ATHEIS

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University of Queensland Press

Chapter 1

Isn't it futile to torture oneself with remorse when it is no longer possible to rectify mistakes or expiate a sense of guilt?

But does remorse disappear if one abandons hope of repentance? If it did, Kartini's sense of guilt would not have weighed so heavily on her conscience. Isn't the complete reverse true: remorse deepens as one acknowledges the impossibility of atoning for one's thoughts and actions?

Kartini stumbled from a room in the Japanese secret police headquarters. Her eyes were lifeless, her face ashen. She crossed the floor of that infamous building, her left hand hanging limply on Rusli's shoulder for support, while I held her right one. I seemed to be supporting a corpse.

The Japanese military policemen we passed in the crowded corridors and halls also appeared lifeless. Some laughed as though to belie their appearance, but one could tell their laughter was forced. Two weeks ago they had thought of themselves as lions feasting on human prey. Now they looked like prey on the verge of being devoured by lions. Japanese military power had been shattered by the Western Allies and Russia.

Yes, so passes the glory of the world! In the world there is nothing permanent, nothing lasting, nothing eternal. Everything changes, everything moves, everything grows and dies. That which is permanent is only the Permanent One, that which is lasting is only the Everlasting One, that which is eternal is only the Eternal One. But man fails to recognize these facts, for permanent, lasting and eternal are concepts of time, while time is a concept of measurement. And measurements are determined by man himself, though he still believes his fate rests in the hands of a Higher Being . . .

Having been reduced to hunks of human flesh, do these Japanese lions hold similar views?

Kartini continued to stumble across the floor. None of us spoke. We were overcome, especially Kartini, by shock at the news we had heard two or three minutes ago.

Rusli guided her step by step. Her head slumped forward. She buried her nose in her tear-stained handkerchief.

Man lives among his fellow beings, rendering good or evil to others. When he performs a good deed he derives self-satisfaction, and when he is guilty of evil he makes amends for his sin. But to whom should he atone when all his victims are dead? Should it be to God because He, the source of all love, forbids man to render evil unto others? Should it be to one's fellow beings, since it is universally acknowledged that it is wrong to perform evil deeds? But how does one express one's repentance?

Indeed, one needs to express one's repentance in one way or another. Yes, one must find one's own way, for does not life consist of maintaining a complete physical and mental relationship between oneself and one's fellow men and with Nature and its Creator? And each particular relationship requires an individual approach which should be both practical and exquisite and have a high moral code, such as justice, as a foundation. In short, a way to benefit all mankind.

Those thoughts ran through my mind as I supported Kartini.

One hour ago . . . no! Even five minutes ago some fire of hope blazed in Kartini's heart, although it was only a flicker like a candle flame slowly choked by the darkness in the middle of the night. Now she had abandoned hope for she had nothing to cling to any more.

Kartini would have fallen several times had we not supported her. We left the building with its infamous torture chambers and entered the yard. As she stumbled, Kartini's shoes left deep imprints in the ground. Her hopes had vanished like wisps of cigarette smoke.

Hasan was undoubtedly dead. From all accounts, his body, weakened by tuberculosis, could not withstand the excruciating, sadistic torture of the secret police. We did not know when he died or where he was buried.

Rusli guided Kartini like a nurse supporting a patient. I

grasped her arm whenever she lurched slowly to my side. Tears streamed down her cheeks. She could have been entering an alien atmosphere, empty, hazy, unreal . . . Was there anybody, anybody at all, to whom Kartini could turn to alleviate the remorse weighing so heavily on her conscience? As she groped for an answer, her grief intensified.

How simple it would have been had Hasan been alive. Kartini would have displayed greater loyalty and devotion, satisfying his every wish to alleviate her remorse. But now? Now?

Should she fast, should she pray, should she live as an ascetic? Would her remorse be dissolved? Suddenly Kartini screamed, and the scream scraped in my heart like the sound of a nail on a slate.

The Japanese in front of the building appeared momentarily startled by Kartini's heart-rending screams before they quickly lowered their slant-eyed, yellow faces as though each was asking: what fate will I meet now? Japan had surrendered less than a week ago.

Kartini wept. Rusli did his utmost to console her. He said tenderly: "Yes, Tin, man's life is brief, but humanity has no end. Relieve your misery by working harder, working for humanity . . ."

Chapter 2

I was unemployed at the time. Well, that's not strictly correct . . . I operated on the black market. How else could one make ends meet when the price of rice soared from six cents to two or three rupiah in Japanese currency?

It was at that stage of my life that I first made the acquaintance of a young man who came to my house one night.

"I've been wanting to meet you for ages," he said, after

sitting down opposite me, "but this seems to be the first chance I've had."

I have a habit of sticking to first impressions. If my first impression is favourable, I react like a writer to inspiration: my conversation is stimulated. My first impression of that young man was excellent. It may have been due to the fact that he appeared genuinely interested in me.

"Yes, I've been hoping to get a chance to meet you for a long while."

"Why?" I asked cheerfully. (But I must be honest: my voice reflected the vanity of someone who considered his opinions were in demand by others.)

"Oh, nothing really, because . . . oh, I don't know, I always like to meet people older and more mature than I am."

"How come?" I asked, but I was conscious that my voice echoed more joy than astonishment.

In the circumstances, it was not surprising that we began to associate like old friends. He undoubtedly took me into his confidence from the outset.

He was called Hasan . . . but I should say at this point that that is not his correct name, and that the names of his associates, who will later become known to us from the manuscript he left with me, bear no similarity to Kartini, Rusli, Anwar and so on. But in a *Dichtung und Wahrheit* story, such as Hasan wrote, it is common practice to use pseudonyms.

Hasan, as his name suggested, was an ordinary looking fellow, although his lean build made him appear rather tall. His eyes and cheeks were sunken, and he seemed to be in ill-health. (I later learned that he was suffering from tuberculosis.) One could tell from his demeanour and speech that he was troubled by conscience.

He had an inquiring mind but was never free of indecisiveness and doubt because he appeared to lack the capacity of a philosopher or a humanist to get down to fundamentals. Apparently he was content to pick the brains of others—myself, for instance—who, in his eyes, possessed greater wisdom. That was my impression, anyway.

I knew Hasan for but a month.

One night he reappeared at my house. He wore a green gaberdine overcoat buttoned up to the neck. He always wore an overcoat when he ventured out at night. You must remember that he had tuberculosis. He had a black Borsalino hat on his head. The colours of the coat and hat made his face appear sallow.

Under his arm was a batch of manila folders. He sat down, throwing his hat on a chair.

"What's that?" I asked as he extracted about a hundred foolscap pages. I opened the five uppermost pages. "A manuscript?" I said. "Who wrote it? You?"

I looked at him admiringly. He nodded, smiling, and I could not tell whether he was shy or proud. I read a few lines. Hasan watched me like a pupil whose arithmetic was being examined.

Several minutes elapsed. Finally he replied: "Actually, friend, I'm in a hopeless position; I've got a burning ambition to write but I don't have the slightest talent or skill. I've brought this manuscript as a sort of an experiment, hoping that you'll care to look at it and tell me where I've gone wrong."

"Why do you want to write?"

"No particular reason."

"I ask, because if you want to write you must think you've got something fairly important to say to your audience. What is it?"

Hasan smiled as if saying to himself: "What an idiotic question!" His smile left me a little embarrassed.

"There's nothing important there for other people," he said softly, after smiling for several moments. "I'm only a novice."

My interpretation was that Hasan was too modest to give any other answer. It was precisely because of this that my interest deepened in his manuscript. I read the story from start to finish throughout the night. His story was clearly an autobiographical novel based on his life and experiences.

This is his story.

Chapter 3

1

On a mountain slope of the White Lake, amid the beautiful Priangan ranges, lies a village called Panyeredan. Surrounded by green orange trees, whose rapid growth stems from the fertile soil and the cool, pleasant climate, the village contains about two hundred houses, most of which are small and belong to impoverished farm labourers. The few large ones, built of brick, are owned by "wealthy" farmers, who possess about ten hectares of land and who also work as middlemen in citrus fruit and other produce. There are, too, a number of houses in which composite materials have been used: the floors are tiled, stone walls extend a quarter of the way up, while the upper portions consist of the traditional bamboo. These houses, which are more numerous than the brick ones, are owned by people who possess one or two hectares of land.

My father, *Raden* Wiradikarta, lived in one of the semi-stone houses. A retired headmaster, he managed to live modestly in the village on his pension of sixty Dutch guilders a month. Before retiring, he was moved from one place to another. He began as an assistant teacher in Tasikmalaja, after which he was transferred to Tjiamis, Bandjar, Tarogong and various other small towns before being pensioned off when he was a headmaster in Tjiamis.

Father and mother were devoutly religious. Since childhood they had faced life with their *tasbeh,* their rosary, and the veil. Their Islamic faith was very strong. To see people praying gave them as much pleasure as a movie addict got from watching a movie.

Both came from pious families. Their greatest ambition was to make the pilgrimage to Mecca, but because they paid little heed to acquiring material possessions they could not afford to journey to the Holy Land.

One day, when father was still an assistant teacher in Tasikmalaja, a visitor called on him, a *hadji* from Banten. His name was Hadji Dahlan. He wore a turban and a long-flowing Arabic gown. He was related to mother. His former name was Wiranta. The fact that he had changed his name and taken up Arabic attire never seemed to give him the slightest concern.

Hadji Dahlan stayed in my parents' house for three nights. On the second day, father returned from Friday prayers at the mosque and, as he sat in the lounge sipping a drink, he said to Hadji Dahlan: "I notice you are always fingering the rosary."

Father's words, apparently, were like a finger releasing the handle of a newly-wound gramophone, because the turban-wearing record immediately began to turn swiftly: "Oh, you don't have a guru yet? If that's the case it's a great pity, because to practise religion without a guru's guidance is to be like a villager set loose in a big city like Djakarta or Singapore. He'll get lost. No different than a chauffeur who knows how to drive but doesn't know where he should go. Oh, we can pray from start to finish, we can bend, we can prostrate ourselves, but what good is it if we don't have a compass to take the shortest, and the best, way to reach our goal? Do you see?"

At great length, Hadji Dahlan enthusiastically explained his understanding of Islam.

"What value is a wrapping without the contents? Do you see? What we need most are the contents. Do you see? Even so, the contents won't be perfect if they aren't wrapped. Just take butter or goat fat. Will they be any good if they aren't wrapped? They won't, will they? That's the reason, then, the Law, the Path, Truth, and Gnosis are all equally necessary. The Law is like the wrapping, the Path is . . . but let me give you a better simile. Take a pearl, for example."

Hadji paused for a moment to take a drink. Father hastily refilled Hadji's cup with brownish-yellow tea from the pot.

"Thank you," said Hadji Dahlan, continuing: "A pearl—supreme knowledge and truth—is our goal in life. The Law—that is the boat." Sometimes Hadji pronounced *kapal* as *kafal* and he even pronounced *tetapi* as *tetafi*, using the Arabic sound which seemed snobbish to me. "Our energy and

compass provide the means of rowing the boat and diving to the bottom of the sea to get pearls. It would be impossible for us to get the pearls if we didn't have a boat, a compass, and the energy to row and dive into the sea. To sum up, all these components are necessary and we must utilize them. Do you see? The boat will be useless if we are without the energy and the compass to keep it on the right route. That's why the Law and the Path are necessary. Do you see?"

Father, enraptured, sat cross-legged, leaning forward a little on the mat, his index finger drawing circles and other figures without leaving a mark.

"Well, now, take your case," Hadji Dahlan continued. "You already have a boat–the Law–do you see? I mean you have both the obligation and the means of performing prayer which you carry out five times a day, don't you? But it seems you haven't got a compass yet: the Path. Do you see? But, as I said a moment ago, both are equally necessary. Only then can we achieve Truth and Gnosis. So, once again, the Path is necessary because without the compass the boat will be at the mercy of the waves. We won't be able to find the pearl. Do you see?"

I still remember how intently father listened.

I was only about six years old then. Naturally I did not understand their discussion. How could I! If I now seem to be repeating Hadji Dahlan's exposition, I am only filling in details of the Law, the Path, Truth, and Gnosis, which later, when I grew up, I often heard from father's lips. They can't have differed much from what Hadji Dahlan had explained.

But what I do remember clearly is the way Hadji Dahlan spoke. He laughed a lot and asked "Do you see?" after practically every sentence. What I still remember, too, is his beard, which was pointed like that of a Bengal goat. He used to stroke his beard while talking.

Father took in every word. He sat, legs crossed, facing Hadji Dahlan who was seated on a goatskin rug constantly fingering his rosary. In front of each was a large cup of black coffee. Hadji Dahlan frequently interrupted his discourse to blow on his hot coffee. Sometimes his sips were followed by a resounding belch. Then he would quickly mutter "God be praised" as his Adam's apple bobbed up and down in his long

neck. Father dutifully responded with a belch, too.

Very rarely did father ask a question; and although "Do you see?" was often asked, or, more precisely, because of it, Hadji Dahlan was extremely fluent in his speech like a teacher who knew his lesson by heart. Father, on the other hand, was like a pupil who was afraid to ask a question for fear of being considered stupid. Apparently there was much father could not understand.

After the cups had twice been refilled, and the saucers were littered with ash and cigarette butts, father decided to be initiated in *Kijai* Mahmud's mystical order in Banten. *Kijai* Mahmud was Hadji Dahlan's guru.

2

A month later, father broke open his money box and, with the money he took from it, set out for Banten with mother.

I can remember how they left at daybreak to catch the early morning train. I was awakened by the noise of people getting their things together. Father and mother were telling Siti and Nata, our two servants, to do this or do that. Occasionally the calm of the peaceful dawn was broken by the clatter of a falling enamel plate.

I remember how I cried, wanting to go with them, but I was not allowed. I was given a shiny 25 cent piece for consolation. As they were leaving, father said: "Don't you be naughty. We won't be long. We will give you a present when we come back, eh? What do you want? . . . Don't forget, recite the Koran diligently."

He patted me on the head and, after murmuring a prayer over me, they departed amid a chorus of cock-a-doodle-doos from our roosters.

3

Father and mother had had four children, but I was the sole survivor, the others having died in infancy. Later, since I no longer had a younger brother or sister, they adopted an

"orphan" from my uncle who had many children and who had recently lost his wife.

This child—Fatimah—was only a year old when her mother died. My parents were delighted to adopt her, not because it was like having another child, but because they were fulfilling a religious obligation by helping an "orphan". As I said a moment ago, my parents lost three children in infancy. My parents' tribulations were very heavy for such a young couple. Had they not been religious, it is possible that they would have gone astray, seeking consolation in bad company. But since they had been reared in a religious atmosphere they looked on their suffering as a trial which had to be overcome by faith. That explained why they became more and more religious. Who knows, perhaps the Dutch saying, "Life's difficulties compel us to pray", really is true. Difficulties seem to make people like my father and mother, who delighted in prayer, pray more intensely.

My parents deeply loved Fatimah and myself. Nevertheless, I was not spoilt. Rather the reverse: I obeyed my parents and had immense love and respect for them.

By the age of five my religious education had begun. I was already being taught to recite the Koran and to perform ritual prayer. Before I went to sleep mother used to urge me to memorize lines or verses from the Koran. I could sing praise to God and the Prophet, too.

I was also frequently told stories about heaven and hell. Mother usually told them to me in bed before I fell asleep. She lay by me, cuddling me. Spellbound, my gaze remained rooted on the top of the mosquito net as though looking at a movie screen. In my imagination the picture of events in hell was displayed on the screen.

"A naughty child who does not pray will go to hell," mother always said. "In hell, naughty children will be boiled in a cauldron of bubbling lead. Nobody, not even their fathers and mothers, will be able to help them."

Like all small children I imagined those stories to be real, as if I had really seen hell. In my mind's eye I saw two small hands reaching up to ask mother for help, yes, my mother. Now, at the time of writing, I think it strange . . . why not my father? In my fantasies mother could be seen reaching

out her hand in a vain attempt to help. I cried: "Mother, mother, help! This is Hasan! Oh, it's hot! Oh, it's hot!"

I felt frightened. Shivering with fear, I cuddled up to mother during the story. She tightened her embrace, reassuring me: "No, child, no! There's no need to be frightened, as long as you aren't naughty. Always obey your parents and your elders and be sure to pray and recite the Koran zealously. God willing, child, I pray that you may always be safe in this and the next world."

Then she hugged me.

One day father returned from market with a small sarong and a black velvet cap for me. "These are to wear when you're praying," father said. I accepted them by joining my hands and touching my nose with the fingertips. Elated, I dressed quickly. I was aloof and proud as though I was a big *santri,* especially when father called me "Little *Kijai*"

Father and mother were very proud of me. They talked about me to all their friends and acquaintances.

"Now he can pray," said father.

Those who knew me then praised me.

"That's good, *Den,* good," said one *hadji.* "Idris, look!" he would say to his child, "*Den* Hasan is already able to pray. You must look on him as an example! There's more to life than playing marbles!" And he would turn to my father: "You know, sir, my Idris is just a villain. He's not like *Den* Hasan."

My nostrils quivered with pride and my head swayed back and forth like a puppet. I laughed with embarrassment.

I still remember when I first learned to pray. I stood behind father, at mother's side. When they carried out their religious obligations I also took part, but sometimes I wondered why mother wore such a strange looking veil, while father wore usual attire. Yes, I can remember it all.

During the Moslem fasting month I took part in evening ceremonies at the prayer hall, where many other children also prayed with their fathers. Before prayers we sang hymns of praise to God and our venerated Prophet.

Even now I still know those hymns by heart, and sometimes I find myself singing them without realizing what I am doing. The one I know best by heart goes as follows:

Allahumaini a'udubika minalikolbi
Iwabinapsihi alaihi mardjago
Kandjeng Nabi, ramana Gusti Abdullah
Ibu Siti Aminah, dipèndem didajeuh Mekah.

I still don't know what those Arabic words mean.

Although still small, I fasted steadfastly right up to sunset, and kept it up for a whole month.

"Those who fast diligently will go to heaven," mother always said when she saw I could barely hold out and was on the verge of giving in.

In the interests of family harmony, the maid and manservant were a religious couple. Nata, the manservant, had learned to recite the Koran at a religious boarding school. Siti, his wife, was a niece of *Kijai* Badjuri who had taught Nata at the school.

Siti enjoyed telling stories. She was good at it, too. Naturally, her stories were popular among the religious pupils. I listened, hanging on every word, especially when she told stories from *A Thousand and One Nights.*

Even so, no stories left a deeper impression on my immature mind than the graphic ones about the punishments of hell which earthly sinners had to endure.

Siti said: "They have to pass across a bridge made of a very sharp knife, sharper than a razor, as fine as a hair sliced in seven. The knife bridge is arched across boiling lead. Those free of sin will pass across the bridge as easily as walking along an asphalt road; after crossing the bridge, they will reach the gates of heaven. But he who has sinned will stumble and slip like a snail on a fine thread.

"Every time he slips he will fall into the boiling lead below. At first, he will try to re-cross the bridge but he will always fall. From tip to toe, his body will be gashed from dragging himself over that knife. Blood will gush from every wound, but he has to keep crawling on his hands and knees.

"He keeps on crawling, screaming with pain. He crawls and pushes himself along, begging for mercy, but not a soul can help him. And when he can endure no more he falls again into the boiling lead."

"Will he die?"

"He doesn't die," replied Siti. As usual, she spoke with

complete conviction as though she herself had once struggled along the knife bridge. "He doesn't die because those who fall into hell cannot die again: their souls go on living to endure the torture of the grave in its various forms. If you torture animals—horses, for example—horses will take their revenge on you in hell. You will be tortured by horses in return for the torture you inflicted. They'll kick and bite. That's why you're not allowed to torture animals, except the bad ones. We should kill the bad ones.

"If you steal, later your hands will be cut off. If you slander others, your tongue will be ripped from your throat. If you eat fried rice, later the small grains of rice will fry you."

"Will they eat me?"

"Yes, like worms eating a mango. That's why you shouldn't eat fried rice." I was very fond of fried rice.

Siti's stories, like my mother's, left a deep impression on me. As a small child, I was plagued by a fear of hell. I carried out my parents' religious instructions with the utmost obedience, and when I was slightly careless I was promptly reminded of the punishment and torture of hell.

As I grew up I became more engrossed in my religious obligations. And those stories about hell did not fade: they became more deeply embedded in my mind.

4

One day when I had grown up and was lucky enough to be on holidays in Panyeredan, I said to father: "Father, may I join the mystical order which you and mother follow?"

Father appeared to be overcome by my request, for he remained silent for several seconds as though searching for the right words to utter.

I still recall when I told him the good news that I had passed my final junior high school examination. Doubtless father felt happier than I did because as far as I was concerned the pass merely confirmed my expectations. I can recall the occasion, too, when I had just been accepted for a job in the Bandung City Council. But his happiness on both

those occasions could not be compared with his feelings when he heard me ask to join the mystical order he embraced.

He looked at me for a few moments, his face glowing, as though hoping that the close love and affection pouring from his heart would be channelled into mine. His voice broke:

"My son, thank God you wish to pursue a holy path. Frankly, I have been deeply troubled that you would not have the inner strength to withstand life's trials and tribulations. But if you follow our way of life, then all our anxiety and fear will disappear. Night and day, my son, your mother and I implore God to protect you in this world and the next."

He gestured as if he wanted to embrace me and pat me on the head as he used to do when I was little, but evidently realized that I had grown up and could no longer be fondled as before. I sat cross-legged in front of him. I bowed. I had a lump in my throat.

Mother, who was in the kitchen, was given the news right away. She began to cry. "Thanks be to God, my son," she said, placing her hand on my shoulder.

I bowed. I was overcome as I felt her hand trembling on my head. Her voice trembled, too. "Yes, my son", she said, wiping her tears with the end of her blouse, "you've grown up. You've finished school, you have a job, all that remains is to fulfil your religious principles. And now you've sought the way yourself. Thanks be to God! Father! When can we introduce our boy to our guru in Banten?"

"We'll work out the best time later," replied father.

My parents said a lot more which moved me. They did not confine themselves to religious matters; they even went as far as marriage! Yes, marriage!

"You are old enough to take a wife," said mother, "and with your job as a senior clerk you can afford it." (I had just become a clerk).

I bowed. I realized my parents feared I would become a scoundrel or drift into vice. That's what it's like in Bandung.

They did not know, though, that I had a girlfriend. I could never bring myself to tell them because I knew only too well they always longed for me to marry into an aristocratic

family. And my girl came from an ordinary family.

To mark my holy intention, mother organized a ritual meal that night for Sheikh Abdul Kadir Djaelani, the founder of the mystical order to which father belonged. As usual, his life story was read before dinner. Tradition was also preserved when my uncle, Mang Satja, read the story. To be precise, he sang it, in traditional Sundanese verse form.

In following my parents' mystical way of life, I performed my religious duties with added fervour. My obligations, already heavy, were increased by new demands.

Yes, my religious duties were heavy at first, very heavy, but gradually they became a habit and hence easy. Indeed life became a burden if I did not carry them out, especially since I had never forgotten father's teachings that I would suffer punishment in the next world if I neglected my obligations.

I would suffer mysterious punishment as long as I lived in this world, too, father always used to say.

I felt like a new man on entering that mystical province. I had had a similar feeling once before, when I had just left my native village to go to a big city school, the junior high, in Bandung. But I felt different now because formerly I had never been confronted with religious mysteries, mysteries which carried the threat of weird tortures behind them if I did not painstakingly carry out my obligations. Beforehand, I was bursting with pride: I had been promoted to a senior school where I could study English, French, German, and other subjects.

Now pride was being pushed aside by a stronger feeling: I must be more diligent in carrying out my duties.

My earlier pride, which was apt to manifest itself in my ability–cleverness, if you like–in English and so on was no longer apparent, although occasionally a feeling that bordered on arrogance would crop up in my mind when I felt I was perfect in serving God devotedly.

A sense of superiority made me dream of convincing other people of the goodness and truth of my mystical way of life. These reflections sometimes made me behave in rather an arrogant and moralizing way. Sometimes I could not hide my dislike of sinners and unbelievers.

One day my guru came from Banten to Bandung. It had always been his practice to travel round visiting his pupils.

A meeting was held at a pupil's house. After evening and sunset prayers had been performed, a discussion of religious matters was held, which frequently involved ridicule of those who did not share our beliefs. I put several questions to my guru but he always replied: "Later all the secrets which are not yet clear will be revealed. Just work diligently for religious knowledge, increase your recitations, your meditation, your fasting, and cut down on sleep. Everything will become clear later on; those who serve God diligently and abide by all the teachings of our mystical order will never need to say, 'God knows, but I don't'. Everything will become clear to them, for none but holy spirits can ascend to the heights of supreme knowledge and truth. I pray you, be zealous in carrying out the instructions I've given you."

Since my guru always said the same thing, I had no inclination to ask further questions. I believed his statements were true.

I became more assiduous, especially since I often received letters from my father. He never failed to include this warning: "Hasan, my son, please be careful in your way of life, particularly since you've embraced the mystical order of the supreme, holy and pure knowledge. Never do anything to oppose or evade those teachings. Remember the consequences in the next world."

5

That's how I lived in a bustling city like Bandung without departing from the discipline of my mystical religion.

I believed, at that time, my religious fervour had reached its peak. Once I fasted for seven days and seven nights. Once I bathed in the Tjikapundung River forty times in a single night, from about the 8 P.M. prayer until daybreak. I dived deeply each time I plunged into the water and, after hastening back to the bank, sat down and let my body dry without using a towel. When I was dry I used to dive quickly into the water again. So it went on forty times. Once I locked

myself in a room for three days and nights without food or sleep and without talking to anybody.

It was only to be expected that I would become more and more isolated from the busy world and normal society. My office work was often unfinished.

My face was pallid like an anaemic's. My office colleagues often said: "Why, our young preacher is becoming paler, isn't he? "

Others replied playfully I would have to get married soon. "You look as if you could do with a woman," they said.

That wasn't all: the most disturbing consequence was that one day I fell sick and had to enter hospital, where I found my lungs had been affected. The doctor saw signs of tuberculosis in my right lung, and I had to undergo treatment.

Fortunately, my condition had not reached a serious stage. A month later I was allowed to go home.

Chapter 4

1

The Water Board section in the City Council office was less crowded than usual, for it was after one o'clock. Only a few people were in the queue, but they kept me busy. After receiving attention, each person, in turn, departed, until only one remained.

At that moment a young man, accompanied by a girl, entered the lobby through the main door. They paused for several seconds, glancing from left to right at the notices above the grilles.

"That's it!" the young man said, pointing to my grille.

He set off briskly in my direction. I could hear the sound of her light feet in their red slippers as her slender figure followed along behind him.

The man was about twenty-eight, handsome, with eyes that expressed a keen intellect. The furrows in his brows

indicated a thinker. Neatly dressed in yellowish trousers and a cream shirt, he wore neither jacket nor tie.

I was momentarily startled when I noticed the girl behind him. I almost criea out. I thought she was Rukmini . . .

She looked about twenty. She may have been older, but her clothes and demeanour made her look younger. She had a pretty face, an aquiline nose, luminous eyes, and a beauty spot above her lip. The waves in her hair set off her beauty to perfection. She was slender–her figure was good. She wore a red silk blouse with jasmine, the white colour of which stood out vividly against the red background. Her batik sarong had a white background.

I finished attending to the last person in the queue. "Now, sir," I said.

"I've just moved to number eleven, Mangosteen Gardens," the man replied, leaning his hand on the counter.

"Oh, you want the water connected?"

"Correct, sir!" He gazed at me intently for a moment . . . "but . . . but, good heavens," he cried, "aren't you Hasan?"

"That's right," I replied, somewhat taken aback. I looked at him. "And you . . . ? Who are you?"

"You've forgotten? How could you?" he replied smilingly. "Please try to think."

I looked at him again.

"Ah! Sure, I haven't forgotten! How could I forget? You're Rusli, aren't you?" I said cheerfully, thrusting out my hand to shake hands.

Instantly our bodies, separated by the partition, met in a firm handshake. The old friendship stored in our hearts rose to the surface again, flowing along the hand-bridge, up, then down, as though swept by a fast-moving current. I shook my head vigorously.

"Good heavens," I said. "I didn't think we'd ever see each other again. Where are you these days?"

"Here. I moved from Djakarta only last week."

"Here?" I shook my head again. "It's been a long time since we last met, hasn't it? When was it?"

"I think it was at school in Tasikmalaja. We haven't seen each other since."

"Of course, of course." I nodded. "It's been a very long time. How many years?"

"At least fifteen."

"Yes, yes, fifteen years . . . it doesn't seem that long. We've aged all of a sudden, haven't we?"

We laughed.

"Oh, first, let me introduce you to my sister, Kartir He turned. "Tin! Tin! Meet Hasan, an old school friend."

With a sweet smile Kartini moved forward beside Rus She gave me a sidelong glance and then extended her har through the grille.

I stared briefly, uncertain whether to grasp her hand or not. Then, awkardly, I did; it was soft and friendly.

"Hasan," I whispered.

"Kartini," she replied distinctly.

A few moments later the details about connecting the water were completed. I made a note of them.

"It's ages since we met," said Rusli, as I folded the form he had to present to the cashier. "I hope we can get together soon."

"I'd like you to come to my place," I said, picking up a pencil.

"Fine. Where do you live?"

"Eighteen, Sasakgantung."

"Good, but it'd be better if you came to my place first."

"Of course . . . you ought to have a house-warming."

"Come later this afternoon if you can. We can talk then. Come about 4.30!"

"Fine. What's your address? Oh, I've just put it down in my book–Mangosteen Gardens, isn't it?"

We parted cheerfully. When Kartini nodded smilingly I nodded shyly in return. God knows, my heart pounded when my eyes met hers.

I checked my books. All applications for connecting or disconnecting the water had been entered in their respective books. As I made the entries I had the strangest feeling. What was clear was that I felt as happy as any other fellow when he met a friend whom he had not seen for ages. Even so, I must admit that my feelings rose from something more than mere happiness.

Chapter 5

The Government offices closed at one o'clock on Saturdays. My bike sped along the Merdeka Lio Road. I did not need to pedal because the road ran downhill. It was hot and humid. The roads were noisy and crowded, especially the Braga Road: the heart of Bandung's bourgeois society, Rusli called it.

All types of vehicles–gigs, cars, three-wheelers, and innumerable bikes–flashed by, for offices and schools had just closed. Only the leading officials, superintendents or above, were in cars.

A multitude of sounds–voices in the air and vehicles on the road–cut across each other, making the road seem more crowded. Gig bells clanged, car horns hooted, bicycle bells tinkled. Often a "Hello Peter" or "Good day sister!" could be heard from behind a wheel, answered at once by "Hello" or sometimes by "Shut up, you idiot!"

Since I did not relish the noise and bustle I avoided the Braga Road, turning right towards the Landraad Road straight to the city square past Bantjeuj. I pedalled steadily, not too fast, not too slow. My bike knew the route by heart.

In front of the mosque, I heard someone shout from the footpath: "San! Hasan!"

I swung around. Amid the hundreds of pedestrians I caught sight of Rusli, grinning broadly as he beckoned to me. Behind him I could see Kartini's face among the milling crowd. She smiled faintly.

My bike shuddered to a stop. I clambered off unsteadily. I let several cars and gigs go by before hurrying across to Rusli and Kartini.

"On Saturdays we finish work at one." I said. "Where've you been?"

"Just strolling. Window shopping."

"Buy anything?"

"Oh, no, just looking. A proletarian's purse can only stretch to fried peanuts at most." He laughed.

People jostled us as they passed and we stood there like a clump of trees in the middle of a surging stream.

"Get a move on!" a policeman ordered.

"Come on, let's go along together," said Rusli.

"Good," I replied.

I lifted my bike onto the footpath. We continued walking, veering from one side to the other to dodge people coming towards or passing us. But they could not avoid bumping into us, or my bike, for the footpath was overcrowded.

When we came to a restaurant, Rusli said: "Let's have something to eat and drink."

"Thanks, but I must hurry home."

"Why? What's doing at home?"

"Yes, let's," said Kartini.

I waited to be persuaded, just as Kartini did the other day when she wanted to play the piano.

"Come on, friend," said Kartini.

"This is a lucky meeting. You shouldn't ignore good luck. That's a religious saying, isn't it?" Rusli said, as he tugged my arm. The bike nearly toppled over as he kept tugging me. It was dragged along behind.

We went in. Customers looked up from their food or drink and watched us enter. One man whispered laughingly to his companion as he glanced towards Kartini. Another customer, a grey-haired man who seemed to be trying to ingratiate himself with his wife by proclaiming that he detested sophisticated women, paused to glance out of the corner of his eye towards Kartini.

"Go on talking!" his wife snapped.

We selected a corner table, separated from the other customers by a row of empty tables. A waiter bustled up with a menu and notebook in his hand.

Suddenly we heard a shout. "Hey, Rus!" Rusli peered around like a mother hen hearing a strange sound. He was startled, but a moment later his face beamed with surprise.

"You're here?" he said, pointing to a young man who was approaching.

"When did you arrive?"

From a distance the young man's hands were outstretched like a blind man seeking directions. A moment later he and Rusli shook hands vigorously.

"When did you arrive?" Rusli repeated.

"Just now, by the midday train," the young man replied, pulling up the nearest chair.

"Let me introduce you first. This is Anwar, an anarchist-artist from Djakarta," said Rusli.

Laughing, Anwar shook hands with us. He was a good-looking young man with skin the colour of a Chinese, and his eyes were slightly slanted. His small moustache and beard were unkept for he hadn't shaved. His clothes were as dirty as a mechanic's overalls.

He told Rusli he intended to move to Bandung. "I got fed up in Djakarta," he said.

He had a pleasant face, but, I don't know, I didn't feel at ease in his presence. As he talked I saw him glance several times out of the corner of his eye towards Kartini, who had her head down reading the menu. The gleam in his eye disturbed me. It was a lustful look.

"What do you people want?" Kartini asked suddenly, lifting her head and biting the pencil as she waited to write the order.

"I've already ordered twenty sticks of chicken sate and *gado-gado,"* said Anwar, reaching for a toothpick in the glass in front of my nose. "I'm drinking iced white coffee." His eyes gleamed again with an obvious predatory interest in Kartini. I grew more disturbed.

After Kartini wrote our orders she handed the docket to the waiter who had been standing patiently behind her.

We went on chatting as we waited for the food. Anwar seemed a cheerful type. He liked to laugh. In a loud voice, and chewing the toothpick continuously, he recounted his experiences since he had last seen Rusli, sometimes rising from his chair to adopt a pose to illustrate his remarks. Naturally enough, some of the other customers turned in his direction and joined in the laughter when Anwar made a humorous remark. Anwar would then quickly turn towards them and raise his hand slightly in acknowledgment. But other customers, irked by Anwar's manner, turned up their noses or made wry faces.

Occasionally I would join in the hearty laughter, but at other times his strange behaviour made me feel uneasy.

"Once I slapped my servant across the face!" he said. "I slapped him because he wouldn't do what I told him. I'd forbidden him to kow-tow to anybody, but one day I caught him bowing and scraping to a district chief. One of the feudal class, y'know. So I slapped him there and then in front of his feudal 'Excellency'. Both got the shock of their lives."

Anwar laughed. The others laughed, too, but I just smiled awkwardly. I did not see the joke. Why should a servant be slapped merely because he had been paying homage? This fellow's really odd, I thought.

"Down with feudal customs that debase the dignity of man!" he exclaimed, revolving the toothpick with his teeth. "And you know, another time I said that bluntly to my own father. You know my father, Rus, he's a regent. He's a first-class feudalist, isn't he? Well, I told him straight: 'Don't you feel like a king in a Javanese farce when you wear that antique regalia and have an umbrella held over your head by an attendant? Why do you need someone else to hold your umbrella? An umbrella isn't heavy—you could do it yourself. In my view, it's all ridiculous.' " Anwar turned to me. "What do you reckon?" Then he turned to Kartini. "What's your opinion? It is ridiculous, isn't it?" He winked. "Well, I reckon it's all ridiculous, myself. My father said it was a sign of respect. But being respectful in that sort of way is just plain idiotic, isn't it?"

A customer at another table glared like an enraged fish. He must have been an old-time colonial civil servant.

"Ha! My *gado-gado's* arrived!" shouted Anwar.

The waiter briskly spread out the food and drink. The table was too small and another one was dragged up.

"Come on, start," said Rusli after the waiter had finished.

"Let's eat like a hungry farm labourer," said Anwar, stirring his *gado-gado* with his spoon and fork.

"Yes," said Rusli, "not like a capitalist who has no stomach for workers' food."

They ate ravenously, especially Anwar, who ate like a

horse. He must have been the hungriest because he was the first to finish. "What about a smoke?" he asked.

Rusli, still chewing a Palembang shrimp, groped in his pocket for a fresh packet of cigarettes.

"These are empty," said Anwar, crumpling his own packet and throwing it on the floor.

He took one of Rusli's. Then he took a small tube out of his pocket.

"What's that?" asked Rusli, finishing the last spoonful of his meal.

"Opium," replied Anwar, carefully smearing a black substance onto the end of the cigarette he was about to smoke.

The three of us watched him. He really is extraordinary, I thought—he even smokes opium.

"Why are you all gaping at me? Isn't this God I'm putting onto my cigarette?"

"You're talking like a madman, Anwar," said Rusli, glancing in my direction for a moment.

"Why mad? Didn't Marx say that? Didn't Marx say God was the opium of the people?"

God forbid, I thought. Although I had changed greatly since meeting Rusli and Kartini, I could not refrain from inwardly exclaiming "God forbid". My heart revolted. I wanted to take issue with that madman. I asked: "What do you mean?"

"It's very simple—God is opium!"

"God opium?" I repeated.

"Yes, opium—at least, according to Marx." He nudged Rusli's arm. "Isn't that so?"

Rusli smiled and sipped his coffee.

"But for me," said Anwar, "God is myself." He jabbed his chest with his forefinger. "And with the poet Kloos I say: 'I am a God within my innermost thoughts . . .' " He brandished his arms like an opera star before an audience.

This fellow's really mad, I thought. He even thinks he's God! My bewilderment grew.

Rusli glanced in my direction. Presumably, he saw me frowning like someone who had been offended. My lips trembled at the corners as if I was about to say something. Rusli quickly cut in:

"Of course, Marx did say once that religion is the opium of the people. But that's just an analogy, an analogy, for instance, like the one we often hear—that God is a pillar in man's life. We also hear yet another analogy: that God is a beacon or torch in a hellish existence. There are all sorts of other analogies. The analogy Marx took is not really inexact: that God, or, to be exact, religion is the opium of the people. What does that mean?"

As usual, Rusli spoke quietly and clearly when analysing a problem. On top of that, I lacked courage to take issue with his theories and opinions, possibly because my sense of inferiority had grown since our association had become closer and the feeling that Rusli "knew better" than I did had taken hold of me. So I listened without contesting a word while Rusli continued:

"It means that God, like opium, is a source of comfort for people living in misery and hardship, a source for forgetting the sadness and suffering of an imperfect world. We mustn't forget, as I explained to you the other day, that religion and God are the products of an imperfect society and are clearly the creations of man in a state of utter despair."

"Hey, waiter! Give us a glass of tea, eh!" shouted Anwar suddenly. People were startled, but he puffed energetically on his cigarette, seemingly indifferent to those around him.

"You gave me a fright," Kartini laughed, her glass poised in front of her mouth.

"Ah . . . you got a fright? Did I speak too loudly, perhaps? I'm sorry, next time I'll whisper."

As Anwar spoke, he looked towards the waiter bustling in our direction between the tables and chairs. "You wanted a glass of tea, did you, sir?"

"Ha! See that!" Anwar pounded the table as he looked at Kartini. "I didn't speak up enough, did I? He still has to ask . . ." He turned to the waiter. "Yes, one glass of tea! Pronto!"

The waiter hurried out the back. This tea-break lasted a few minutes, but my thoughts remained centred on Rusli's explanation.

"So, in my opinion," Rusli resumed, "the analogy of a pillar or torch we often hear is basically the same as Marx's

analogy with opium. Both are just analogies. What do you reckon, Hasan?"

I did not reply. I could sense Kartini looking at me. Anwar was puffing his cigarette. He seemed to have transferred his attention to the people coming and going.

"Look, a build like Mae West," he said, gesturing with his chin towards a fat woman who had just come in with her husband.

"Isn't it time we went home?" asked Kartini as if she had been waiting for an appropriate moment to break up the discussion.

"I have to wait for my tea first," said Anwar.

"That's all right. We've got to go now, though," replied Rusli.

"Where are you staying the night?"

"For the time being, at my uncle's place in Katja-Katja Wetan, but tomorrow or the day after I may come to your place. I've got my luggage, too. You've got a big place, haven't you?"

"Yes!" replied Rusli. "Good!" he said, standing up. "We'll make a move now."

After Rusli paid the bill we said goodbye to Anwar. We had almost reached the exit when he shouted: "Hey Rus! Did you pay for me, too?"

"Ah, as if I wasn't wise to you," Rusli replied, with a wink.

"All right! All right!" Anwar said, chanting, and drumming the table with his fingers. "Hey, waiter! Where's my tea?"

Chapter 6

Time passed as though its appetite for devouring the days, months, and years was, as Rusli put it, as voracious as imperialism's increasing hunger for colonial domination.

But people who concentrate steadfastly on a particular

idea or problem are unaware of time passing. It did not seem, for instance, that four months had elapsed since I met Rusli and Kartini. As the days passed we became closer, and the closer we became the more I was influenced by Rusli's reasoning. He took pleasure in making me think about all sorts of issues—moral, social, political, economic and the like—which earlier had never crossed my mind.

"They're just as important as religious questions," said Rusli, "because man's entire life is governed by them."

I now began to think I was a real man because, as Rusli said one day, the most important thing for man was to think. Moreover, as a human being, he should have a deep-rooted moral attitude.

The more I concentrated on the fresh problems Rusli raised the less I thought of matters of religion and mysticism. And yet I had never had any doubts or scepticism before. From childhood I had practised my religion unquestioningly. A man's mind is like a flock of chickens in a fowlhouse. You scatter grain in one corner and all the chickens flock there; the other spots are deserted. You scatter grain in the other corner and the chickens flock there. The grain is never scattered evenly at any one time.

And so my interests and thoughts were now devoted to the issues Rusli brought up. I must say that Rusli's influence grew stronger as time passed. His success lay in his approach. He did not draw on the fear and horror of death like a religious teacher lecturing his pupil, nor did he use the thrust and parry and mockery of a polemicist or a demagogue. A skilful propagandist, Rusli always put into practice his theory that people were more easily won over by a smile than by bullying. But I realized that Kartini's presence was the most important factor. Things would not have gone so smoothly but for her. In fact, she was a catalyst for Rusli's influence.

At first my emotions were barely audible to me, but day by day they became more vocal: I loved Kartini as I had once loved Rukmini.

Thus, everything I said and did was tempered by the thought of what she would say. Would she be angry? Would she like the cut of my jacket? And so on.

I realized how much I had changed. Four months ago my actions and expressions had always reflected public opinion, especially pious Moslem opinion. I had always been at pains not to disgrace the "pious Moslem class" in public. (What Rusli said was true: everyone was sustained and influenced by the opinions and established standards of his own group or class.) But now I no longer cared about public opinion. Kartini's opinion was more important now. I was no longer embarrassed to accompany her to the markets and to restaurants; I even went to the movies with her a few times. I was amused when I recalled that only four months ago I used to dodge behind a roadside tree to hide from a passing car or gig.

It came as no surprise when many of my acquaintances shook their heads at the sudden transformation in one so pious. The understanding ones–it was not lost on me that they were elderly and widely experienced people–just smiled. My aunt was one of them.

"Ah," she told me one day, "you're still young, you have to learn about life. What's more, you're a man–you won't get pregnant. A man's like a copper coin: even if you're crooked or dirty someone will still accept you. A girl, though, is like a silver coin. When a silver coin is a bit tarnished nobody wants it."

I opened my heart to aunt about Kartini. She smiled and said firmly: "San, you've grown up. You've got to face life with courage and resilience, but that doesn't mean that you oughtn't to watch out."

She then told me of her youth. When she was growing up her parents were tyrannical. When her sexual desires began to stir, she said she was shackled and denied the slightest liberty. So, as soon as a man began to court her, she was easy prey and eloped like a bird that had been waiting for a long time to be released from its cage.

But aunt's first husband was unfaithful. Perhaps that was why she was always warning me that courage and resilience didn't mean that I shouldn't be on my guard. Aunt promptly left her first husband. She was too ashamed, however, to return to her parents' home, and took a job as a household help to one of her aunts whose husband was a district chief.

They had many children and sorely needed aunt's help. Then, poor thing, the district chief seduced her and she was forced to flee once more.

Aunt had vast experience. She had been married six times. She was just on fifty when she began to think about the rosary and the veil. Now she zealously practised her religion, adhering diligently to the Prophet's axiom: Pray as if you are going to die tomorrow.

Aunt's understanding attitude, which neither hindered nor condemned me, made me feel better about associating with Kartini and Rusli.

Yet I was still uncertain because I felt a barrier still existed between Kartini and myself. I often asked myself what Rusli's relationship with Kartini really was. Kartini called herself Rusli's sister, and Rusli once said she was his sister. But they did not behave like brother and sister. Their attitude was too intimate for that. Were they close friends? Yes, that was about it . . . but wasn't it possible for an association between a young bachelor and a young widow to develop into something more than mere friendship? Ah, rubbish! I didn't believe that sort of thing went on.

I felt depressed sometimes when I thought about it. I reflected that that sort of association was shameful, sinful, and forbidden by Islam.

I was in such a state that I was determined to end my association with them. It was clear, however, that the bonds of love could not be severed quite so easily.

Kartini seemed to be aware of my innermost feelings. Sometimes she liked to make me jealous, especially in front of Rusli. When that happened I did my best to conceal my jealousy, but sometimes the skin on my face seemed to be made of glass and I could not hide the fire that flared up inside me.

But Kartini would have lacked feminine guile had she not succeeded in enticing and captivating me again. Thus, my jealousy was transformed into a deeper love.

To sum up, the longer I associated with her the more my love for her increased and the greater influence she, and through her, Rusli, exercised over me.

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Riwayat Hidup

Achdiat Karta Mihardja lahir di Cibatu, Garut, 6 Maret 1911. Tahun 1932 tamat dari *Algemene Middelbare School* bagian A1 di Solo. Ia juga mempelajari mistik (tarikat) aliran *Kadariyah Naksabandiah* dari Kiyai Abdullah Mubarak yang terkenal juga dengan nama Ajengan Gedebag. Kecuali itu belajar filsafat pada pater Dr. Jacobs S.J., dosen pada Universitas Indonesia, dalam Filsafat *Thomisme.*

Tahun 1943 ia menjadi anggota redaksi *Bintang Timur* merangkap redaktur mingguan *Peninjauan* (bersama Sanusi Pane, Armin Pane, PF Dahler, Dr. Amir dan Dr. Ratulangi).

Tahun 1937 pembantu harian *Indie Bode* dan Mingguan *Tijdbeeld* dan *Zaterdag,* juga sebentar bekerja di *Aneta.* Tahun 1938 jadi pimpinan redaksi tengah-bulanan *Penuntun Kemajuan.* Tahun 1941 jadi redaksi Balai Pustaka, sejak saat itu tumbuh minatnya kepada kesusastraan. Tahun 1943 menjadi redaksi dan penyalin di kantor pekabaran radio, Jakarta. Tahun 1946 jadi pimpinan umum mingguan *Gelombang Zaman* dan setengah mingguan berbahasa Sunda *Kemajuan Rakyat.* Tahun 1948 kembali jadi redaksi di Balai Pustaka. Pada tahun 1949 terbitlah roman *Atheis*-nya ini.

Tahun 1951 bersama-sama Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana dan Dr. Ir. Sam Udin mewakili PEN Club Indonesia menghadiri Konperensi PEN Club International di Lausanne, Switserland. Saat itu ia juga mengunjungi Negeri Belanda, Inggris, Prancis, Jerman Barat, dan Roma. Tahun 1952 berkunjung ke Amerika dan Eropa Barat dengan tugas dari Dep. PP&K untuk mempelajari soal-soal pendidikan orang dewasa (termasuk penerbitan bacaan-bacaannya) dan 'university extension courses'. Kesempatan ini digunakan juga untuk mempelajari seni drama di Amerika Serikat. Tahun 1956 selama setahun memperdalam bahasa Inggris serta sastranya di Sydney University dalam rangka Colombo Plan. Tahun 1960 menjabat Kepala Inspeksi Kebudayaan Djakarta Raya dan memberi kuliah pada FS-UI tentang Kesusastraan Indonesia Modern.

Tahun 1961 menjabat sebagai Lektor Kepala pada Australian National University di Canberra, mengajar sastra Indonesia Modern dan bahasa Sunda. Sampai sekarang ia masih tinggal di Australia.

Roman *Atheis* ini salah satu karya terpenting yang lahir dari tangan Achdiat K. Mihardja. Pergeseran nilai-nilai dalam masyarakat kita yang terus berubah menjadi tema sentral roman ini. Masalah-masalah itu sampai sekarang masih relevan, walaupun roman ini telah berusia lebih 30 tahun dan telah mengalami cetakan yang ketujuh.

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Bagian V

Hari Sabtu kantor-kantor pemerintah hanya bekerja sampai jam satu siang.

Melancar sepedaku di atas jalan Merdeka Lio. Aku tak usah banyak mendayung, karena jalannya mudun.

Alangkah ramainya di jalan. Apalagi di jalan Braga, "Urat nadi masyarakat burjuis di Bandung," kata Rusli.

Bermacam-macam kendaraan simpang-siur. Delman, mobil demmo dan yang sangat banyak ialah sepeda, oleh karena kantor-kantor dan sekolah-sekolah semuanya baru bubar. Anak-anak sekolah, guru-guru, klerek-klerek, komis-komis, semuanya naik sepeda. Hanya tuan-tuan besar, dari referendaris ke atas atau opsir-opsir, naik mobil.

Seperti kendaraan yang bermacam-macam itu di atas aspal, bersimpang siurlah pula bermacam-macam suara di udara. Membikin keadaan lebih ramai lagi. Delman berkeleneng-keleneng, mobil berdedot-dedot, sepeda berkerining-kerining. Dan seringkali pula terdengar "Hallo Piet" atau "dag zus!" dari belakang stang stirnya, yang segera disambut dengan "hallo!" kembali atau kadang-kadang pula dengan "hou je kop, aap!"*)

Aku tidak suka kepada keriuhan dan keramaian seperti itu. Oleh karena itu aku tidak mengambil jalan Braga, melainkan membelok ke kanan, kejalan Landraad, terus ke alun-alun, lewat Banceuy.

Aku mendayung dengan tenang. Tidak terlalu cepat, tidak pula terlalu alon-alon. Fongersku sudah hafal jalan.

Sampai di depan mesjid, terdengarlah tiba-tiba dari tepi jalan orang berseru-seru.

"San! Saudara Hasan!"

Segeralah aku menoleh ke arah suara itu. Maka di antara orang-orang yang beratus-ratus berjalan di atas trotoir itu, nampaklah kepadaku wajah Rusli berseri-seri dengan tangan melambai-lambai memanggil aku. Dan di belakang dia kelihatan pula wajah

*) "Diam lu monyet!"