiastic about becoming a painter even though he has never seen a painter in his life. One day, Fevzi asks him why he doesn't go to school. He says that his father doesn't allow it. Fevzi says that his brother's school is very close to his house and that if he wants, he can enroll him in that school with a petition. Both Aziz Nesin and his mother are very happy about this.

One Friday, the two brothers tell Aziz Nesin that they are going to visit their mother who lives in Kuruçeşme and that he can join them if he wants. Aziz Nesin is happy with this offer. The three of them walk to Kuruçeşme but are exhausted. When Fevzi and Hamdi go to their mother's house, Aziz

Nesin waits for them on the street for a long time. When they come back, both of them are sulky. They had hoped to get money on the way back, so they had imagined that they would return by tram and even buy bagels. However, Aziz Nesin guesses from their silence that things didn't go as they expected. When they reach Beşiktaş, they become cheerful again. However, when they reach Karaköy, they start to worry because they have to pay when they cross the Galata Bridge. The officers standing on both sides of the bridge grab anyone who tries to cross without paying. When leaving, Fevzi has paid for three of them, but he only has money left for two. Hamdi has to sneak behind them without letting the officers know.

#### *Being a Schoolboy*

Since the republican regime is considered a break from the past, primary schools that are previously named after great people are numbered. Aziz Nesin delivers the petition written by Fevzi to the Istanbul Seventh Primary School, previously known as Suleiman the Magnificent Primary School. The school principal requests six photos and a vaccination certificate. Since he has no photos until then except for one taken when he was very young, this is the first time he has a photo taken. He leaves home to have his photo taken with Emine, the daughter of the muezzin, and her brother.

There is a security cabin on the road. However, this cabin is usually empty. As they pass by it, they see a black man sitting inside. The man has unbuttoned his pants, his eyes are wide, and he is breathing rapidly. Since there is no one else on the street, they quickly pass by the cabin. When the girl asks what the man is doing, Aziz Nesin says he doesn't know. The girl then laughs to herself.

After completing his registration, he gets up early and goes to the school to take the exam. All the children are with either their mothers or fathers. He is alone. A strange feeling settles inside him. He knocks on the principal's door alone. The principal sends him to a teacher named Zekâi. There are three teachers in the teachers' room, one of whom is wearing a turban. First, they ask him to read passages from a book. He reads. They ask him to read a fifth grade book, Aziz Nesin successfully reads all of them. They ask him to write, he writes. The more he can write the more difficult sentences he is asked to write. The turbaned one opens the Quran and asks him to read. Since he is a hafiz, he recites the surah from memory. They ask if he has read the history of the prophets. When he says he has read, they ask him to tell about the Battle of the Trench. He does. When he successfully answers the math and geometry questions, they ask him geography, history, and chemistry questions. He can't answer any of them because Uncle Galip didn't teach him any of these. Thus, he is enrolled in the third grade. Since his mother told him to study and become a doctor when she was discharged from hospital, he becomes happy by imagining that he can be a doctor who can heal the sick like his mother. When he leaves school, he goes to the Süleymaniye Mosque. He sits down on the steps in the mosque's courtyard and begins to cry with joy.

#### *Disease, Motherhood, Meat, and Cat*

After it is determined that his mother has tuberculosis, doctors tell her that she needs to eat meat often. With the support of an institution, his father goes to the butcher every week with a piece of paper in his hand and buys half a kilo of meat. Since his mother cooks this meat on a barbecue, she usually eats it when no one is home. Otherwise, she is afraid that their neighbors, who are poor like them, would also get cravings because of the smell. Although Aziz Nesin tries not to be home when the meat is cooking, his mother always saves some meat for him.

A tabby cat lives in their house. This cat doesn't touch any food that isn't given to her. However, her only surviving kitten is a yellow cat and a thief. One day, the mother cat is seen climbing up the stairs with a huge piece of meat in her mouth. When she reaches the hall, she lets go of the meat and purrs. After a while, her kitten comes out of nowhere and starts eating the meat all by herself. The mother cat sits aside and licks herself. At that moment, Aziz Nesin's mother suddenly leaves the hall and goes to their room.

From that day on, the mother cat continues to come home with large pieces of meat. This cat, who never steals anything from the house, feeds the large pieces of meat she stole from somewhere to her kitten. One day, while they are having lunch, the mother cat comes up to them and lies down on the tablecloth. After a while, her kitten comes up to them, but as soon as she comes, she claws the bread on the table. The mother cat immediately hits her a few times. The kitten then hides under the table. After a while, the mother cat disappears. They think that she is caught and killed where she steals the meat.

### *Fish Oil*

There is another thing his mother takes as a nutritional supplement; cod fish oil. Its taste and smell are so bad that as soon as she drinks the oil, she eats the quince she is holding in her other hand to suppress its taste and smell. Later, when some people recommend that she eat coffee, she starts eating coffee as soon as she drinks the oil. At those moments, Aziz Nesin stands in front of his mother and looks at her face carefully, thinking that maybe she will offer it to him. But his mother never offers it.

### *Fairy Tales*

From time to time, their neighbor, Emine, invites him to her room and tells him fairy tales. His favorite fairy tale is The Lame Stork. The Lame Stork is actually an angel of goodness and appears to people as a lame stork. In order to reward everyone who does him a favor, he makes a hole in the wall of the house where they live and pours gold coins through it. Every time Aziz Nesin hears this, he goes down to the unused lower floor of the house, looks at the ruined walls and imagines that gold coins are poured from there.

His mother tells fairy tales just like their neighbor. In one of the tales she tells, a big bird rescues a young man from a dungeon, but in order to fly him to the land of hope he wants to go to, it asks for water and meat. When the young man has no meat or water left to give the bird, he gives his blood instead of water and his liver instead of meat. They finally reach the land of hope, but the young man's blood and liver are gone. His mother also tells of a lonely girl locked in a dungeon. This girl makes a woman for herself from the remains of melted candle wax and calls her "Auntie Candle." She ties a rope around her neck and pulls her as if she is answering "yes" or "no" to her questions. In another tale, a woman who doesn't know how to feed her children rips out the liver of one of the dead in the cemetery, cooks it as food and feeds it to her children. Then the dead person gets up from his place and goes to the woman's house and asks for his liver back. In another tale, someone who wants to be immortal keeps looking for a place where the day is more than twenty-four hours, the week is more than seven days, and the month is more than thirty days.

### *First Day at School*

On the first day of school, he gets up early and puts on his best clothes. His mother happily hugs him and sends him off. He goes to school with Fevzi's brother, Hamdi. He feels strange when he sees so many children in the schoolyard that he has never seen in his life. He feels closer to the adult teachers than to the children. When Hamdi sees his own friends and leaves him, he is left stranded. After a while, a teacher comes out and starts making them sing the National Anthem. Since he doesn't know the anthem, he moves his lips to keep up with everyone.

### *A Great Man*

His teacher, Zekâi, is always well-dressed, clean-shaven every day, and his teeth are spotless. He constantly tells the children that wearing old and patched clothes isn't shameful, but wearing dirty clothes is. Aziz Nesin wears patched clothes, but his mother never lets him wear dirty or torn ones. That's why he holds great respect for his teacher, Zekâi. For him, the Republic means his teacher, Zekâi. Sometimes his teacher hits the palms of mischievous students with a ruler, but he never hits him. He feels a respectful fear toward him. So much so that he can't even turn his head when passing by the two-story wooden house where his teacher lives with his mother.

### *Not the Fez, but the Hat!*

When Mustafa Kemal Atatürk bans the fez and makes wearing hats mandatory, the Greeks, Armenians, and Jews start making and selling hats. Muslim Turks, however, can't immediately adapt to the hat and thus can't start producing and selling them right away. Aziz Nesin's father is so angered by the hat-wearing mandate that he stops calling Mustafa Kemal "Blind Kemal" and simply starts calling him "the blind one." When Aziz Nesin looks at the portraits of Mustafa Kemal at school, he notices that one of his eyes is indeed slightly impaired, but he feels proud of his achievements even if one eye doesn't see well. However, when his father claims that Mustafa Kemal is a converted Jew from Thessaloniki, Aziz Nesin doesn't like it. He can't dismiss this claim as easily as he can the possibility of one eye being impaired.

One day, while sitting in the schoolyard with the other children, they watch the men passing by on the street. Despite the ban, a few still wore fezzes; some wear hats, and most wear caps. Many of his friends, influenced by their fathers, argue that the fez looks better than the hat. Aziz Nesin, on the

other hand, defends the hat precisely because his father loves the fez; if Mustafa Kemal Pasha says hats should be worn then hats must be worn. While defending the hat, he points out men who he thinks wear hats well, showing his friends that they look much better in hats than in fezzes.

#### *The Uniform*

A mandatory school uniform policy is introduced in schools. Aziz Nesin will have to wear navy blue trousers, a jacket, and a cap. The uniforms are sewn and sold by Christian citizens who also make hats. Aziz Nesin and his father, who never buys anything without haggling, spend days searching for a uniform. When they can't agree on a price during negotiations, his father, as usual, says, "Some have money, others have prayers," but these words have no effect on the Greek, Armenian, and Jewish tailors. Everyone, as if in unison, insists they sell at cost. When Aziz Nesin becomes the only one at school without a uniform, they finally find and buy one cheaply from a Greek tailor through an acquaintance of his father.

#### *When Was Abdülhamid Dethroned?*

When his teacher, Zekâi, says that the last sultan was Vahdettin and that he fled by boarding a British warship in the Bosphorus, Aziz Nesin is surprised. After all, everyone talks as if Mustafa Kemal had dethroned Abdülhamid and declared the republic. Everyone complains about the Abdülhamid era. If the last sultan was Vahdettin, he wonders why the complaints are directed at Abdülhamid and not at Vahdettin.

Years later, he reflects on how every revolution must stand against something, and if it stands against something weak, it too will be weak. That's why, he thinks, the revolution chose to stand against Abdülhamid, the last strong representative of the dynasty, rather than a vague figure like Vahdettin. After all, the excitement and power of a revolution will be as great and impactful as the thing it opposes.

#### *The Sheikh's Youngest Son*

Every day, the schoolyard fills with vendors selling nuts, paper halva, bagels, caramels, and dried fruits. While his friends buy and eat these treats, Aziz Nesin never approaches any of the vendors because he never has any money. However, one day, as he passes by the vendors, someone calls out to him. It's a man selling salted peanuts, roasted chickpeas, pumpkin seeds, and nougat from a glass-covered tin box. When Aziz Nesin gets closer, he realizes it's Muhittin, the youngest son of the sheikh of the lodge in Çürüklük. Seeing him in this situation feels strange to Aziz Nesin. In these times, social values are turned upside down, and people's places in life have shifted dramatically. Muhittin offers him a paper cone filled with salted peanuts. This is the only treat he ever eats during his time at school.

#### *The Child-Man*

Aziz Nesin's father has an acquaintance named Kâmil the Sergeant, who is from Kastamonu. He has no family and makes a living by transporting goods with his horse, though sometimes he gets bored and switches to selling firewood. Aziz Nesin's father always scolds him like a child, telling him to stick to one job. Eventually, Kâmil the Sergeant sells his horse and builds himself a four-wheeled, glass-covered cart. In the glass compartment, he displays and sells nuts, chickpeas, pumpkin seeds, salted peanuts, pistachios, carob, and almonds. He decorates his cart with colorful flowers and lights paper lanterns at night.

One day, when Aziz Nesin's father sees him without the cart and asks what happened to it. Kâmil the Sergeant, like a guilty child, explains that he donated it to a lame man with two children whose wife has tuberculosis. Although Aziz Nesin's father says he was tricked, Kâmil the Sergeant insists the man promised to pay for the cart once his situation improved. However, the man never pays. What bothers Kâmil the Sergeant isn't the unpaid debt but the fact that the man didn't take care of the decorations on the cart.

After this, he spends some time collecting broken glass, paper, and cloth scraps from the streets to make a living. He sells charcoal, vegetables at the market, and even collects purebred dogs from wealthy neighborhoods. When lost dog notices are posted, he matches the dogs he has with the photos and collects rewards. He buys bones from butchers, boils them to extract fat, and sells it. Eventually, he builds sheds on an empty plot of land and starts living there with the dogs. Wealthy women, hearing of his reputation, buy dogs from him.

He spends the last twenty years of his life with the dogs and dies in the shed where he lived with them. His body is found a few days later. The dogs, which would eat anything when hungry, don't even allow anyone to touch his corpse.

#### *Friends at School*

Aziz Nesin's favorite friend at school is Irfan. After elementary school, Irfan can't continue his education and becomes one of the biggest newspaper distributors in Bâbüâli. Muzaffer is a chubby, snotty boy whose nose is always running. Aziz Nesin last sees Muzaffer during the events of 6-7 September; he's arrested, and Muzaffer serves as the military prison warden. He neither treats Aziz Nesin well nor poorly. Another friend, Hâdi, from Malatya, is mocked because he struggles to speak Turkish. Their teacher, Zekâi, predicts Hâdi will be the most hardworking student, and he turns out to be right. Aziz Nesin believes this is largely due to Hâdi's inferiority complex, which pushes him to excel.

The only friend he keeps from third grade onward is Salih, who, like Muzaffer, is always snotty. Salih comes to school wearing oversized shoes but later learns that his father and uncle are wealthy oil merchants. While running a photo studio, Aziz Nesin borrows money from Salih but fails to repay it on time. One evening, Salih visits him, and they walk together on Istiklal Avenue. Salih lectures Aziz Nesin about the importance of managing money, and as Aziz Nesin listens to him, he feels all the good things he felt about his friend shatter.

Another friend, Feridun, always dresses elegantly and attends military school but later quits. Years later, Aziz Nesin sees him on the street asking for directions and learns he's become an actor and an organizer.

Among his friends is a boy named Ihsan, but Aziz can never remember his face. However, at the age of fifty, he dreams of Ihsan as a clumsy, awkward child and is shocked to realize he still remembers him. It makes him wonder what else his subconscious holds onto.

There's another Ihsan he remembers, but this one is older. In those days, elementary schools admit not only children but also people almost as old as teachers. This Ihsan, with his barely grown mustache, is one such student. However, he's soon expelled. One day, rumors spread that he's waiting in the schoolyard to stab the teachers who expelled him. The fifth-grade students band together and attack him. In the end, Aziz Nesin sees him being dragged away by someone, blood streaming from his nose.

#### *Disconnected Letters*

Because reading with Arabic letters is difficult, Enver Pasha looks for solutions, and as a result, the method of disconnected letters is adopted. People think this will make reading and writing easier, but it doesn't. Until Aziz Nesin attends school, he writes with connected letters. However, his teacher, Zekâi, insists on using disconnected letters for ease. Aziz Nesin's father, who disapproves of what Enver Pasha does, curses Mustafa Kemal, claiming that he is following Enver Pasha's path. However, Mustafa Kemal doesn't follow Enver Pasha's path. He completely abolishes Arabic letters and replaces them with Latin letters.

#### *The Unforgettable Lunch*

At school, they have four classes before lunch, and after the fourth class, they go out for lunch. There are also two classes in the afternoon. One day, after the bell rings, Aziz Nesin runs home for lunch. However, when he looks back, he doesn't see any of the children he normally sees. The road is completely empty. When he gets home, his mother fries two eggs for him. After eating, he runs back to school. But the schoolyard, which is usually crowded, is completely empty. When he enters the school, he realizes that everyone is in their classrooms. He quietly goes to his own classroom. His teacher, holding a ruler, asks where he has come from. He says he has gone to eat. The teacher asks him to open his palm and then hits him with the ruler. Although it hurts, he doesn't make a sound. Shortly after, the bell rings, and all the children disperse for lunch. At that moment, he realizes that he has gone for lunch after the third class.

#### *The Martyr's Wife and Daughters*

On the street where they live, there is an old mansion. Each room of this mansion is occupied by a different family. One of them is a bread-seller woman and her two daughters. This woman loses her

husband in the Battle of Gallipoli. Her older daughter is a boarding student at the Women's Teacher Training College, and every morning, the woman sells bread she buys from the bakery at Yağkaparı Dock, accompanied by her younger daughter. Aziz Nesin learns about her work because he walks with her in the mornings. However, not all martyr's wives and daughters are like this woman and her daughters. Aziz Nesin notes that some women and their daughters are forced to do shameful things to survive.

Uncle Galip gives French lessons to the older daughter, while Aziz Nesin teaches the younger one. However, one day, because he pushes the girl too hard, she starts crying. He leaves her without saying a word. As soon as he steps outside, he also begins to cry. From that day on, he never goes back to give her French lessons. Although the woman gives him a small allowance for teaching her daughter French, he stops going.

#### *The Sudden Eid*

One day, while Aziz Nesin is out with his school friend Mustafa, a watchman strikes the iron tip of his baton on the pavers and announces, "The crescent moon has been sighted; today is a holiday!" Two people have witnessed the sighting of the moon, so the mufti declares it a holiday. Normally, an Eid has an eve, but since this is suddenly declared that afternoon, Aziz Nesin doesn't know what to do. The first thing that comes to his mind is to take a bath. He places a tin of water and a basin in the middle of the room. He undresses, steps into the basin, and starts washing himself with cold water. Shortly after, his mother arrives and scolds him. From that day on, he develops a fever and falls ill. He spends the Eid sick.

#### *Self-Satisfaction*

Aziz Nesin constantly thanks God, thinking that he is a beloved servant of God because he is born to Muslim parents, not Christian ones; because he is Turkish and not of another nation; and because he is born in Istanbul, not in another city. That's why he easily embraces Mustafa Kemal's saying, "How happy is the one who says, 'I am a Turk!'" However, later on, he begins to question what the fault is of children born to non-Muslim families or those born in villages, if being Muslim is a superiority and being born in Istanbul is a blessing. These questions torment him.

#### *Mother Goes to Her Hometown*

When Aziz Nesin's mother says she wants to claim her share of the inheritance left by her father in her village, his father objects. When she mentions their financial struggles, his father refuses to acknowledge them. In fact, he never admits that they face any financial difficulties. He is also against city dwellers eyeing the land owned by villagers. However, his mother says she misses her village, that spending time in an airy, mountainous place will be good for her health, and that if her mother is still alive, she wants to see her. His father allows her to go to her hometown, telling her to bring her mother back if she is alive. They see her off at the Tophane pier as she sets off for the Black Sea.

#### *Harassment*

Aziz Nesin notes that during his childhood, pederasty is very widespread, and no one is ashamed of it. Many jokes and anecdotes about it circulate among the people. That's why women don't want their children to play outside. One day, while his mother is in Ordu, he goes out, and a well-dressed man approaches him and starts chatting with him. Aziz Nesin is used to adults not treating him like a child, so he doesn't find it strange. When the man suggests going to the cinema, he can't say no. Before the cinema, they go to a pastry shop. They sit at one of the small tables, and a pastry is brought to the table. Suddenly, he feels a hand wandering over his knees, so he abruptly stands up and leaves. He notes that since he wasn't educated about such matters, he learned through experience.

#### *The Guest*

When Aziz Nesin's father is asked if he can take care of a sick man in his mother's absence, he agrees. The sick man is someone named Rüştü Pasha. Rüştü Pasha, who is said to be one of Abdülhamid's pashas, constantly groans and can't go to the toilet, so a chamber pot is placed under him. His sister takes care of him. Eventually, Rüşü Pasha passes away.

#### *His Mother Comes Back*

When his mother goes back to her hometown, she buys floral pongees, printed fabrics, and headscarves as gifts. She sees her mother in her hometown and has the opportunity to talk with her.

Upon her return, she brings back two sacks filled with beans and hazelnuts, and a basket full of sour mandarins. She says joyfully that every year, the same things will be sent to her.

However, due to the financial difficulties they are facing, she decides to sell her share of the inherited land from her father by sending a letter of attorney to an acquaintance in Ordu. To issue the letter of attorney, she needs to have an identification photo taken. His father refuses to allow this because his mother has to lift her veil and show her face for the photo. Aziz Nesin recalls a line from a folk poem: "There are traces of eyes on your face / Who looked at you, my beloved?" He mentions that he knows how jealous his father is.

After a quiet struggle at home about taking the photo, his mother eventually has six identification photos taken. Her face is visible in a triangular shape from under her black veil. The photos and the letter of attorney are sent to Ordu. However, she doesn't receive a response. Aziz Nesin goes to Ordu in 1959 to try to access these photos his mother took, but he doesn't achieve any results.

### *Zekeriya*

Everyone who migrates to Istanbul gathers with people from their own hometown in the same area. When Aziz Nesin learns that his mother's fellow townspeople gather around Arapcami in Beyoğlu, he starts visiting a coffeehouse run by two brothers named Celâl and Bilâl. There, he meets their nephew Zekeriya, who works at the coffeehouse. Zekeriya is a child who has finished primary school and loves reading. However, his family doesn't allow him to continue his education. Aziz Nesin feels so saddened by Zekeriya's inability to continue his studies that he feels ashamed of his own education.

### *Being the Poorest Child*

When his friends decide to visit their teacher, Zekâî, at his home on the first day of Eid, he joins them. They meet up, but when he sees his friends going in the opposite direction, he asks why. His friends say they are going to buy candy. Since one of their fathers is a confectioner, he will sell it to them cheaper. They go to the shop, and each child buys some candy, but he can't buy anything because he has no money. The confectioner gives each of them a ring-shaped candy as a gift. When they go outside, he feels so ashamed that he doesn't know what to do. His mind is on the shelves, cabinets, books, and desk at his teacher's house when they run into his twin friends. Seeing that they also have boxes of candy, he suddenly says he needs to go and runs away. He runs far away. When he gets home late, his mother asks where he has been, and he says the teacher didn't let them leave early. He starts praising the sofa, desk, cabinets, shelves, and books at his teacher's house, which he hasn't even seen.

### *Evening Lessons*

When he hears about a public evening school in Yeşil Tulumba that offers classes for people who couldn't attend school, he goes there to learn new things. He lies that he never attended school. In the exam they give him, he performs so well that one teacher, thinking he is a wasted talent, says to another, "This child has sparks of intelligence in his eyes!" He attends math classes here three evenings a week, surrounded by a few teenagers and people in their 20s and 30s.

### *A Different Tenancy*

Unable to pay their rent, they rent a madrasah room in Süleymaniye. This room actually looks like a cave. There is a window above the door that opens onto the street and this is the only source of sunlight. There is a mezzanine floor where a crippled and very ornate woman lives. This floor is reached by a wooden staircase. Some men occasionally bring money to this woman who is said to be rich. The real tenant of that room is this woman. However, since she respects Aziz Nesin's father very much, she doesn't ask for anything from them. They divide the mezzanine in the middle with a cloth curtain and live with her. Living under these conditions exhausts Aziz Nesin's mother so much that her illness progresses further. So they rent a house in a few weeks.

### *Aunt Havva*

They move to the third floor of a three-story masonry house in Vefa. There are two rooms, a sofa, a kitchen and a toilet. Two brothers who work as middlemen rent this place to them. Since his mother has returned from Ordu, she constantly talks about her sister, Havva. She brings her to Istanbul because she has a foot problem. Havva is a young, thin, and very beautiful young girl. When she undergoes surgery on her foot, she stops limping like before. When she recovers completely, she starts to miss her village. His mother treats her like a mother, not an older sister, and asks her to stay

in Istanbul. However, Aunt Havva insists on her village. Aziz Nesin doesn't like Aunt Havva very much because he can't see in her the warm feelings that his mother shows her. In the end, Aunt Havva returns to her village in Ordu and dies a year later because she can't bear the living conditions in the village.

#### *Milk Siblings*

When his father leaves Istanbul with two middlemen to search for treasure, his mother learns the address of her foster parents. She takes Aziz Nesin and goes to that address. There, Aziz Nesin learns that his mother and his mother's foster mother gave birth at the same time, and that he and his mother's youngest foster brother, Abdülkadir, are milk siblings. While staying there, they keep the plate and spoon his mother and he use separate from the ones they use. However, neither of them takes offense at this. After all, his mother has tuberculosis, and he is the son of a woman with tuberculosis.

#### *The Letter*

His father sends a letter from Bursa announcing that they have found a treasure trove of old coins and that they will soon be very rich. He even places one of the coins under the paper and rubs it with a pencil to create an imprint of the coin on the paper. However, his mother, having received many such letters before, doesn't believe a word of it. After a while, his father returns empty-handed. Aziz Nesin thinks that his father's lifelong obsession with treasure hunting was a sweet, enticing dream, and that deep down, his father knew he would never find anything.

#### *Heybeliada*

Since the doctors say his mother needs to live in a place with fresh air, she rents a two-room wooden house on Heybeliada, where she spent her childhood. Her foster father will pay the rent for the first month and provide ten liras in assistance every month. Aziz Nesin goes to his house in Kadıköy several times a month to collect the money, and his wife hides the money in his sock. In addition to the money, she also sends honey, jam, and butter.

#### *The Landlord*

The landlord is a Greek man who lives in Istanbul. He comes to talk because they haven't been able to pay the rent. While drinking coffee with his father, the Greek man speaks in a very ornate Ottoman Turkish. He is so refined that he resembles an imam who has taken off his robe. At one point, their conversation turns to verses from the Quran and hadiths. For every verse and hadith his father mentions, the Greek man responds with another one. Then, they move on to reciting poetry. His father recites folk and Sufi poetry, while the Greek man recites classical divan poetry. He doesn't pressure his father about the rent at all and simply asks him to bring the money to his shop whenever he has it. After the Greek landlord leaves, his father claims that the man carries a "hidden faith," insisting that he is definitely a Muslim but can't reveal it for some reason.

#### *The Secret Misdeed*

The biggest problem on Heybeliada is water. There are water carriers who transport water using donkeys, but buying water this way is beyond their budget. On the island, there is a single fountain near the pier that receives water transported by ferry from Kartal, and it flows for only an hour or two in the afternoon. At the fountain, donkey-riding water carriers, women with tin cans, and children with buckets gather and wait. Every day, Aziz Nesin comes here with a jug to carry water home. The shortest route he takes while carrying water is a steep slope, with a meadow on one side. As he carries the jug, children playing with a ball gather in the meadow. Embarrassed by them, he speeds up at that part of the slope, but lifting the jug to keep it from touching the ground makes it even harder for him.

Their neighbor, Zeynep, also has tuberculosis, and since the doctors have recommended sunbathing for both women, the two of them go to the pine groves in the afternoon, lift their charshafs and sunbathe their backs. One afternoon, Aziz Nesin leaves them in the pine groves and heads straight home to fill the jug with water and buy bread with the money his mother gave him. He takes the jug from the house, stops by the Greek baker near the church, gives the baker a lira, and tells him he'll pick up the bread on his way back. Then he goes to the fountain, fills the jug with water, and returns to the baker with the full jug. The baker gives him both the bread and the change from the lira.

The next evening, he does the same things in the same order. When he picks up the bread from the baker, the baker says he forgot to give him the change from the lira and drops the coins into his palm. Aziz Nesin takes the money without saying anything, even though he had actually paid the full price for the bread. The following evening, when the baker doesn't give him the change along with the bread, he claims he had given a lira (even though he hadn't) and asks for his change. He repeats this trick many times. With the money he saves, he buys fruits and vegetables brought to the pier by motorboats. When his mother asks how he bought them, he lies and says he got them very cheap.

One day, when he claims he bought quinces cheaper than their neighbor did, his mother becomes suspicious. After that, he never takes extra money from the baker again. But what he did stays with him so deeply that it haunts him for the rest of his life, popping into his mind at unexpected moments and filling him with shame.

#### *What Changes After the Occupation*

His mother wonders about an old Greek haberdasher she knows from her childhood. She asks around and finally finds a woman who knows about him. The Greek haberdasher, after Istanbul is occupied, takes off his fez, kicks it in front of the church door, and shouts, "Zito Venizelos!" which means "Long live Venizelos!" When Istanbul is retaken, he flees and disappears.

#### *Zeynep Khanum's Son*

Zeynep Khanum's son is a student at a military school when he joins the resistance in Anatolia and later becomes a captain. One day, he comes to visit his mother. Aziz Nesin sees that he is as handsome as Zeynep Khanum describes. Although Aziz Nesin feels like a child when he lifts him up with both hands, he feels like an equal when they chat.

#### *Breaking Rules for the Sake of Goodness*

Aziz Nesin moves on to the fourth grade, but his mother doesn't have the means to send him to the school on the island. His father goes off somewhere for treasure hunting again, but they have no idea where he is. His mother's stepfather wants to send him to a free boarding school, but the only school that accepts children his age is Darüşşafaka, which only admits fatherless children.

When the Republic is declared, the position of imam at the Naval Academy is abolished, and Şevket Efendi, the imam of the academy, becomes the imam of Heybeliada. However, the only mosque on the island is the one at the academy. Since imams handle many of the tasks that village heads usually do, his mother's stepfather writes a letter to Şevket Efendi, asking him to declare that Aziz Nesin is fatherless.

When Aziz Nesin takes the letter to him, he doesn't expect Şevket Efendi to help him. However, Şevket Efendi prepares a petition stating that his father can't be found. According to this, his father is not dead; he is simply missing. So, if he ever shows up one day, it won't count as a false statement. As soon as Aziz Nesin takes the petition and steps outside, he feels guilty, as if he has killed his father himself, and starts crying.

In reality, Şevket Efendi breaks the rules selflessly to help him study. Aziz Nesin learns for the first time from Şevket Efendi that it is sometimes necessary to step outside the rules to do good. Much later, he realizes that he takes a very important step toward becoming the Aziz Nesin we know today, thanks to him.

#### *The Lottery*

After completing the documents for Darüşşafaka, Aziz Nesin spends a night at his mother's stepfather's house in Kadıköy. In the morning, his mother's step brother, Edip, takes him to Fatih. After learning the location of the school, he starts commuting from Heybeliada every morning to take the exams. Almost all the children have someone with them—either their mothers, aunts, or other female relatives. Only Aziz Nesin and another boy come and go alone, have no one by their side. This boy explains that he has been preparing for these exams all summer. Aziz Nesin, on the other hand, has done no preparation at all. During breaks, the boy shares every snack he buys with him. Although Aziz Nesin has some money in his pocket, he can't bring himself to spend it. He is so afraid of running out of money that he thinks he won't be able to return to Heybeliada if he spends it.

At the end of the exams, about eighty out of three hundred children are successful. Both Aziz Nesin and the other boy are among these eighty. However, only thirty of the eighty children will be admitted to the school. A lottery will determine which thirty children are chosen. The lottery begins, and the children, in order of their numbers, draw a paper from the bag. They announce whether the paper says “empty” or “full.” The first twenty or so children who draw all get “empty.” When it’s Aziz Nesin’s turn, he reads the paper, and it says “full.” He becomes the first child in the lottery to be accepted into the school.

The other boy, who befriends him during the exam days, draws an “empty” paper. As soon as he reads it, he turns around and starts walking away quickly. Aziz Nesin runs after him, but the boy speeds up and disappears. Although Aziz Nesin can’t see his face, he is sure the boy is crying.

### *Coincidences*

The children who win the lottery are given their documents back in an envelope, which they must return when they start school. Aziz Nesin leaves the school with the envelope in hand. He arrives at the courtyard of Fatih Mosque. In those days, there are toilets side by side in the mosque courtyard. The ceilings and three walls of these toilets are made of the same cut stone used to build the mosque. Since the top part of the door is open, the head of anyone standing inside is visible from outside. The toilet hole is a very wide triangle shape. The hole is so large that some children are even said to have fallen into it. Occasionally, rats the size of cats jump out of this hole. Inside, on one of the side walls, there is a niche for placing a candle or lamp. On the walls, there are vulgar writings that are hard to repeat. The mildest of these is the phrase, “No matter how much you shake it, the last drop will fall on your pants.”

When he enters, he is terrified of dropping the envelope into the large hole. He rises on his tiptoes and places the envelope in the niche. After finishing, he leaves the toilet, walks to the ferry, and boards it. When he reaches the island, he starts climbing the hill toward his house but suddenly stops. He realizes he has left the envelope in the niche in the toilet. He crouches by the side of the hill. He doesn’t cry. He is frozen. In a cold, numb state, he gets up and goes home. He tells his mother that he has been accepted into the school. His mother and the neighbors present at the time, Zeynep Khanum and Neriman Khanum, hug and kiss him, celebrating the news. Although his mother notices his subdued mood, she doesn’t understand what’s wrong.

He leaves the house and walks toward the pine groves. When he is alone, he finally cries freely. Darüşşafaka is now lost to him. All his hopes are dashed. But when he returns home and sees how happy his mother is, he even forgets that he lost the envelope. Soon after, Neriman Khanum’s husband calls him over. The man works as an officer in the island’s fire department. He asks Aziz Nesin where his Darüşşafaka admission papers are. He casually replies that they are at the school. The man then tells him he left the papers in the toilet at Fatih Mosque’s courtyard and hands him the envelope.

That day, after Aziz Nesin leaves the toilet, a firefighter from Fatih enters the same toilet, finds the envelope, and takes it to the fire station. There, he sees that the papers belong to a child accepted into Darüşşafaka and realizes from the address that the child lives on Heybeliada. On a night when he is on duty, he calls the Heybeliada fire station. That night, Neriman Khanum’s husband is also on duty, and as soon as he hears the name on the papers, he recognizes it as his neighbor’s child. Another firefighter, traveling to Istanbul, picks up the envelope from the firefighter and brings it to the island.

Aziz Nesin reflects that the more disorganized a society is, the greater the role of coincidences. He says that many successful people owe their achievements to such small, seemingly insignificant good coincidences, while many who fail in life—or even become criminals or vagabonds—are often pushed down those paths by similarly small, unfortunate coincidences.

### *Bonding with the Children*

A few houses down, there lives a woman named Habibe, who has many children. Her husband works as a chef in Istanbul, and she cleans the mansions on the island. Her house is so chaotic that even at the doorstep, the smell of urine wafts out. One day, her eldest son tells Aziz Nesin that they are paying children to carry firewood at a nearby mansion. Reluctantly, he goes with the boy to the mansion. While the children carry firewood, he watches them, torn between joining in or not. He thinks he shouldn’t do this kind of work because he isn’t a laborer.

However, at one point, he notices a well-dressed girl among the children carrying firewood. He asks the boy who she is and learns that she is the daughter of the mansion's owner. While her twin brother plays alone nearby, the girl is busy carrying firewood with the other children. Determined to impress her, Aziz he everything he can to stand out. He joins the other children, carrying the chopped firewood from the garden and kitchen to the woodpile. In the end, when everyone is paid, the girl receives the same amount of money as the others.

After the firewood-carrying job, Aziz Nesin starts playing games with the children. One of the games they play is called "complimenting." In this game, one child turns their back and counts to twenty while the others strike poses like statues. After counting, the child turns around and chooses the pose they like best. The chosen child then takes their turn to count, and the cycle repeats. While playing this game, he kneels in front of the mansion's daughter, striking a pose as if declaring his love.

This girl is the daughter of a former Ottoman governor. Aziz Nesin feels the first seeds of love in his life for her. The mothers on the island don't allow their children to swim in the sea. To check if they have been swimming, they either lick the children's skin or scratch it with their nails to detect the salt. The girl sneaks away from the house servant and swims with him in a hidden cove. Since he doesn't have swim trunks, he swims in his underwear, and the girl, having come secretly without her mother's knowledge, doesn't bring her swimsuit either. When they reach the cove, she tells him to turn around and enters the sea up to her chest before calling him to join her. When it's time to leave the water, he gets out first, then turns his back to wait for her to come out.

There is another boy who likes the same girl; Aziz Nesin refers to him not by his real name but as Şirzat. Şirzat is older and taller than him. However, on some days when they plan to swim, they don't invite Şirzat because they don't want him around. Years later, while talking to a friend, Aziz Nesin hears that the girl has grown up, married, and divorced. But he doesn't seek her out or speak to her because he doesn't want to see her as an adult.

#### *Contributing to the Household*

Aziz Nesin is aware of how much his mother struggles due to financial difficulties, so he wants to do something to help. In the mornings, he collects mussels for bait and then goes to the pier to fish. When he gets hungry around noon, he returns home with the fish he has caught. His mother cooks the fish, but he feels this isn't a significant contribution.

Then, he decides to buy a carving set. His mother gives him some money, and he goes to Istanbul to purchase the carving set along with a paper template for a shelf. When he returns home, he immediately gets to work and starts making the shelf. Once it's finished, he takes it to the market to sell, wandering around with the shelf in hand. However, he doesn't know how or to whom to sell it, so he has no choice but to return home. He hangs the shelf in a corner of a room.

Later, he learns how to make paper roses and carnations from the sister of his friend, Şirzat, who is an elementary school teacher. He manages to sell a few of them at the pier. However, he realizes that this won't bring in any serious income either.

#### *In Her Absence, In Her Presence*

Aziz Nesin's first love and Şirzat move to Istanbul because they start school there. In their absence, when word spreads that Sait Halim Pasha's mansion is distributing ashoura, Aziz Nesin and his sister go to get some. Both of them stand in line in front of the mansion, holding two large bowls. When it's their turn, a man scoops two ladles of ashoura from the cauldron at the garden gate and fills their bowls. Although there is room for two more ladles, the man says everyone gets only that much. Embarrassed and holding one full and one empty bowl, he almost feels grateful that the girl isn't on the island to see him like this, and he returns home.

A few days later, he sees her and Şirzat in their school uniforms, talking to the children. Şirzat is wearing the Galatasaray High School uniform, and the girl is wearing the Feyz-i Âti School uniform. He watches her from a distance for a while. She is wearing a hat and has cut her hair short. This angers him. In fact, he becomes so angry that everything in the world seems to bother him at that moment. When the girl notices him, she turns toward him and starts walking. As she does, the other children follow her. He walks toward her as slowly as possible and says, "That hat doesn't suit you at all."

When she explains that it's part of the uniform, he asks her to take it off. She removes the hat. This time, he tells her that her short hair looks very ugly. Smiling, she says, "It's a boyish cut."

Despite his own unease, Aziz Nesin points out the class-based ease the girl displays. He notes that people from her class inherit this confidence from their families, which is why they always act so comfortably from childhood onward. In contrast, people like him can never learn this kind of ease.

After their conversation, he throws himself into the pine groves, picks up a stick from the ground, and starts hitting the grass with it. He feels immense anger toward her for cutting her hair. Because people believe that if a woman cuts her hair, it means that she is going down a bad path.

### *The First Days at Darüşşafaka*

Until that day, Aziz Nesin has been sleeping on a floor mattress, but on his first night at Darüşşafaka, he sleeps on a regular bed for the first time. He wakes up to the sound of a teacher's stick hitting the iron of the bedframes. Here, it is mandatory to pray five times a day. First, they perform ablution, and after ablution, the Darüşşafaka students place their towels over their left shoulders under their jackets. He does the same. A child with a beautiful voice recites the adhan. In the hall downstairs, students are separated by class and line up. Because Aziz Nesin is the shortest, they place him at the very front.

He has great respect for one of the teachers; Rıfkı. Rıfkı is a teacher who has devoted his life to education. He knows the number of every student by heart, but while reading, he sometimes swallows some syllables.

A few days after arriving at the school, new clothes, socks, and cloaks are distributed to the students. Among them, he loves the cloak the most. A few days later, new shoes are also distributed. That day is Thursday. On Thursdays, the children eat their lunch and go home, returning on Friday evening. And every Thursday, the lunch always consists of a type of pastry. While going to the cafeteria with his friend Musa Kâzım, his friend says, "What a great school! Even one's mother can't care for you this much." Years later, when they meet on İstiklal Avenue, Aziz Nesin asks Musa Kâzım what he does for a living, and Musa Kâzım gets upset because he has become a famous football player at Galatasaray. However, since Aziz Nesin isn't interested in football, he doesn't know.

### *A Darüşşafaka Student with a Father*

When he returns home from school, dressed in his green-and-black uniform and navy-blue cloak, with permission, he finds his father at home. On Friday, in the late afternoon, while returning from the island to Istanbul, he feels a great sense of guilt. Darüşşafaka is a school that only accepts children without fathers, yet his father is at home. As soon as he steps into the school, he feels like shouting "I have a father!" inside his mind. While eating in the cafeteria with his friends, everything gets stuck in his throat. When they go to class, he sits there without even looking at the book in front of him. Every night, lying on his right side in bed, he prays to become a great man who has made great discoveries and whose name will live on forever, reciting a few verses before falling asleep. In the morning, he wakes up as if he hasn't moved, getting up again from his right side. However, that night, because he is terribly afraid that it will be discovered that his father hasn't passed away, he is unable to pray or recite any verses. When he wakes up in the morning, he finds his blanket on the floor.

### *Faris*

After a while, the children from the orphanage also come to school. As a result, the fourth grade is divided into two sections. The children from the orphanage are very close to each other, having studied together for three years. Apart from them, a new child arrives at school: Faris. Faris is a backup student who replaces one of the children who didn't show up after winning the lottery. He is a blonde-haired, soft, clean, and gentle child. During the art class, their teacher, Ağâh, places an orange in front of them as a model. Faris draws this orange in such a way that it looks just like a real orange. He is extremely successful in his drawings.

Faris, who doesn't joke around with anyone, only jokes with Aziz Nesin. One day, during the lunch break, he comes up to Aziz Nesin and says, "You got a ten!" When Aziz Nesin asks what for, Faris replies, "For stupidity." Aziz Nesin, wanting to repeat this joke to someone else, sees Mansur, who is known for his seriousness at school. He makes the same joke to him. However, Mansur immediately goes to the principal's office. Shortly afterward, the principal calls Aziz Nesin to his office. While Aziz Nesin explains the situation to the principal, he says that Faris had told him about this joke at school,

and Aziz Nesin had repeated it to Mansur, but Mansur misunderstood and thought the joke was being made to him directly. The principal forgives him.

Later, Faris contracts tuberculosis and loses one of his lungs, but he manages to graduate from law school and becomes a lawyer. On December 16, 1946, he, like Aziz Nesin, is arrested. While there, he is subjected to severe torture. On the day they are to be sent to the military prison in Harbiye, the deputy director known as Hamdi the Fingerless explains at the police headquarters that the torture isn't due to a personal vendetta, but is part of their duties. Faris responds, "Even if I try to forget what you've done to me, my bones will demand an account from you. This isn't how duty is done; what's being done to us here can't be called duty!"

Aziz Nesin later becomes Faris's cellmate in prison. Lying on his bunk in the prison, Faris looks through reproduction albums of great painters. Sometimes, he places a painting in front of him and gazes at it for half the day. After spending five years in prison, he becomes ill and dies shortly after being released.

### *The Perfect Patch*

In those days, there are no durable nylon socks, so they wear the cheapest socks made from cotton thread. As a result, their socks always have holes in them. Mothers are forced to keep patching up their socks. Whenever Aziz Nesin takes off his shoes, he tries to hide one foot under the other out of embarrassment from the patches, but then the patch on the other foot is exposed.

His school friend Nahit always wears black, thin socks. During prayer, Aziz Nesin always falls behind Nahit and can't take his eyes off his socks throughout the prayer. This is because Nahit's patches are so perfectly done that from a distance, nothing can be seen. However, when looked at closely and carefully, they can be distinguished.

### *Handkerchief*

On Wednesday evenings, students who perform well during the week are given a green card with "Well done" printed on it. When a student receives six cards they are given a pink card with "commendation" written on it. Four pink cards make up one "privilege". Students who receive three or four "privileges" are gifted a book with the school's history written in it. Aziz Nesin becomes the first person in his class to receive a card due to his homework about the film *White Nun* they watched one evening.

When he goes home with permission, he tells his parents about his achievement. However, neither of them shows much interest. He feels upset because they don't understand how important it is. His father, who never likes the cinema, especially doesn't show any interest. However, his mother gives him a purple silk handkerchief before he returns to school. When he gets to school, he shows the handkerchief to his friends. Fahrettin, the class representative, admires the handkerchief and asks him to give it to him. Aziz Nesin, saying that the handkerchief is a gift from his mother, refuses to give it to him.

While everyone silently waits for the teacher, Fahrettin stands by the door. Suddenly, he tells Aziz Nesin to be quiet. Aziz Nesin replies that he is already not talking. Just then, their teacher, Şakir, enters the room. When Fahrettin claims that Aziz Nesin is being naughty, Şakir calls Aziz Nesin to the blackboard. Since the lesson is about the human body, Şakir asks him to explain the eye. Aziz Nesin explains the eye in detail, even drawing the layers of the eye on the board. Then, Şakir asks him to explain the ear. As he is explaining the ear, the bell rings for recess. He is the only one who speaks during the entire lesson. Şakir tells him that he has studied well, but that he expects moral behavior from his students first and foremost, and as a result, gives him a punishment of not going home over the weekend.

In another lesson, when Aziz Nesin wants to go to the bathroom, Fahrettin doesn't allow him. When tears begin to fall from his eyes because of the pain, he reluctantly agrees to give him the handkerchief. He hands it over and goes to the bathroom. He can't forget this handkerchief for years. In 1937, while he is a second-year military student in Ankara, he sees Fahrettin working as a ticket inspector at one of the cinemas in Ulus. He feels sorry for him because he couldn't continue studying.

### *Punished Game*

His favorite time at school is during the Ramadan months because he can play games until suhoor, eat, and sleep until noon. After two lessons in the afternoon, they play games again after breaking their fast. One evening, he plays marbles with his friend Rifat. Since he loses every time, he has to carry Rifat on his back. Eventually, Rifat gets bored, and he is forced to play alone. While playing by hitting the marble on the ground like a ball, someone hits him on the head. Thinking it's one of his friends, he continues to play without turning around. Finally, when he gets angry and turns around, he sees his teacher, Şakir. His teacher opens his palm and hits him with a ruler. Although it hurts, he doesn't make a sound. From that day on, he never plays marbles again. Years later, when he meets the friends he used to play games with during Ramadan, he sees that they, like his teacher, have become hardened, serious adults who have forgotten how to laugh.

#### *Interest in Theatre*

In winter, everyone plays snowball fights. Since Aziz Nesin is short, the older kids toss him around like a snowball. Because there are no stoves in the classrooms, they gather around the stove in the corridor to warm up. One evening, a performance is organized. Mahir from the senior class reads the poems he has written. After that, the play *Has Bahçe* (The Garden) by Reşat Nuri Güntekin, inspired by Mark Twain, begins. After watching this, he becomes interested in theatre and immediately starts writing plays.

#### *Vahit*

Their geography teacher, Osman Nuri, is a man who does everything he can to keep the children's attention. As soon as he realizes their attention is drifting, he shouts, "One!" and the children get up. When he shouts "Two!," they sit down. When he shouts, "Three!" they look to the left, and when he shouts "Four!," they laugh. Sometimes, he says these commands in a mixed order, which confuses the children. However, in the end, their attention goes back to the lesson.

One day, Osman Nuri invites Vahit, a student from another class who has done very well on his homework, to teach the lesson. Vahit is known for his diligence. However, when he realizes that his teacher doesn't read the homework assignments, he starts adding football commentary in between his homework answers. But the teacher, who normally doesn't read the assignments, wants to read them and gets angry as he sees what Vahit has written. Eventually, Vahit is expelled from school. Years later, Aziz Nesin finds him in an old shop at a flea market selling old items. However, the person he sees isn't the old Vahit. He is a broken man, just like Faris.

#### *Boxing*

For some reason, when the school is on vacation for a week, he goes to the island. On the island, a young man practices boxing in his house's garden. One day, he sees that this young man also teaches boxing to Şirzat and the other kids. When Şirzat notices that he is watching from a distance, he invites him to box. Although he says he doesn't know how to, the kids insist, saying that Şirzat doesn't know either. Reluctantly, he faces the older and taller Şirzat. As Şirzat hits him, he tries to fight back, but since he is short, he can't reach his face. Even when Şirzat gives him his left glove, it doesn't work. Finally, after taking a beating, he has to leave.

#### *Nickname*

Thanks to what he learns from Uncle Galip, he quickly knows things that his classmates don't know, especially in grammar lessons. He answers even the hardest questions from his teacher in a short time. When his friends say that they haven't learned the things he knows until third grade, he acts superior. This time, his friends ask how old he is. He says he is eleven years old. However, his friends don't believe him. Implied that he must be older because he knows so much, they give him the nickname "Kart" (meaning "old man"). This nickname bothers him so much that he starts praying at night for his friends not to call him that. However, he later realizes that through this experience, he learns that the best defense is offense, and it plays a big role in his tendency to turn to humor. Therefore, he emphasizes that all humorists make fun of themselves first.

#### *The Older Brother from the Past*

The Darüşşafaka football team plays a match against the Istanbulspor team on the school's field. Aziz Nesin keeps his eyes on the senior student, Enver, throughout the game. Enver isn't only a very good football player, but he also seems to enjoy showing off. During a school trip, his friends ask if he can climb to a high place they point out. In order to prove himself, Aziz Nesin climbs there but can't get down. At that moment, Enver comes and helps him down.

Years later, during a time when the Izmit Paper Factory's paper supply is insufficient for the market's needs, the factory places an ad in a magazine. Aziz Nesin writes a column explaining the absurdity of the situation. However, later he finds out that the factory's director is Enver Atarifat. Saddened by this, he goes to visit him. On the way, he thinks about how he will remind him of who he is. However, when he enters the director's office, he is confronted with a completely different person. Director Enver Atarifat is a cold man. Seeing him like this, Aziz Nesin regrets going there. He leaves without saying a word.

Years later, after he writes about this disappointment in the *Akşam* newspaper, Enver Atarifat sends him a letter explaining that he didn't know who he was until reading the article. He shares that he has helped many young people from Darüşşafaka, but sometimes, these good deeds have caused him harm. He explains that during their meeting, he suffered because of this and couldn't be overly affectionate with anyone as a result.

#### *The Slow Approach of Death*

During the days when they stay in Kasımpaşa, Cerrahpaşa, and Süleymaniye, as evening falls, his mother sits by the window and sings songs about sickness, loneliness, and the absence of a mother. Since they don't light the lamp until his father arrives, Aziz Nesin passes the time by imagining people and animals as he looks at the damp stains and plaster bulges on the wall. When his father comes home, his mother lights the lamp and opens the door with a smile.

However, as his mother's illness progresses, she can no longer sing. There is talk on the island about giving people with tuberculosis donkey milk and feeding them dog meat. Some tuberculosis patients really do try these methods. However, his mother asks them not to do any of these things. In the mornings, she only drinks milk with eggs. His father reads prayers every morning for his mother's recovery. Because fresh eggs are expensive, he buys special chickens. Thus, one of Aziz Nesin's favorite pastimes becomes watching the colorful chicks hatch from the eggs.

#### *Punch After Punch*

Some of the wealthier families' children on the island call their fathers "beybaba" (a respectful term for father), so Aziz Nesin's mother also asks him to address his father this way. However, he feels uncomfortable with it. Fathers who are called "beybaba" wear starched shirts and pressed trousers, ties and glasses, and their shoes are always polished. But his father doesn't resemble them.

One of the children who call his father "beybaba" is Haşim. Haşim shares his ball with the other children on the island but refuses to share his bicycle. There is also Hasan, whose father is a captain. Whenever they are about to play with Haşim's ball, Hasan is always chosen as captain. Since the ball belongs to Haşim, even though Hasan plays badly, he takes Haşim into his team. Aziz Nesin knows that Hasan doesn't like him, so he doesn't want to interact with him.

One day, when Hasan forcibly rides Haşim's bicycle, a fight breaks out between them. While the other children watch the fight, Aziz Nesin tries to stop Hasan. This time, Hasan leaves Haşim and tries to attack Aziz Nesin instead. Despite Aziz Nesin's attempts to avoid it, he ends up punching Hasan in the nose. Hasan's nose starts bleeding. Then, Aziz Nesin knocks Hasan down and keeps punching him. He looks at the children, hoping they will intervene, but they just keep watching. Eventually, Hasan runs away, escaping. The next day, when they are about to play ball, the children ask Aziz Nesin to be the captain. Without even looking at Hasan, he says he'll take him onto his team.

#### *Taking a Photo with Her*

During the holiday, he starts spending time with his first love on the island, just like they did before. They swim together. They don't talk much, but they always want to be together. As the holiday comes to an end, he feels sad, thinking that after school starts, they will drift apart into their own worlds. One day, while walking together, they come across a neighbor who takes photos with his camera during the summer. They take a photo together. When the man gives them the photo, Aziz Nesin looks at it and feels embarrassed because he sees that he has his hand on her shoulder, and she has her arm around his waist. However, he doesn't shy away from silently boasting by showing the photo to his friends at school.

### *Fifth Grade Begins*

When he returns to school, his biggest fear is being called “kart” again. No matter how much he tries to avoid it, it happens. As a result, he pretends to not know many things, so as not to stand out. During this time, a cold sore appears on his face. The school doctor applies ointment, and the cold sores disappear after a few days but reappear again. He gets worried because he is told that the sores are caused by not cleaning them properly. Years later, he learns that the real cause of these cold sores is poor nutrition.

### *New Home*

During the national struggle, the properties left behind by non-Muslims who collaborated with the occupying forces and had to leave the country after the declaration of the Republic are called “Emlak-i Milliye” (National Property). His father moves into one of these houses, which had belonged to Greeks who had left the country. His mother, whose illness has progressed, is in the hospital. When Aziz Nesin goes home on leave, he sees that their new house is under a vine tree. He secretly eats some unripe grapes. He eats them secretly because eating unripe grapes is childish, and although he is eleven years old, he doesn't consider himself a child.

### *Remembering*

One day, Aziz Nesin tells his friends that he saw the same picture of an eye in his French book that he had previously seen in his Turkish book, they don't believe him. They make a bet. They bring the Turkish book and compare, but the picture he mentions isn't there. Suddenly, he thinks to check the page numbers and realizes that one of the pages has been torn out. His friends found the picture he mentioned and tore the page to avoid losing the bet.

### *The Burden of Not Having a Father*

Their teacher, Rifki, teaches letter writing in class. One day, he asks everyone to write a letter to their fathers. While all the other children write to their deceased fathers, Aziz Nesin doesn't know what to write since his father is alive. First, he wonders how to address him. After thinking it over, he decides to write to Salim, who adopted his mother. Once the letter is completed, Rifki, knowing that Aziz Nesin usually writes good letters, asks him to read it out loud. While reading the letter, he struggles not to cry. Eventually, he breaks down in tears, and Rifki thinks he is crying because of the pain of being fatherless. He then explains that their school is a place for children without fathers, where they educate many such children and turn them into educated members of society. However, he also tells Aziz Nesin that he doesn't like the letter he wrote. Aziz Nesin wonders if they realize that his father is alive by the trembling in his voice as he reads the letter.

Then, he writes a letter to his father. He writes it to be able to address him as father. One Thursday, when the other children leave for their homes, he is told that his uncle has arrived. When he goes to the door, he finds his father standing there. His father has brought him some undershirts and food. While talking with his father, he fears that the gardener and the janitor will realize that they are father and son.

Everyone knows that Darüşşafaka is a school only for children without fathers, so when he goes home on leave, he almost hides. He doesn't want anyone to see the uniform he wore proudly during his first year, but since he has no other nice clothes, he has no choice but to wear it. Not wanting to go to school, he lies to his father, telling him that Saturday is a holiday and that classes will start on Sunday. When he forges a petition for his mother for him to give to his teacher, Rifki, no one suspects anything. So, he continues to go less frequently to school. Each time, he writes new petitions from his illiterate mother. When his father asks why he doesn't go, he invents secular holidays that his father doesn't know about. His father, who dislikes the government and thinks the country is straying too far from Islam, believes the excuses. One day, he goes to school a few days late, only to turn around and head back home, telling his father that the vacation lasts a full week.

### *Frugality*

Since the country has just come out of a war, children and young people are encouraged to work hard and be frugal to become rich. One day, their teacher, Veli, tells a story in class. There is a very poor young man in America. He constantly searches for work but can't find any. One day, he goes to the office of a factory owner and asks for a job, but the owner tells him there's no job available. The young man apologizes and leaves the office. A little later, while walking through the factory's garden, he sees something on the ground and bends down to pick it up. The owner, watching from the window, calls

him up and asks what he picked up. The young man replies that he picked up a rusty pin. The owner is impressed by the fact that the young man doesn't waste even a pin, and hires him to work in the accounting department. The young man works hard, buys a small share of the factory, and eventually marries the owner's daughter. After the owner's death, he inherits the factory. Thus, the poor young man becomes one of the richest people in America.

Aziz Nesin notes that such stories are used to cover up the evils hidden beneath the fortunes of millionaires, and that in a poor country emerging from war, these stories seem believable to the people. But in truth, they have no basis in reality.

#### *Looking for Her*

One Friday, Aziz Nesin leaves home early to go to school, and after arriving at Karaköy, becomes curious about the area of Şişli, where she lives. He walks toward Şişli without being sure if he's going in the right direction. He wants to ask someone where Şişli is, but he becomes afraid that they will realize he's coming to see her. Eventually, he asks someone and learns that he is already in Şişli. Soon after, he sees her coming toward him and can't believe his eyes. Afraid of being found out, he hides and watches from across the street. He follows her for a while, but this turns out to be the last time he sees her. He walks back to Galata Bridge with a heavy heart, giving up on going to school, and tells his father that the school is on a one-week holiday.

#### *At School*

When he returns to school, he finds three mice eating the food his father had previously brought in his locker. His relationships with the school and his classmates start to deteriorate. One of their teachers, Hozer, who is referred to by his nickname, holds Aziz Nesin accountable for missing an exam and subjects him to a private test in the teacher's room. He asks questions like what water is made of and how much hydrogen and oxygen it contains, but he can't answer any of them. This failure embarrasses him so much that for years, he dreams of taking the same exam again in his sleep.

#### *Caviar*

When his mother is brought home from the hospital, she is too weak to get out of bed. His father takes him to Eminönü market to buy caviar, as his mother is told it would help her recover. Normally, Aziz Nesin finds his father's bargaining with the sellers annoying, but this time he insists that his father bargain as much as possible since caviar is very expensive. Finally, they return home with some caviar. His mother gives him a portion to eat, but he doesn't like the taste and wonders why the rich eat something so bland and expensive.

#### *Chocolate*

Aziz Nesin's mother is hospitalized at a special hospital in Haydarpaşa to fight infectious diseases. When they visit, she asks for some chocolate for their next visit, but not just any chocolate—good chocolate, not the cheap kind. His father gives Aziz Nesin money to buy the chocolate she requested. Thinking that his mother won't be able to tell the difference between cheap and expensive chocolates, Aziz Nesin buys four cheap chocolates instead and eats the rest with the leftover money. The next time they visit, when his mother sees the chocolates, she scolds his father for not buying the good ones as she asked. His father doesn't tell her that it wasn't him who bought them but takes the blame. Aziz Nesin feels so ashamed that he carries the guilt with him for the rest of his life.

#### *The Goodness That Sends Him Away from Darüşşafaka*

The children at Darüşşafaka are often subtly or openly reminded that they are well-dressed, well-fed, and well-educated because of the kindness of others. One day, their teacher, Şükrü, tells the class about an old Darüşşafaka graduate who brings kilos of apples and oranges to school every week and lays them on a cloth in the garden for the children to fight over. Aziz Nesin finds this idea ridiculous because he is certain he would never participate in such a fight.

One night, they are woken up by the shaking of everything around them. All the children, terrified, run barefoot into the garden. It's the 1928 earthquake in Torbalı. After the earthquake, Şükrü says they must show kindness to the victims, so he collects money from everyone in the class. Each child will bring the money they collected back to school when they return from their holiday. Aziz Nesin, affected by the emotional atmosphere Şükrü creates, says he will bring some money, but he doesn't have any. After his first holiday, he never returns to school.

### *Death*

Aziz Nesin's mother is brought home from the hospital, but she has become a mere skeleton. After some time, she is able to walk again inside the room. One morning, she tells her husband that she rode a black ram in her dream and she informs her husband that she will die on Wednesday in two weeks. Aziz Nesin overhears this while his father is telling someone else.

One morning, his mother starts coughing up blood. He is taken outside the house, walks among the pines, and returns. The house fills with women. At noon, all the women leave, but they won't allow him to go near his mother. He presses his ear to the keyhole to listen to what they are talking about. He hears his mother say to his father, "My son goes to boarding school, that's why I won't die in disappointment." Since he hasn't told anyone that he quit school, he feels like he has deceived his mother. Moreover, since he won't be able to lie to his father anymore, he has stayed at the homes of some of his father's acquaintances, and no one questions his lie about the holidays. All this responsibility weighs on him like a chunk of metal, and he promises to start studying again.

His mother asks to see him, so he is allowed into the room. Only his father is with her in the room, and the women are waiting outside. His mother looks at him and smiles with her eyes. She wants to say something, but her tongue doesn't work. She struggles to breathe, and her eyes fix on the ceiling. He is taken outside again. Since he is told to spend the night at Aunt Neriman's house, he goes there.

His mother dies on the day she told her husband she would. His father buys several barrels of water from the water seller. Before she dies, she prepares soap and a sponge to be washed with. She also tells her husband that every Muslim must pay for their own funeral expenses, and so she sells the only thing she owns—her sewing machine—to cover the costs. His father is deeply saddened by these words but says nothing. Aziz Nesin can't give the money his father gave him to the water seller without a reason.

### *Why Does He Write?*

Aziz Nesin explains that he was burdened by a sense of inferiority rooted in many different sources from his childhood. He describes this inferiority complex as something that has both destroyed some and pushed others forward. He acknowledges that this feeling has allowed him to regulate himself and shape his character. He feels indebted to society because of his experiences, and through writing, he repays those debts to his mother, Uncle Galip, his teacher, Rifki, and everyone else who helped him. He emphasizes that he can't live a life of ease by simply climbing the social ladder. He asserts that the suffering of one person affects everyone, and if one person is hungry, others can't truly be satisfied.

## THEMES

### SOCIETY

**Class** Aziz Nesin's father migrates from his village to Istanbul and works for wealthy families, striving to earn their respect through his honesty and hard work. His desire to speak well reflects his wish to be appreciated, especially by educated people. His primary goal in life is to climb the social ladder, but he fails to achieve this. Unable to accept his own social class, he ignores his limitations and never refuses anyone who asks him for a loan. This is why most of the people who owe him money are educated individuals or civil servants. For the same reason, he wants to raise his son, Aziz Nesin, like the respected religious scholars of the Ottoman Empire, to prevent him from becoming a laborer. One of the moments when Aziz Nesin, as a child, experiences this conflict is when he sees poor children carrying firewood for money on Heybeliada. Despite needing money, he refuses to carry firewood because he doesn't consider himself a laborer. However, when he sees the girl from the house also carrying firewood, he changes his mind and starts working to impress her. For him, exerting effort for someone else's approval is more acceptable than earning money. Yet, after schools start, the class difference between him and the girl becomes more apparent. He approaches her with anger, while she treats him with the carefree attitude of children raised in wealthy families. He gets offended by her slightest actions, but she never loses her gentle demeanor. However, this girl represents an idealized version of class difference. For instance, during their time in Cerrahpaşa, the children from the mansion next door neither mingle with street children nor hesitate to attack Aziz Nesin when they get the chance, just like street children do. In fact, Aziz Nesin, as a child, ends up

having his first fight with one of these mansion children. This shows that the children of wealthy families aren't always like the idealized girl he admires.

**Superstitions** Aziz Nesin's sister suffers from a bone disease due to malnutrition. Her mother, hoping for a divine cure, leaves her near a gravestone in the cemetery just before the evening call to prayer, and as the neighbors suggest, waits for someone else to bring her back home. She believes this will bring healing. Similarly, when Aziz Nesin's father is away fighting in Anatolia, his mother follows the neighbors' advice and goes to a well, trying to determine whether her husband is alive or dead based on the reflections she sees in the water.

**Patriarchy** Almost every woman around Aziz Nesin constantly faces violence from their husbands. Sometimes, he witnesses neighbor women telling his mother about the abuse they endure. Although his father isn't as cruel as these men, he also inflicts severe violence on his mother if she returns home after the evening call to prayer or lifts her veil slightly in the presence of a stranger. His mother, however, doesn't empathize with other women. When the wife of Feridun tells her about being raped by two men, his mother blames her instead of trying to understand her feelings, leaving her isolated.

## HEALTH

### Illness

Aziz Nesin's mother suffers from tuberculosis and spends a long time in various hospitals for treatment. Following the doctors' advice, the family moves to Heybeliada, where she tries to benefit from the sunlight as much as possible. However, she eventually passes away.

## POLITICS

**Conflict** Although Aziz Nesin's father joins the national struggle in Anatolia, he becomes dissatisfied when the sultanate and caliphate are abolished after the success of the movement. He vehemently rejects all the innovations introduced by the new regime in the name of Westernization and modernization. He even refuses to send his son to school. However, with the help of a neighbor's child, Aziz Nesin enrolls in school and embraces the changes brought by the new regime, unlike his father. A clear example of this is his support for wearing hats when it becomes mandatory, in contrast to his conservative friends who defend the fez.

## PSYCHOLOGY

**Alienation** Aziz Nesin's father wants to raise him as a respected religious scholar, so he denies his son's childhood. Whenever he catches Aziz Nesin playing, he tells him he isn't a child. As a result, Aziz Nesin becomes hesitant to spend time with peers, play games, or do anything he considers childish. After starting lessons with Uncle Galip, he begins spending more time with adults and thinking like them. He feels ashamed when he realizes that other children don't have responsibilities like carrying water from the fountain, which he is tasked with at home. He compares himself to horses forced to climb steep slopes, feeling alienated from his childhood and the carefree aspects of life.

**Isolation** Because of the lessons he receives from Uncle Galip, he becomes a child who is more knowledgeable than his peers. This situation becomes even more pronounced when he starts studying at Darüşşafaka. His friends, who aren't as knowledgeable as he is, give him nicknames to set him apart from themselves. Aziz Nesin feels deeply hurt by this and begins to feel the need to hide his knowledge from them.

**Guilt** After starting studying at Darüşşafaka, a school where only fatherless children are educated, Aziz Nesin begins to feel ashamed of his situation. First, he feels as though he has betrayed his father by pretending he doesn't exist, even though his father is still alive. Second, when his father returns from his treasure hunts and Aziz Nesin sees him at home during visits, he becomes convinced that he is depriving a truly fatherless child of their rightful place at the school. Over time, he grows disillusioned with the school and eventually drops out.

**Obsession** Aziz Nesin's father believes that the only way to achieve his dream of climbing the social ladder is by finding treasure. As a result, he disappears for long periods without explanation.

Sometimes, he sends letters claiming he has found treasure and that they will soon be rich, but Aziz Nesin's mother, having received many such letters, no longer believes them. His father, however, never gives up his obsession with treasure hunting until his death.

## CHANGE

**Social Transformation** After the declaration of the Republic, when dervish lodges are closed, everyone previously considered respectable, including all members of religious orders, turns into simple laborers dealing with life's trivialities like any other people. Aziz Nesin feels this most deeply when Uncle Galip starts working as a laborer in a factory. Uncle Galip quickly becomes worn out, forced to count every penny. For the first time, this man, who never complained about anything, starts criticizing the selfishness of others. Aziz Nesin is deeply saddened by his new state. Similarly, he is shocked to see the son of a sheikh become an ordinary street vendor waiting outside schools and the sheikh's wife bargaining for the worst-quality items when shopping. Meanwhile, the sheikh's other son turns the illusions he learned in the lodge into a stage show and becomes a famous illusionist in Europe.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. During Aziz Nesin's childhood, which coincided with the transition from empire to republic, everyone he encountered had experienced this great transformation differently depending on their social class. Considering especially the story of Uncle Galip, which illustrates the role of religious lodges and dervish convents in society, what can we say about how this transition affected the everyday visibility of social class differences?
2. In this period of transition, symbols of social prestige also evolved. In this context, what differences and similarities can we draw between Aziz Nesin's father's pursuit of social prestige as a man and Aziz Nesin's own search for prestige as a young boy?