
INTO THE WHIRLPOOL: THE SECOND PART OF SOETJIPTO'S *DJALAN SAMPOERNA*

Benedict R. O'G. Anderson,
editor and translator*

Editor's Note: For the translation of the first part of Soetjipto's autobiography, *Djalan Sampoerna*, see "First Love: The Opening of Soetjipto's *Djalan Sampoerna*," ed. and trans. Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, *Indonesia* 82 (October 2006): 39–74.

Introduction

This second (and probably last) installment of Soetjipto's "memoirs" could not be more different from the first. The touchingly sweet, funny, and sensual tone of "First Love" has vanished completely, to be replaced by a raw, sharp-eyed bitterness. Precisely because it completes an astonishing diptych, this installment shows the social and literary intelligence of the author to impressive effect.

Almost all the six "chapters" that follow are concerned with events that occurred in August 1925, when Soetjipto was just fifteen years old. We are invited to observe the rapidly deteriorating relations between the little teenager and his violent Madurese stepfather, which are marked by physical brutality and mental humiliation. Yet the cause of the final break between them forms a literary and historical gem all on its own. By this time, Soetjipto has finished his schooling and is apprenticed as a typist in

* I wish to express my thanks to Arief Djati for helping me with some of the more difficult passages in the text that follows.

the office of the Patih ("deputy *bupati*") of Situbondo. But he is so fascinated by the prospect of watching the election of a village chief (*lurah*) organized by his boss that he forgets he has "borrowed" his stepfather's bicycle. What follows is an alluring description of a colonial-era village election, seen, uniquely, through the eyes of a fifteen-year-old "native."

The abuse he receives as a result precipitates his decision to abandon his mother and head for the (partly) open road. He has made two decisions: the first is to have revenge on all the snobbish, mean, and stupid relatives, on both sides of his original family, who have humiliated and abused him; the second is to seek out other relatives who may be willing to help him stand on his own. The first objective is perfectly attained. By an astute combination of lies, eavesdropping, and theft, he punishes his ghastly grandfather and grandmother in Waru, and his shallow, arrogant cousin in Surabaya. But the second goal eludes him. None of his relatives will help him, and he must live completely alone, simply by his wits and his endurance. Yet the bitterness of these chapters is relieved by his lively account of his grandparents' home, the milieu of the student boardinghouse in Surabaya where his cousin lodges, the "Islamic restaurant" in Kudus where he finds briefly a Samaritan, and the grim coldness of the household of his petit-*prijaji* uncle in Kediri.

(The long installment that follows next might be impossible to translate, but it is central to the work as a whole. Soetjipto encounters, in his wanderings, a "wise man," real or dreamed, who encourages him to make pilgrimages to various sacred sites in East Java and deepen his knowledge of Javanese mystical lore. After these arduous pilgrimages, he will end up as a pauper sleeping nights in the majestic precincts of Surabaya's Sunan Ampel mosque.)

What is the value of the translated chapters, aside from the account of the village election? What strikes me first is the power of Soetjipto's description of the milieu and mentality of his colonial-era petit-*prijaji* kinfolk. It puts even Pramoedya's rhetorically brilliant portrait of Sastro Kassier (in *Anak Semua Bangsa*) into the shade: here we find snobbery, arrogance, selfishness, spitefulness, (petty) class consciousness, coldness—shared by men and women alike. He even gets perfectly across the provinciality and the colonial-era toadying to Dutchness. Never has the "wonderful Javanese kinship network" been so decisively blown apart. I do not believe that even colonial-era radical activists, including communists, ever achieved such a finely detailed accusation.

The second thing to note is Soetjipto's moral compass. He secretly opens a groveling, lying letter from his Madurese stepfather (who has intercepted Soetjipto's letter to his mother) to his grandparents, and steals from them a golden ring. He lies to the man in whose house his cousin and friends lodge in Surabaya, and steals the money in the boys' pockets. He intercepts a letter from his cousin to his uncle in Kediri, to make sure that the man does not know what he has done in the capital of East Java. He peeks through keyholes and eavesdrops on this conversation and that. But he is quite frank that what he has done is wrong. What is striking is the main justification that he offers, which is not, as one would expect, simple revenge, though this is mentioned. His basic idea is to force a series of breaks with all his kinfolk so that he will never see them again.

The last chapter ends in an astonishing way. Two years after the painful parting with his first love, the boy decides radically to change his identity and to abandon any claims to being a *prijaji*. He leaves his petit-*prijaji* clothes, and the little money that his icy uncle has given him to return "home," under a shady tree in a remote rice field, dons a sarong and a *kopjah*, and prepares for a new, wandering life as a member of the Muslim underclass. So far as I know, there is nothing like this in Indonesian literature or historical documents. It is not political at all, at that.

It is true that, in those days, Indonesians grew up fast. We know how young Semaun and Tan Malaka were when they became heads of the infant PKI (Partai Komunis Indonesia). But nothing brings us a sharper consciousness of this condition than the twenty-one-year old Soetjipto recalling what it had been like to head, all alone, for the Lower Depths at the tender age of fifteen.

Chapter 9—My Fate

But again I was puzzled. Why did my stepfather always look at me with such a sour expression? Why did he always show his anger? In my opinion, perhaps he was afraid that I would interfere with his worldly possessions (actually, when he died I would be afraid to take over whatever wealth he left behind).¹ Such could well be the case. So it would be best for me to leave. This would satisfy him, and for my part, I would never have to see his face again.

But ... I should wait. Till the end of the year, when I finished school. Such for a long time were my thoughts as I reflected on my life.² My brain felt very tired. So I fell asleep, and was conscious of nothing any more.

One day, I felt I could no longer bear the sadness knotted (*tersimpael*) in the very marrow of my bones. So finally I complained to my mother about my stepfather's anger towards me. Whenever my stepfather got furious, he never failed to say: "And where does your food come from?" This meant that he resented every mouthful of food I took each day. After listening to my complaint, my mother immediately put her arms around my neck and wept:

"My child, how can your mother protect you? Mother is just a woman, and women are always in the wrong. So I hope you will try hard to fight down your feelings with a pure heart, and be patient."

"Don't cry like that, Mother. Actually, I don't like complaining to you. But what else can I do? I can't bear it any longer. I've always tried to fight down my feelings. But every day his anger and his hate for me grow stronger. When he is angry, I always bury my feelings inside my heart. But the longer it goes on, the harder it is to bear.

¹ The text seems a bit awkward "... ia takoet bahwa saja menridoeni doenjanja (kalau ia mati saja takoet mengambil harta tinggalannya)." "*Menridoeni*" is East Javanese for "interfere in."

² A note that should have appeared at the start of the translation of Soetjipto's first chapters. In his introductory remarks, Amien Budiman picked out some peculiarities of the author's style, in particular his idiosyncratic use of *mereka itoe* to mean "at that time," rather than meaning "those people," as it does normally in contemporary Indonesian. In fact, however, it is simply a Malayification of the Javanese *marika ikoe*, meaning "at that time."

That's why I have poured it all out to you, Mother. It is too much, Mother ..." So I spoke, shaking my head from side to side, while the tears rolled down my cheeks.

"I know it is true, my child. But your mother cannot shield you. If I talk to him about all this, it will surely turn out badly. You'll have to think for yourself what's the best way out."

"Mother, that's not it at all. I didn't complain to you because I wanted you to talk to Stepfather. It was just to pour out to you what is in my heart. Who else can I turn to?" I asked, wiping the tears from my eyes.

"My child, I know you didn't mean it that way, and I also know the reason why your Stepfather hates you. But knowing all this doesn't help at all, because I can't do anything to make things better. All I can say is that you have to fight against your feelings." So she spoke, while her tears poured down.

"Mother, don't cry! Let it be—for this is my fate." And I put my arms around her neck and kissed away the tears on her cheeks.

"Child, please be patient ... Now go outside, so you can calm yourself. If your father found out my heart was in turmoil, it would be for the worse, no?"

So it went every time I complained to my mother. Because she was only a woman, she had no power whatever. Even if a woman does what is right, once her husband says she has done wrong, then of course it will be she who is at fault. But how could I control my feelings (*Napsoekoe*)? For I could see the danger hanging over me, which every day made my heart grow sadder.

Before, my stepfather only dared to be angry with me when my mother was not around. But now, even if my mother was present, he never hesitated. No matter how much I tried to control myself, every day it became harder to do so. Not only was my body abject,³ but every day I had to put up with angry abuse, like: "Of all the eggs in my yard, you are the rottenest."

I have already described a bit my humiliating position. You could see it clearly in our daily life if you compared me with my brothers and cousins. They attended the HIS (Hollandsch-Inlandsche School, Dutch-Native School), but not I. When they talked in front of me, they would always mix in some Dutch (to show me that my status was not like theirs). In every way, their manner showed their contempt for me. And it was not only that their schooling was far higher than mine. The things they owned were also different. They were all given bicycles, whereas I always had to walk. I cannot say more about the discriminations between us, because if I call them to mind, I feel as if I no longer have the strength to move the pen which I am using to write upon this paper.

Especially when I think of my cousin who was attending the NIAS in Surabaya.⁴ When he came home to Pandji during the holidays, my heart would always be thrown into turmoil; for he would always spit when he ran into me, as if I were no more than a worm. It was the same when my grandmother from Waru came to visit: her expression

³ *Soeda badan bersifat hina*. "Hina" is hard to translate since it lies on the semantic borderline between an objective social reality (abjection) and a subjective condition (humiliation).

⁴ Nederlandsch-Indische Artsen School—the Netherlands-Indies Medical School—in Surabaya.

when she looked at me was completely different from the one she put on for my stepbrothers. Every time this happened, my heart burned with pain, as if sliced by razorblades. So whenever I felt sad, troubled, bitter, and ashamed in my heart, I would get rid of these feelings by saying to myself: "Well, after all, this is [my] fate written by God."⁵ Nonetheless, I would often sit thinking over my lot, till the tears rolled down my cheeks. I couldn't bear my stepfather's intolerable behavior. "Ah, my fate; such is the way that human beings are." But actually, my real father's behavior was no less intolerable! This is what happens when a person does not think of the consequences of actions he is about to take. It was not only he who ended up suffering; I too, for years, had to weep on account of something he took only minutes to do. "Like a city burned to cinders // because of the flame of a single candle."⁶

And when my thoughts came to a dead end, I said to myself: "Body mine! Promise you will never behave like my father." Even though I was so sad, I shook my head firmly: "Never! I'll never be like him. After all, I may even not get married. Marriage? There's no use to it. I already know how to get married to my own self."

And this was the decision that I took over and over again: Just wait! Some time this year!

Still, I could not help thinking about my fate, because I was not strong enough to bear the feelings in my heart. It was as if wherever I went, I only encountered fires that blazed up inside me. The only meager water that cooled my spirits was the love and help of my mother. Such was the abjection of a child, merely because of the behavior of a parent (my own father). But I do not want to go on and on about the pain, confusion, and sadness in my heart. Later on I will describe the way to lead a good life in this world (once the reader knows the purpose of this book), and to become *Sampoerna*.⁷ But this depends on the outlook of the reader himself. For a human being cannot make another's heart good, unless that person himself receives a blessing of forgiveness (the will of God).⁸ Let alone I myself, who am writing this book when my age is still younger than a full ear of corn.⁹ Even Kandjeng Nabi Mochamad was not able to make better the hearts of all mankind. Nonetheless, I am forcing myself to write on because—if one looks at it—my life has been very odd (*gandjil*). So I pray the reader will think about it seriously and sincerely, and not read just the profusion of my words.¹⁰ In the name of Allah! I say In the name of Allah because before everything I am a human being, and so ask forgiveness for anything wrong in what I wish to say. There is no certainty that most of the men who wear the white *pitji* (hadjis), who pray day in day out, and who take their prayer-beads with them wherever they go, or those who are always going to church, especially those with beards down to their knees, are

⁵ *Ah, telah nasib toelisan Toehan*. One notices that Soetjipto uses "Toehan" rather than "Allah."

⁶ Here Soetjipto's quotation marks suggest that he is quoting a proverb or a couplet from a well-known poem.

⁷ This is the key word for Soetjipto and cannot be adequately translated into English. Neither "complete" nor "perfect" covers the full meaning, which is impregnated with Javanese mysticism.

⁸ A difficult sentence, which I am not sure I have grasped. "Karena menoesia itoe tijada bisa bikin baik hati orang lain, apa bila tida dari ampoenan diri sendiri (kehendak Toehan)."

⁹ A proverbial expression for the young and inexperienced.

¹⁰ A difficult passage, which I am not sure I have got right. "Maka itoe poedjikoe soepaja pembatja soepaja bisa masoekken soenggoeh-soenggoeh, djanganlah membatja jang terhamboer di moeloet sadja."

truly *sampoerna* in their hearts. For what they do is all in public, while being *sampoerna* lies deep in the heart. The converse is also true. For example, there are many foreign women whose clothes leave them almost naked, and when they dance, they do so in a man's arms. Nonetheless, if their hearts are pure, then what they do is pure. In the same way, look at the way that Balinese women bare their breasts; yet if this is done with a pure heart, it is also pure. But what happens here, in Java? Everyone strictly covers his or her body, and when traveling also covers his or her head. If they dance, men and women stay at a distance from each other, and their bodies do not touch. But if their hearts are not pure, then all of this is also impure. The proof of what I say is that often at a dancing party (*tandak*) quarrels arise which end in stabbings. Such is what happens when purity is simply a public guise. But let me stop here ... because the time has not yet come for me to talk about this at length! All I wish to say is that people should read my story with a pure heart which is, so to speak, reflected in their gaze. For the reading of whole warehouses (*goedang*) of books is useless, I feel, if their contents are not locked up in the reader's heart. On the other hand, even a scrap of paper, if firmly rooted in a pure heart, will bring some good. For this book of mine, in fact, one sheet of paper is really enough. But: It is like a *dhalang* who tells a story through his puppets, yet if there is no gamelan accompanying him, what he says will bring no joy. This is why this book is the way it is.

Meanwhile my situation continued as before, till I finally finished school. I then went to work as an apprentice typist in the *kabupatèn* office in Situbondo.¹¹ Even so, my life there was no different from when I was still in school.

Chapter 10—A Village Election

One day, around two o'clock in the afternoon, the inhabitants of Tjoradjeru, a village not far from my own, dressed to the nines, came in a big crowd to the house of the Wedono. "I wonder what they want?" I said to myself.

It was God's will that I was carried away by the wish to see what was going on. Without another thought, I jumped on my stepfather's bicycle, which happened to be leaning against the wall. I intended only to have a quick look. But when I got there I found the crowd seated on mats laid out in the forecourt. I parked the bicycle at the house of my uncle (my mother's brother), next to the Wedono's. Then I went back to observe what was up.

"What is happening?" I asked one of the bystanders.

"Elections for the village head [*lurah*] of Djeru," he replied. "Oh! An election for a *lurah*!" I said to myself.

I was dying to¹² watch, since I wanted to know how elections for *lurah* were carried out. There were six candidates standing in the middle, each waving a banner. Beside them was a row of little makeshift huts, built so the voters could not see inside. Each hut had an entry and an exit with guards standing by. I hadn't been observing very long when the Wedono called out a name from a register laid out on a table. Beside

¹¹ Soetjipto uses Dutch here: *leerling hoelpschrijver*.

¹² Soetjipto uses the lovely half-Javanese expression, *hatikoe amat adreng*.

him were a number of other officials, above all the Patih. The man whose name had been called then responded. He rose from his seat, walked over to the table, and picked up a *lèntè*—a small piece of bamboo, maybe fifteen centimeters long, about the size of a sugar-palm leaf stem. Then he went into one of the little huts by one door, and later emerged, empty-handed, from the other. After that he went back to his seat.

The Wedono continued calling out names, his eyes never leaving the register before him. Each person summoned immediately stood up and went to cast his vote. I watched till I felt tired—there were so many people called up. When all the names had been read out, the Wedono turned to chat quietly with the Patih—to whose office I went every day—with the police, and with many other officials whose rank I did not know. Not long afterwards, the Wedono summoned the guards at the huts, who then went in and brought out bamboo containers topped with flags, six in all.¹³ And all the while, one could hear people talking happily with their friends. There were even some who clapped their hands, calling out the name of their preferred candidate. From the volume they would know who would be elected.¹⁴

The candidates all sat there cross-legged, heads bowed, along with their banners. None spoke a single word. After the bamboo containers had been placed in front of the officials, the Patih rose from his chair and rapped on the table.

“Members of the village of Tjoradjeru, I now request the help of someone with a strong voice to count the *lèntè*, so you can all hear how many *lèntè* each candidate has won.” Someone in the crowd then responded to this request.

The Patih then picked up a bamboo container and read the letters written on one of its sides. Next, he lifted his head and read out the name of the candidate on it. The minute the crowd heard the name he mentioned, their expressions changed. Some got red in the face, others went pale, while others whispered eagerly to their friends. The container was then handed over to the man who had volunteered to count the *lèntè*. Immediately he split it open and gathered up all the *lèntè* inside. Then he took the *lèntè* out, not omitting a single one. Then he counted them out ... 1 ... 2 ... 3 ... in a strong and clear voice, so that everyone could hear. The din and the arguments that immediately broke out were indescribable, but I had no idea what the fuss was all about. The man counted out the *lèntè* one by one, in each of the six bamboo containers. Among the six was one containing the most *lèntè*, and the candidate whose name was written on the bamboo was thus elected Lurah. When the crowd learned who the victor was, they burst into cheers, clapping their hands—though of course there were some people who were downhearted to know that their candidate had been defeated.

While the tumult was still going on, the Wedono called out the name of the successful candidate. When the man stood before him, the Wedono said: “You have just been appointed Lurah by your fellow villagers. Now you must learn how to lead them. You will have to manage your village so that its shortcomings are improved. In short, you must now learn your duties. At the same time, you will receive a new name

¹³ Soetjipto calls them *bamboe keratan*, which I take to mean hollow sections of a bamboo pole, stopped at one end. He includes a small ink illustration.

¹⁴ My guesswork. The text strangely enough says: “bertepoek tangan, menjeboet-njeboet nama orang jang sekalijannja menandaken dari kebéraannja. Karena jalah akan taoe jang mana jang akan mendjadi loerah.”

from the officials here assembled: Soeromangkoeredjo. 'Suro' because you have become a *lurah* in the month of Suro. 'Mangkoe' means 'hold,' because you now hold the office of *lurah*. And 'redjo' means 'good.' Thus, taken as a whole, your new name means that from this day on you must do your work well..."

Even before the Wedono had finished, there came a roar of approval from the crowd. Then they hoisted the successful candidate on their shoulders and carried him out of the Wedono's courtyard onto the main street, heading back to their home village. The cheers, clapping, and shouting never stopped as they walked along. Startled, the people who lived along the street came out of their houses to see what was happening, pushing and shoving to get the best view.

I followed along, because I too was headed home. When I got there, I started to run, suddenly remembering my chores. But just as I reached the door, I was shocked to hear my mother admonish me.

"Where have you been?" she said in a harsh voice.

"It's only now, Mother, that I know how a new *lurah* is elected," I answered, my heart full of happiness.

Chapter 11—Rebellion and Departure

"Hurry up and take the bicycle to the office. Otherwise your father will have to walk home."

I was very dismayed, since I'd completely forgotten that I had taken his bicycle early that morning.

"All right, Mother. I just forgot. It's still there at the house of [of my uncle]," I said in a trembling voice. Then I rushed to my uncle's home to get the bicycle and bring it straight to the office.

"Where have you been?" asked my stepfather.

"Watching the election," I answered fearfully.

"Oh! So now you've become a *lurah*," he said sarcastically (*merenggoek*), showing his hatred for me.

I didn't say a word. I just turned back, downhearted at these unwelcome words. When I got home, I immediately set about my chores.

At around six o'clock, just as the sun was about to set, my stepfather came home from the office. Soon after, I heard my mother calling for me, so I went to her straightaway.

"Your father wants you. Is it true that you damaged his bicycle, and that's why he is so angry now? Ah, why are you so careless?"

My heart thumped wildly in fear of the anger that was about to strike me. Even though, so far as I could remember, I hadn't damaged anything. Very frightened I went to face my stepfather.

"Where did you go on the bicycle?" he asked in a rage.

"Just to the house of the Wedono to watch the election of a *lurah*," I replied timidly.

"What? Just the house of the Wedono? How could you get that flat tire if you only went that far? You're always telling lies. I'm sure you took the bicycle all over the place," he said, raising his arm to hit me.

"I didn't, Father, I didn't," I said, trying to contain my sadness.

"Shut up!" he said, and, Bang!, in a flash his fist struck my head.

"I don't want to feed someone who goes off to the Wedono's. I don't want to feed someone uselessly. Do you think it is just a handful of food that has gone into your stomach all this time?"

He went on and on with these unfair and wounding words of abuse, and I felt so sad. He still hadn't finished cursing me to his heart's content when I turned away: I knew from experience that if I didn't leave at once, he would never stop his abuse. But now, at the moment when I turned on my heels, he seized me by the collar and yanked me back, so hard that I fell sprawled on the floor. I started sobbing from the pain. But the blows never ceased, and neither did the curses from his mouth. Even though mother had forbidden it, he went on torturing me with his fists. Mother kept trying to help me, till she too felt his fists. But even then, she didn't stop trying to help me.

"This is no way to teach him a lesson," she said. "If you really want to kill this child, then finish me off [*mempoesin*] too.¹⁵ If you go on this way, how could I bear it. As I recall, the boy is my own flesh and blood too!" With such words, Mother showed her determination to help me, and finally I escaped from my enraged stepfather's blows.

"So that's what you teach your child! That's why he talks back to his elders. You always take his side, always! If that's the way it is, you can clear out, both of you!"

"That's not the proper way to think. If you taught him a lesson in the right way, of course I wouldn't want to help him. But you're not teaching him any lesson, you're just kicking him out. That's why the boy not only doesn't improve, but his thoughts go astray. I don't need to go on and on at you about this. Just think it over yourself. Is it really right to teach the boy a lesson this way?" As her words poured out, Mother's eyes glistened. And after she finished speaking, she started sobbing and invited me to follow her into her room.

"It doesn't matter, Mother. Don't be sad about nothing," I said trying to hold back my tears.

"My child, your fate is really ... Steel yourself! Believe me, God is not aware of what has befallen you in your life," she said stroking my hair.¹⁶

"Mother, I really can't stand it any longer. There's no help for it. After all, it is my fate ... " I let my head fall into her lap.

"What? No help for it? What do you mean?"

¹⁵ She addresses him as *Kanda*, short for *Kakanda* (elder brother), the traditional Javanese mode of address of wives to husbands.

¹⁶ The language is rather startling. "Engkau haroes pertjaja bahwa Toehan tida insaf dari apa jang telah terperboewat di atas kehidoepanmoe." Probably it is a garbled version of the Javanese expression, *Gusti ora saré*—God does not sleep (is always aware).

"Don't be upset, Mother. I can't bear the sadness in my heart any longer," I said, lifting my head from her lap and gazing at her face.

"How can you say that, my child? I've already told you to steel your heart," she went on, widening her tear-filled eyes.

"Oh Mother, you should know that for a long time now I've been turning over in my mind what is best for me to do. I want to leave this house."

"Leave this house? Where to?" she exclaimed, showing how startled she was.

"Anywhere I can lay my head. You've known for a long time the reason for the explosions ready to burst from my heart. It isn't just one flame that has burned me inside, but flames uncountable. And as time passes, they don't die down, but redouble themselves. It is this that has been destroying one with my unlucky fate for so long." As I spoke, everything that burned in my heart day by day was reflected in my face. I fell silent, and buried my head on her thighs.

"Child, tell me honestly. What is it that troubles your heart more and more? It's just your stepfather, isn't it?" she asked, lifting my head, as her tears continued to trickle down onto my chest.

"Mother, you've always said yourself that my fate is unlucky. I can't believe you don't know what I mean. And even if you don't know, you must have noticed how I am treated, day in day out." My eyes never stopped gazing at her tears.

"No, child, I really don't know," she replied, shaking her head.

"Actually, Mother, I'm not surprised that you don't know, since you don't look seriously at my situation here. So please do so now! Is it right that father is always angry with me, always cursing me, merely about the food I have eaten here? You know it isn't right. But I'm a man now, and I can evaluate things as they really are. The way I think now is very different from what it used to be. Surely you realize, Mother, how differently my brothers and I are treated every day. Just think about when they wake up, and when I do. Or what they study and what goes into my head. After they get home from school, they can go where they please, while I have all the chores. Surely that's enough. I don't need to go on and on. You can imagine it all yourself, Mother, if you really pay attention, since actually you see it every day. Then there's the attitude of Uncle's children (my cousins) when they run into me. And the attitude of our relatives in Waru. Before, I never thought twice about any of this. But now that I can think for myself, I can weigh all the bad and the good. Mother, I am sure you can foresee what my life will be like when I am full-grown. How could I live a life like that? It's impossible. It would be different if I were blind, deaf, and could make no distinctions. But to live like this would be unbearable. Everywhere, in every situation, I meet only with bitterness, humiliation, and sorrow. Mother, it is not too late [*kasèp*]. Luckily, it's not too late. Things can still change. That's why I'm telling you I have to leave this house."

All the while, I did not have the courage to look Mother in the face. I knew that if I did, I wouldn't be able to continue with what I wanted to tell her. And Mother never said a single word as I talked on. Only when I was finished did I dare to lift my head and look her in the eyes. I was shocked. Her face had gone white. She covered it with her hands. Her body was utterly still, as if the life had gone out of her. I felt as if my

blood had ceased to flow. I was in such a daze that I couldn't express what I wanted to say.

Gradually she came to herself. Slowly she opened her eyes and gazed at me. I couldn't bear it, especially when she opened her eyes and stared at me. It was so clear what grief she felt. At once I hugged and kissed her.

"Mother, I really will do what you ask of me. I want to steel my heart and be patient." So I spoke as I kissed her cheek. But she said not a word in reply.

Only after a long pause did she say: "Child, you must leave the room. I can hear your father's voice, he's headed this way. Who knows, maybe he will be angry with you again. Tomorrow I will let you know what is the best way for you to live."

But before the last words were out of her mouth, Bang! My stepfather was kicking violently at the door.

"Out! Get out! What's going on in there? Get out!" he shouted, yanking my arm ...

That night I couldn't sleep. I tossed back and forth, over and over, my thoughts in a daze, my chest suffocating, and my heart in turmoil, like a madman. "It's too much," I said to myself. "If I keep on turning everything over in my mind, I'm sure my body will be wrecked [*roesak*]." So I pondered, my thoughts fluttering in confusion as I lay on my bed. So, very quietly, I got down and walked to the window, then stepped outside. "Ha! At last there is a wind. How fresh the night breeze is on my body," I said to myself as I left my room.

It was about one o'clock. Everything was completely still, except for the flutter of night birds looking for fruit. My body felt fantastically fresh. Though it was deep in the night, to my eye it seemed bright as day. My chest now felt as if it had a vent in it. It was only then that I remembered how wide the world really is. I headed for the courtyard wicket, as I wanted to take a walk. The farther I went, the fresher my body felt. My chest too felt ever more open wide. But as I walked on and on, once again my mind was filled with the image of the worm (*oelat*) inside my breast. "Well, no matter where I go, memory of my situation always returns. It is always in my heart. So I must really think things out very seriously, for this is the burden of responsibility of my soul.¹⁷ If I go on the way I am, for sure everything will turn out badly. Here I am hated, there I am hated, and yonder too I am hated. Wherever I go I always encounter this hatred. Even though all that has happened is the fault of my real father, yet I have to bear the consequences; for now it is I who feel them. The best solution is to cut all ties to my relatives. I never want to see them again, no matter whether I end up rich or poor. Let them be rich, well-educated, with high positions! I want to live on my own. How could it not be so? If I live in abjection, that's my own affair. Why is it that whenever we meet, they always turn their heads away, spit, glower, and stare at me with disgust—all of which only shows how much they hate me? They're no good," I said to myself.

¹⁷ I am not sure of the meaning here. Soetjipto writes: "karena ini ada tertangoeng pada tanggoengan djiwakoe sendiri." "Soul" may sound too Christian, but as we shall see later, there is a curious Christian side to his work.

The long and the short of it was that I would go to find a life different from the one I led here. I didn't care how, just so long as I could stay alive and escape from my relatives. "Tjih! Relatives! What do I care about them? So what if I have no relatives! In my world there could plenty of [new] kinsmen, if I so wish."¹⁸ *Prijaji-prijaji-prijaji* ... But ... in fact, if one observes the meaning of the word *prijaji*, it derives from the Javanese *Priati*, meaning: "Pri" is what is the feeling in the heart.¹⁹ Buddhists call them *sinatrija*.²⁰ In fact my relatives didn't deserve the name *prijaji*, but rather that of ...

So be it. I would say no more about these things, I had other matters to deal with. Then I remembered a saying that my teacher had once told us: If a can is completely filled with water, it won't shake about very much when you carry it; but if it is only half full, it will make a lot of noise. This adage means, he said, that a truly intelligent man will not say much unless he is disturbed by someone else. But a half-intelligent man will certainly deafen one with his chatter. So be it then. Let them point their fingers at my abject condition. It only showed their own stupidity.

It's true that I had been troubled, thinking about my mother's fate if I left her. But now I would put this worry out of my mind. After all, she still had another child, with my stepfather. The boy was already in a fine school. Eventually he would pay mother back for her goodness. Of course, I too wanted to repay her goodness. But how could I do so in my present condition? My own life was still in chaos. All I could do was to promise myself that even in the midst of a sea of fire I would never forget my mother's love.

What I had to do now was to vanish from the sight of all my relatives. This would suit everyone and would be for the best. If such was the case, there was no more to be said. I was now grown up, not a little child any more. It wasn't fitting any longer to ask my mother to feed me. Far better to follow my own heart's intention. Would my fate always remain unlucky?

I spoke these words aloud, gesturing with my hands, as though I were talking with a friend. When I felt tired from walking, I sat down on a cement bench by the roadside. But barely had I seated myself, when I stood up again, remembering that this was the bench on which I had once waited for the boy I loved. "Ah," I said to myself, "just as I finished with one line of thought, then another one pops up. There's always something new!" I walked on, looking for another place to sit, but I still hadn't found one when I heard the factory siren (*soeling fabriek*) sound. This meant that it was already four o'clock. So I hurried home, worried that later I would be sleepy at the office. My body

¹⁸ Soetjipto's text is a bit hard to understand. He writes: "Tida ada familie, inilah doenijakoe ada terletak lebih banyak familie, apa bila saja soeka." Javanese like to speak of new friends as members of the family; Soetjipto is saying that he can make his own family as he wishes.

¹⁹ *Pri rasanja di dalem Hati*. Taking "pri" to be "peri" (nature, character, disposition), the short sentence might mean, more elaborately, "who one is depends on the sentiments of the heart." It is striking that immediately after this sentence, Soetjipto includes a small ink drawing of a Cross, with rays of light emanating from it on all sides.

²⁰ *Sinatrija* is an old Javanese abstract word dating from the Hindu-Buddhist, pre-Islamic past, meaning "acting like a *satria*/knight." Probably Soetjipto is thinking of his ancestors (*wong Budho*) rather than contemporary Buddhists, who were rare in colonial society except among the Chinese.

was so tired that instantly I lost consciousness. My soul vanished, as I slept the sleep of the dead.²¹

Bam! All of a sudden I fell to the floor. I was really shaken. And at that moment my soul returned. "Get up, you animal!" Only vaguely did I take in these words as they penetrated my ears. When I opened my eyes, they were dazzled by the sunlight that came through the glass window of my room. Barely had I turned my head when my stepfather, his eyes ablaze, came into sight. Once he was sure I was awake, Bam! His feet started to kick my chest.

"Get up, you animal!" At that instant I stood up, and without being conscious of it, I kept my eyes on his face, while shaking my head.

"Well, here's a really wonderful parent!" I said.

My words made him livid with rage. He tried to hit my head, but I blocked the blow with my arm. When he saw that I was going to fight back, he got still angrier and kicked at me with all his strength. But I seized the chair beside me, aimed it at his feet, and said:²²

"Go ahead, if you want!"²³ But as of now I'm not your child any more." My stepfather's fury now knew no bounds. He beat me still harder with his fists, and his kicks redoubled. But, now without any sense of shame or respect, I did my best to ward off the painful blows from my body. But one kick was so strong that he managed to break a leg of the chair I was using as a shield. "The main thing is not to let him grab my arm," I said to myself.

Finally, feeling exhausted, he stopped hitting and kicking me.

"So you have the nerve to fight me, ha?" he asked.²⁴

"It's not right," I answered, shaking my head. "I am no longer your child. I am no more in your charge. I have to leave this place right now," I said, glaring at him. Then I left the room and went to find my mother.

"Mother, there's no time for talk. I ask your permission to leave this place."

When she heard my words and observed my expression, my mother was thunderstruck. For a long time she could not utter a single word.

"That's your son for you. He's annoyed just because I woke him up," said my stepfather, approaching her. Immediately I turned my head and stared at him.

"Shut up! Is that what you call waking someone up? Very well, I never want to see your [*engkau*] face again."

²¹ Soetjipto's *lenjaplah djiwakoe* may just be an ordinary idiom, but it is also probable that it refers to a common belief that in sleep a person's soul/spirit leaves the body and travels.

²² The text is: "laloe koeterimaken pada kakinja."

²³ The boy uses the familiar *engkau* (you) to his stepfather, very insolent in the context.

²⁴ The text has: *Engkau berani padakoe*. "*Berani*" has a double meaning, which I have tried to convey with "have the nerve." It implies both a certain courage and an enormous disrespect to an older man and a parent of sorts.

As she took in the situation, my mother was dumbfounded. Her mouth was agape, and she couldn't utter a word. I lost patience waiting for her reply and went straight off to my room, where I took out my suitcase and put in all my clothes, no matter how worn. When I was done I went back to see my mother.

"Mother, I'm leaving now."

When my stepfather saw all this, he went off to the front door with a big smile on his face.

Mother stared at me. "What are you going to do, my child?"

"It doesn't matter, Mother. I'm just asking your permission to leave this house."

"Very well," she said, with shortened breath, and nodding her head, "but the best thing is for you to go first to your grandmother's home in Waru, if you really cannot bear it here any more." As she spoke she got up from her seat and went over to the closet. "Here are ten guilders to pay for your journey to your grandmother's."

I accepted the money without replying, but gazed at her face. I felt then that I couldn't bear it, so I turned my head and headed for the door.

"Tjip! ... "

At the sound of my name, I stopped short. But then, in a flash, it came to me: "if I turn back and see the expression on my mother's face, I won't have the strength to stick to my intention." So I went straight out of the door.

"Tjiiip ..., my child ..."

It so happened that I left the house at nine in the morning, so there was still time to catch the train to Waru. I hurried along, virtually running. A few moments later, however, I suddenly stopped when I heard a voice calling me.

"Are you headed into town? Then just hop in!"

When I turned round, I saw the driver of a *dokar*.²⁵

"I want to go to the Sumberkalok railway station [*Staat-sioon Soemberkolak*]. How much is it?"

"Up to you. Just get in!" said the driver, reining his horse to a halt. Once I was inside, the driver spurred his horse, which then trotted gaily along.

Chapter 12—Getting Even: Waru and Surabaja

On the floor were strewn sawo-fruit, all picked from my grandfather's garden, and about to be sent to Pandji. I had now been three days at my grandmother's house. All along my one thought was how to escape from my sadness by letting mother know I had arrived in Waru. When I discovered that the sawo were going to Pandji, I immediately wrote a letter with the idea of hiding it among the fruit. I was sure it would be Mother who would open the letter and read it.

²⁵ A popular two-wheeled, horse-drawn cab.

The next day, about four o'clock in the afternoon, my grandfather summoned me on his return from the office. He looked at me angrily (*merenggoek*) and said: "I have just received a letter from your father in Pandji. He tells me you left without asking leave of anyone. And he mentioned a lot of other bad [*boesoek*] things you have done. I don't like this! He will think ill of me, only because of you. You'd better go back to your mother! I don't want you staying here."

I smiled as I listened to my grandfather's words, thinking to myself: "Even if you [*kau*] didn't give me this order, I was going to clear out anyway."

When my grandmother heard what my grandfather had to say, she boxed me on the ear and spewed out a string of curses—so many I can't list them here. And aside from their cruelty, she uttered them at the top of her voice. I felt as if arrows were being shot into my ears, and the pain was unbearable. Nonetheless, I continued to smile as I listened to the abuse of two old people possessed by the devil (*Iblis*).

That night, I sat on the bench beneath the sawo tree. My brain was in a whirl as I thought over what had happened. "Ah, this is my fate again. Yet I took the greatest care to make sure the bastard (*djahanam*) didn't find out about the letter to my mother. So then, it's my ill fate once again. What friend is there to whom I could send the letter, asking him to pass it on to my mother? And what address could I give? Ah, what a mess! I'm sure now that my letter fell into my stepfather's hands and that he tore it up without showing it to my mother. Just my luck! (*Sianat benar*) Never mind, it doesn't matter. If I'm now a 'bad' (*boeroek*) person, then let me go on being bad. That last night when I went walking in Pandji, I already had the idea of taking the 'bad' [*boesoek*] path, to escape from all my relatives and never show my face to them again. Now I've been given the steam that reinforces my will.²⁶ So be it."

The next morning, after waking up, I was headed for the bathroom when suddenly I stopped in my tracks. I noticed an envelope in an open cabinet. I looked around, but the house was completely quiet. Grandfather must have left for the office, and Grandmother also gone out, who knows where. Silently I stepped into the room and approached the cabinet. When I got close, I could see clearly that the envelope had come from Pandji. So I immediately took out the letter inside and read it:

Pandji 12-8-25

With deep respect,²⁷

Your son wishes to inform you that he has received the sawo that you sent. The quantity was exactly what you, Father, mentioned in your letter. Beyond that, your son completely understands the purpose of your letter. Your son wishes to express his deepest thanks to you and to Mother.

Your son has also received a letter from your grandson stating that he is with you. He left Pandji without taking leave either of his mother or of me. The only reason was that your son woke him up because he was already late for work. It is only too true, the boy won't listen to his parents. He just does whatever he wants.

²⁶ The text reads: "sekarang saja ada asep lagi, jang menoembai kekoewatan kehendakoe." I am not sure if I have understood it properly.

²⁷ The letter is written in a highly formal style that is hard to reproduce in English.

Furthermore, your son prays that you receive the mercy of God (*Toehan*) and prosper, and your son as well. Wassalam.

Pr ...

"Nice!" I said to myself with a smile on my lips. Then I put the letter back where I found it. But as I did so, I spotted a ring next to the envelope. On inspection, it turned out to be made of gold. So I thought to myself: "I'll take the ring with me, to make a final break with my grandparents." I popped the ring into my shorts' pocket and went off smiling to the bathroom ...

At the railway station, I'd sit for a while, then stand up and pace up and down the platform. I was really impatient for my train to arrive. I was headed for Surabaya, to the lodgings of my two-faced cousin who was studying at the NIAS. He was living with a relative in Kampung Udakan, Alley IV. Finally my train arrived.

Once in Surabaya, I went straight to my cousin's place. When I met the owner of the house, he immediately asked me: "Where are you²⁸ from?" I explained as clearly as I could. He then invited me in and called for his wife.

"This is the first time we've met. But how could you forget him?" he said. "He's the son of Mas Kassier of Balong-bendung."²⁹

"No wonder I forgot! When I saw him last, he was still a baby," she replied and went back into the house. He and I then had a long talk. He asked me many more questions, but I answered only briefly, since saying more would do me no good. After one o'clock my cousin arrived, whistling and singing *pantun*. Brak ... brak ... sounded the flapping of his shoes. When he came inside, I said to myself, "Ah, the Menado boy's arrived."³⁰

He was startled to see me, and looked me up and down from head to toe.

"What are you doing here?" he asked, shrugging his shoulders.

"I just got in from Pandji. Tomorrow I'm off to Waru," I replied with a smile.

"Up to you!" he said, and went off to his room whistling.

In the house there were a lot of other youngsters besides my cousin. They came from Malang, Tulungagung, Solo, and other places unknown to me. All of them paid the master of the house for their room and board.

Later that afternoon, my cousin and his friends sat on the front porch, chattering in Dutch. The only thing they talked and joked about was girls. I also sat at the front of the house, eavesdropping on what they were saying. Even though they were using Dutch, I could understand a bit. I smiled to myself as I listened to my cousin chatting with his friends. I said to myself: "It's plain he still doesn't know a thing about the real world. There's no way that in his school he gets lessons on the snares of this world.

²⁸ The man uses the word *sampaian* [*sampejan*], which in East Java is a politer form of address than it is in Central Java.

²⁹ "Elder Brother Bookkeeper."

³⁰ This makes it look as if Soetjipto's cousin's mother was a Menadonese woman.

And if he were, there's no chance he is going to cast these snares aside, judging from what he's babbling about now. But what does it matter? No need to think about him any more. There's no point in my talking to him. The main thing is to think up something bad to do to him, so that I never have to see his face again (be afraid to come back to this place)."

The longer they all chattered, the more, it seemed, my cousin felt his oats. His laughter got louder and louder (*mengikil-ngikil*). Tired of just sitting there, I went quietly inside. The minute I saw the boys' jackets hanging up, I had a sudden bright idea. "Ha! Now I know what I can do to guarantee a complete break with my cousin. I only pray there'll be enough to pay for my journey to Kudus, since I want to break all ties with my relatives here."³¹

Stealthily I groped inside the pockets of the jackets, keeping a sharp eye out. When I finished, I calculated that the total was about seventy guilders. I smiled when I realized how much there was. Quietly, I put all the money back in the pockets, one by one. I'd take it all with me next morning when I'd leave the house and head straight to ... Kudus!

That night, when the boys were all asleep, I stayed alert, squinching my eyes, and waiting for the clock to ring four times. I struggled against sleep with all my might, for I knew my plan would fail if my eyes fell shut. In the end, I succeeded in staying awake till the hour struck four. I got down from my bed very quietly, for there were a lot of boys in the same room. Then I headed for the bathroom at the back of the house. After bathing, I stepped into my clothes. None of the boys was yet awake. Some, of course, opened their eyes, but quickly shut them again, adjusting their blankets. It seemed that they all trusted me, knowing who my parents and other relatives were. Then I groped through their pockets once again. The amount of money was what it had been before. When I was done, I set off for the main road, intending to go to the NIS station in Pasar Turi.³² When I reached Undakan Street, I found a *dokar* and at once got in.

"Where are you going, Mas?" asked the driver, looking at my clothes and thinking I was a *prijaji*.³³

"To Pasar Turi, Kang."

"All right, let's go," he replied, geeing on his horse. After a while he asked me: "Where are you [*sampaian*] headed, Mas, taking a train so early in the morning?"

"To Kudus," I answered tersely.

Chapter 13—A Samaritan in Kudus

At once the driver turned his head and said: "To Kudus? There's no train this early in the morning. The first one leaves at nine."³⁴

³¹ The end of this sentence seems garbled: "karena saja hendak memoetoesnja keadaan jang di sana djaga." The last phrase seems to mean "who still keep me in mind as a relative."

³² Nederlandsch-Indische Spoorwegmaatschappij, a major private railway corporation of the period.

³³ We know from the date on his Madurese stepfather's letter that Soetjipto was then just fifteen years old. That the *dokar* driver addresses him as "elder brother" (Mas) shows the class aspect of the term. In turn, the fifteen-year-old addresses the older man with the familiar word for elder brother (*Kang*) used by social superiors to older men of inferior position.

My heart started pounding. I immediately thought of my misdeeds.

"In that case, just go to Semut Station. I can take the express to Solo and change trains there," I said, trying to calm my beating heart.

"That you can do. Myself, I usually take the NIS train, since my family lives in Tjepu." He geed the horse to trot faster so that I would be in time. When we reached Semut Station, I got down in a hurry.

"Kang, can you give me half a guilder change," I said, handing him a paper guilder. "Thanks a lot, Kang," I continued when he gave me the change.

"Not at all, Mas," he replied, turning his *dokar* back onto the street.

I headed for the ticket office and bought a ticket for Solo and got onto the train at once. I hadn't been seated long when the train moved off. I got to Kudus at about three in the afternoon. Arriving in this little town, I felt worried, thinking about what would become of me if I couldn't get in touch with my grandmother. I knew only that she lived in Kudus, but in which *kampung* and on what street I had no idea. After a while I recalled that my grandfather had once worked as an irrigation foreman and had retired about three months earlier. I walked and walked around Kudus for about five and a half hours. When my legs felt tired, I took a *dokar* for a while, then walked again. Every time I met someone who seemed a good prospect, I would ask him—but without success.

By seven o'clock I felt completely exhausted. I was so hungry that my stomach began to ache, but I was ashamed to ask for rice at a roadside stall given the kind of clothes I was wearing.³⁵ So I kept on walking and thinking about what fate would strike me next. Finally I decided: "No more of this. I'll look for somewhere to eat, as I'm terribly hungry." Such was the feeling in my heart, as I tried to console myself for my fatigue.

Since I couldn't bear the idea of walking any farther, I hailed a *dokar*, and, once inside, asked the driver: "Do you know of any restaurant?"

"Yes, Mas," he replied, urging his horse on. As the *dokar* trotted along, I kept turning my head left and right, checking for a house sign with my grandfather's name on it. After fifteen minutes, the *dokar* arrived at an area containing the finer houses and shops in Kudus. After looking around me carefully, I realized that in my five and a half hours of walking, I had never passed this street. Then, in the distance, I spotted a large signboard hanging over a doorway. Below there were tables and chairs. As we got closer, I could pick out "Muslim Restaurant" on the signboard.³⁶ Although we had already passed the restaurant, the *dokar* still proceeded apace.

"Just let me down here, Mas," I said (because in Central Java they use "Mas" for everyone). The *dokar* immediately halted, and I paid the fare. "Thank you, Mas," I added.

"I thought you wanted to go to a bigger restaurant?"

³⁴ Because of overtyping, the reader can't be sure whether the time should be nine o'clock or a bit later.

³⁵ He is still dressed as a *prijaji*, so thinks people will stare at him if he eats at a lower-class foodstall.

³⁶ The text has RUSTAURAN ISLAM.

"No, this is fine," I called as I headed towards the door. Hardly had I sat down when a waiter came over to wipe my table.

"Do you wish to order something to eat?"³⁷

"Just tea, with some rice and fish."

"Fine, Mas," he replied, making for the counter. Soon enough he returned with the food I had ordered, along with a spoon, fork, and napkin.³⁸ I fell to with the greatest pleasure, as my stomach was starved and my body exhausted. When I was finished, I called the waiter over and asked him for the bill. It turned out to add up to only forty cents.

"Wah, the food here is really cheap," I said to myself as I took the money from my shirt pocket. At that moment, it occurred to me how nice it would be to stay on at the restaurant for a while, as I was still very tired from walking about.

"Could you get me another cup of tea? I'd like to sit here for a bit."

"Of course, Mas," he replied, removing my empty plate and cup. Then I stood up and moved to a table closer to the street, so I could see what was going on outside. A few minutes later the waiter came with the cup of tea I had ordered.

"Do you sell newspapers, Mas?" I asked him.

"We do, but only *Kaoem Moeda*," he answered, setting the cup down on the table.³⁹

"That's fine. Whatever you have."

"All right, Mas," he answered turning back again. Soon afterward, he brought me a newspaper. I started reading while taking my rest. From time to time, I would lay the paper down, read it, and then sip my tea. But the longer I sat there, far from my fatigue disappearing, the more worried I got, especially when I saw from the needle of the clock that it was past eight. "What will become of me if I fail to find the man I am looking for?" Such was the plaint of my heart, as I read through the newspaper, then put it down and drank my tea.

As I was sitting there anxiously, I spotted a *prijaji* walking by on the street. From his manner and his clothes, it was obvious that he wasn't from Central Java, but rather from East Java. I was really surprised, never thinking that I'd find someone from East Java here. I watched him closely without blinking an eye. He was hurrying toward the restaurant as if he had something important on his mind. But when he reached the door, he just kept on walking, looking neither right nor left. At that moment I didn't know what to do. As I looked at his manner and dress, my heart was in turmoil. Though I'd summoned up the courage to speak to him, I couldn't get the words out of my mouth as I felt so confused. Once he passed the restaurant, I lost all hope and felt

³⁷ The half-Javanese address is judged and adapted carefully to Soetjipto's age and presumed status: "Hendak mengersakan makanan apakah sampean?"

³⁸ Signs distinguishing a restaurant from a foodstall.

³⁹ *Kaoem Moeda* was a moderate Islamic-nationalist newspaper published in Bandung, with Abdul Muis as its editor-in-chief. It was run primarily on commercial lines, with plenty of advertisements placed by Dutch companies and Sino-Indonesian entrepreneurs from Muis's Minangkabau home province. It lasted for most of the final two decades of Dutch rule. My thanks to Ben Abel for this information.

so sad that I dropped my head onto the table and covered it with my arms. But then I was startled by the sound of approaching footsteps, and a voice calling to the waiter:

"Do you still have today's paper?" he asked.

"Yes, Dèn," answered the waiter.⁴⁰ Immediately I lifted my head and was surprised to see that the man asking for the newspaper was the same man I'd watched walking by the restaurant. I quickly folded up my newspaper and handed it to him.

"Here, Mas, take this one! I'm already finished with it."

On hearing my words, he quickly swung round to look at me. His expression suddenly changed, showing that he was really surprised.

"It's today's, isn't it?" he asked, his face showing his pleasure.

"Yes, Mas, but I'm done with it," I replied, giving it to him with my head bowed.

"Thanks very much, Dik," he said as he took it from me.⁴¹ "Where are you [*sampean*] from? I don't believe I have seen you around before," he added, looking me over up and down.

"I've just arrived from Surabaya. I'm looking for my grandfather,⁴² but so far no luck," I answered with a smile. His eyes opened wide, indicating that he was curious.

"What's his name?" he asked, leaning over.

"Till recently he was an irrigation foreman, but now he's retired," I replied putting my hand into my pocket.

"But of course! But he's not at home. Three days ago he left for Bandung to visit his son[?]," he said with a stare.⁴³

"Oh!" I replied. I couldn't say another word. My heart was in turmoil, I was so upset. But after reflecting for a moment, my chest felt calm again, and I continued: "Well then, Mas, why don't you take a seat here for a while?" I brought over a chair and set it by him.

"Dik, what exactly is your relation to him, and whose son are you?" he asked, taking his seat.

"Actually, I'm just a great-nephew. He's the brother of my grandfather who's an overseer [*opneemer*] at the Waru Sugar Mill," I answered, taking a chair for myself. Soon after, the waiter came over with a newspaper.

"We don't need it. Just bring us two cups of tea and some cakes," I said.

"There's no need, Dik. Really, there's no need," the *prijaji* interjected.

⁴⁰ Short for Radèn, lowest aristocratic title for a Javanese male. Here, the waiter uses it as a casual sign of polite deference.

⁴¹ Javanese for "younger brother."

⁴² Soetjipto here uses the word *Embah*, which, he explains to the reader, is High Javanese for his usual *Kakek*, adding that *Ingjang* [*Ejang*] is also a High form.

⁴³ From *anaknja* one cannot tell for sure whether it is a son or a daughter. But it is more likely that a son would be away from home.

"It's no problem, Mas. Just take your seat here." Shortly thereafter the waiter came over with two cups of tea and some slices of cake. "Please drink up, Mas."

"Thank you, Dik," he replied, moving to sip his tea.

"Mas, have you [*sampejan*] known my great-uncle for a long time?" I asked, also sipping my tea.

"We go way back, to the time when we were in Sidoardjo together," he answered, setting down the cup from which he had just drunk.

"In that case, you probably know my uncle, too, who used to work as a draughtsman at the Buduran Sugar Mill, but has since moved to Pandji."

"Of course I know him," he replied, rather surprised.

"I'm the son of his sister, who is now married to the bookkeeper at the sugar mill in Pandji," I said, bowing my head.

"Yes, yes, of course. In that case, I know who you are. It could be that I knew you too when you were still a baby—when your mother was still with the draftsman at Buduran. You must be the son of her former husband. Not from her present husband in Pandji, right?" he said with a smile.

"That's right, Mas, I'm her son by her previous husband. Please have some cake, Mas," I said, handing him the plate.

"Where are you going to spend the night, Dik?" he asked as he took a piece of cake.

"At a hotel, Mas, now that I know my great-uncle is not at home." When he heard my words, he fell silent for a long while. I had no idea what he was thinking.

"In that case, why don't you just stay over at my house," he said, rolling up the newspaper.

"It's up to you, Mas," I said with a smile.

"Do you plan to wait until Mas Mantri [your grandfather] comes back?" he asked, finishing the tea in his cup.

"Oh no. Tomorrow, I'm going on to Bandung," I replied, taking a piece of cake from the plate.

"So you want to go straight to Bandung, Dik?" he asked, as he put his teacup down on the table.

"Yes, Mas."

"Wah, it's already nine-thirty, Dik. Let's go to my house," he said, looking at his watch.

Immediately I hailed the waiter. "How much is it for everything?" I asked, groping in my pocket for the money.

"One rupiah and six cents, Mas."

Once I had paid the bill, the *prijaji* stood up. "Let's go, Dik," he said. I quickly hailed a *dokar* that happened to be passing by the restaurant. After the two of us climbed in, the *dokar* took off at a fast trot.

"Is it far to your house, Mas?" I asked after we had gone a fair way.

"Not at all. You can see the lamps already," he replied, pointing to a house up ahead. Then he turned to the driver and said: "Stop here, Mas." After paying the driver, we got down and went into the house. Once inside, he handed me some soap and a towel and told me to take a bath. I was really happy because my body had been tired so long. When I was done, he invited me to sit on the porch and have some coffee with him. He talked on and on, but I hardly paid any attention, as I was exhausted from walking around the town for so many hours. As he talked, he explained to me who his parents were, as well as his brothers and sisters and other relatives, all of whom, it turned out, knew my family. In spite of this, all his words just passed through my ears, and did not reach my heart. Furthermore, I was in a state of confusion, thinking over where I should head the next morning. Only when he noticed that I was nodding off did he tell me to go to bed.

"Go to bed, Dik. I can see that you're falling asleep."

"Thank you, Mas," I answered, standing up and heading for my bedroom. But even though my body was dead tired, I couldn't get to sleep immediately; I kept worrying what I should do in the morning. "How lucky I am to have met this man. Otherwise, what would have become of me?" I said in my heart several times. After thinking it over for a long time, I finally had a good idea. In the morning I would go to look up Father Doctor (*Rama Dokter*), my great-uncle's son. He lived in Kediri. "In that case, I'll go to Kediri. But what will happen when I meet him? Well, it doesn't matter. If he's nasty [to me, I'll pay him back] ... in kind. But if he is good ... [to me, I'll be] good to him, too." Then, without my realizing it, my eyes closed.

When I woke up the next morning, I immediately went to take a bath. Once dressed, I took leave of my host and went straight to the railway station. It was about four-thirty in the morning. I bought a ticket for Semarang. My target was Solo. I could change trains in Kertosono, and from there go on to Kediri.

Chapter 14—The Final Break—Kediri

I got to Kediri about four in the afternoon. As soon as I got out of the station, I hailed a *dokar*. When I reached Rama Dokter's house, I got down, paid the driver, and went into the yard. The door was shut. My heart started to thump. How should I approach the people inside? I was afraid that they would be angry with me if I knocked. After all, they were people of rank (*orang pangkat*). Finally, summoning all my courage, I tapped on the door with my fingers. What a surprise! Exactly opposite to the image I had in my mind, the door was immediately opened by a very pretty woman.

"What is it, Mas?" she said,

"Is this the house of Rama Dokter?" I asked politely.

"Yes, it is. And who are you [*sampaian*]?" she asked, surprised. I explained to her who my parents were. Then her expression changed. If before it had been rather dour,

now it was bright and clear. With trembling lips, she said: "Don't be startled, child [*Anak*]. We've never met before, face to face. This is the first time, and you've grown so tall. That's why at first I called you Mas.⁴⁴ But your father [*Ramamoe*] has gone to visit his brother in Lumadjang.⁴⁵ It'll be three days before he returns. Come in and take a rest at the back." She went inside, and I headed towards the back of the house along a small alley. "Inside this way, Nak," she said, turning back to look at me.

"No, thank you, Ibu. I'll just go round to the back," I answered, continuing my steps forward. When I reached the back of the house, I found her busy in a room. A few minutes later she came out, and said:

"Put your bag in here. You must be tired."

"Thank you, Ibu," I replied, going into the room.

"Do you mean to wait here till your Father returns?"

"That's right, Ibu, I want to meet Rama Dokter," I replied, bowing my head.

"Well I think that is for the best. Take a rest for now, my child. Later we can talk."

"Thank you, Ibu," I replied as I entered the room. I put down my bag, changed into clean clothes, and shut the door. Then I sat down to think over my fate. "Ibu Dokter is really very nice. But who knows? Isn't it true that sweet words often contain poison?" I said to myself. All the while I was in the room, I kept my ears open. But even after quite some time, I did not hear anyone walking about: only the sound of little children making a commotion inside the house. Slowly I laid myself down on the bed to relieve my weariness.

Seven o'clock in the evening. A soft breeze refreshed my whole body. All over town, lamps were burning brightly. The shadows they cast looked so beautiful in the water. I took a walk along the banks of the Brantas River to calm my thoughts. All I was wearing was a worn-out batik sarung, a Chinese-style white shirt that my mother had sewn for me, black sandals, and a Padang-style *pitji*. I wasn't out looking for some fun; I just wanted to take a short walk, no farther than the Chinese *klenteng* (temple), and then turn back as far as the post office. In the event, I just went back and forth between these two places. After half an hour, my feet started feeling tired, but my chest felt relaxed. Then I headed quickly back to the house.

As I entered the yard, I was startled to see someone peering through the glassed-in front door, which was closed. I stopped in my tracks, waiting to discover who this person might be. It looked as if he had been peering for a while, since I could hear him sighing with fatigue. But I could not see him clearly, since the lamp at the front of the house had been turned off. The only light came from inside.

"If you want Rama Dokter," I called to him softly, "he's away right now."

Startled, he turned to stare at me. Then slowly he headed my way. When he got close I could see his uniform clearly. "Ah, the postman!" I said to myself.

⁴⁴ She now refers to herself as [your] mother—*iboenda*.

⁴⁵ The word *saudara* has no clear gender, but later we will learn that it refers to a brother.

"Dèn, I've been waiting for a long time, but no one comes out," he said, as he came forward and handed me a newspaper.

"Thank you, Mas," I replied as I took it from him.

With that, the postman went off on his rounds, and I headed for the little alley that would take me to the back of the house. But after only a few steps, I felt something fall to the ground by my feet. When I looked down, I could see it was an envelope. I picked it up right away. By God's will, just as I was bending down to pick it up, rays of light from the window caught the envelope and showed where it had come from. Thunderstruck, I immediately picked it up, for I could see clearly that it was from none other than my cousin in Surabaja. Quickly I put the letter in my pocket, while my heart thumped ceaselessly. "Ah, this is a bad omen," I said to myself. I struggled to calm my heart, which was burning with the desire to open the letter. Then I went back to the front of the house, intending to read the letter some place far from Rama Dokter's home. The newspaper I laid down on the table in the front porch. Then I stepped out of the yard. "Ah, where should I go to read it?" I said to myself after walking some distance. "Be patient! I want to find a really good place first," I said, to placate my eager heart.

As I walked along, I kept a sharp eye out for a good place to read the letter. "Very well, I'll read it on the bridge over there," I said to my heart when I noticed that the bridge was a little better lighted than anywhere else. So I went straight to the bridge and halted at its middle, where there was a lamp. When I took the envelope out of my pocket, I saw that it was addressed to Rama Dokter, and stayed my hand for a moment. It came to me that what I was about to do—open a letter that did not belong to me—was wrong.

"Hmmm!" I sighed, and let both hands fall to my side. However, I didn't tear the letter up. My vision went black, and I felt my head spinning—to the point that I fainted and became unconscious of where I was. But then, thanks to Allah's power,⁴⁶ at that moment a passerby bumped into my arm. I was startled, like someone suddenly woken from sleep. When I regained full consciousness, I saw that my two hands were empty. I searched on the ground for the letter, but it was nowhere to be seen. Only when my gaze fell on the river flowing by did I see the letter turning over and over in the water as though it were greeting me. I smiled, nodding my head. I thought: "It's better this way, for my eyes haven't read it. This is the end of the matter."

Although I hadn't actually read the letter, my heart could guess its contents. It was bound to report on all the bad things I had done in Surabaja, with the expectation that Rama Dokter would not receive me. "So what could I do?" I said to myself, gritting my teeth. "What I did came from my heart, because I really wanted to do something bad to all my relatives. It was perfectly all right!"

As I said these words to myself, my stepfather appeared to me in my mind's eye. And at that moment, all sorts of crazy memories came back. Then, I thought back to my own father's sins. But when I finally opened my eyes, I couldn't see a thing. The bright world had turned black. Only when I regained full consciousness did I notice

⁴⁶ The first mention of Allah, referred to as *Lillahita'allah*.

that people were hurrying back and forth in front of me. I felt very ashamed, thinking that they must be feeling that I was acting like a madman.

When my chest finally felt clear and calm, I slowly left the bridge and headed back to the house of Rama Dokter. "Hey there, letter! My goodbyes to you! You came from Surabaya, and now you're going back, enjoying the scenery all along the banks of the Brantas." So I spoke, greeting the river with an uplifted hand.

When I reached the house, I tried to calm myself, so that if I ran into Ibu Dokter, nothing in my eyes would show that something was up. At the back of the house I found her reading the newspaper I had left on the table at the front.

"Where have been walking, my child?" she asked as soon as she noticed me.

"Just around here, Bu," I answered.

"Have something to eat. I'm afraid this is all there is," she said, pointing to food already laid out on the table in my room. "Why does my stomach still feel full?" I complained to myself. But I took some of the food from the plate, ate it—only a little. I was afraid that otherwise she would sense the sadness in my heart. In fact the food was really good, very tasty, but at that moment it seemed to me like plain water. When I was finished, I started to wipe off the plate in the usual way.

"Just leave it there, someone will be coming to clean up," said Ibu Dokter.

"It's all right, Bu. It is no trouble really," I replied, continuing to clean up. When the job was done, I pretended to read a book in my room, so that she would quickly go to sleep—there being no one else with whom she could chat. Indeed, after a while, she went inside and closed the door. Immediately I doused the lamp and lowered my body on the bed. Naturally, my heart was still in turmoil from that had happened, but I tried to forget it. "Let it be! Just think of yourself as alone in the world," I said in my heart as I covered my face with the pillow.⁴⁷

One day—to be exact, on the third day of my arrival—Rama Dokter came home at about five in the afternoon, accompanied by a guest. At once, I hurried to my room. After a while, Rama Dokter, having changed his clothes, started chatting with his wife and guest. They were sitting at the back of the house, very close to my room. Their talk was very lively. Aside from Javanese, they also used bits of Malay and Dutch, mixed now and then with loud laughter. Then the guest turned to Ibu Dokter and said:

"Dik, I've just received a letter from home in Bandung. Father's been there four days already. It looks as if he didn't know, when he left for Bandung, that I had gone to Lumadjang."

"What a shame, Mas! But what could you do? You [*sampaijan*] had important business there," Ibu Dokter replied.

"That's true. But anyway, it means I shall have to leave for Bandung tomorrow."

As I listened to them talk, I thought: "The guest must be Rama Opzetter [Printer] from Bandung, the brother of Rama Dokter." They went on talking for a long time, but

⁴⁷ *Engkau ini ada sebatang kara* has the original meaning of being separate from one's kin, but is a general idiom for being all alone in the world.

I didn't pay attention once I knew who the guest was. The one thing I did notice was that there were no references to me. So I was sure they knew nothing about my bad deeds.

At that point, I thought: "I'd better go outside, so Rama Dokter can see me and ask his wife what I want." So I quietly opened the door, passed along the alley, heading for the front of the house. I only glanced at Rama Dokter for a second, because he was already staring at me. Immediately I bowed my head. When I got to the front, I felt immensely pleased. I was sure that very soon Rama Dokter would summon me.

But in the event what happened? Three days had passed, and still not a single question had been asked of me. Not only did Rama Dokter ask no questions, but he wouldn't even look at me. I often tried to approach him, to the point that our noses almost touched, but he remained silent, pretending not to be aware of my presence. I became very confused, starting to think all kinds of crazy things. "Why, after all this time, does he still not summon me or ask me any questions? Has he learned of my misdeeds in Surabaya? No, that's impossible. Or is it perhaps because I haven't gone to present myself to him? This could be it. Still, he must realize that during all the time I have been in this world, now is the first occasion for me to meet him. If I had met him earlier, of course I would not feel so awkward, embarrassed, and timid in approaching him!"

I was really upset and confused, trying to guess why he wouldn't talk to me or ask me any questions. The longer I thought about it, the more I remembered what my mother had said about my situation. "Ah, Lord God [*Toehan rabbani*], it must be my fate," I said to myself. "Father, this is all your doing! But who is it who tastes the bitterness and who the sweet?" Such were the complaints that I repeated over and over, because of a burden that was grit in my eyes.⁴⁸

That very day, in the afternoon, while I was sitting in my room, I was startled when the door suddenly opened. But this feeling disappeared as soon as I recognized who had just come in—it was Ibu Dokter. After entering, she came up to me and said:

"Child, don't just sit there in silence. Your Father is like that after all. He has just gone out, so I want to talk to you. For too long I have been wanting to explain things, but I couldn't because the right moment had not yet come."

On hearing these words, I felt much relieved. But then again, the moment I thought about how abject my life was, the darkness surged up again in my breast. Yet though my heart was in turmoil, and my lips felt almost too heavy to be moved, I forced myself to reply:

"Bu, I hope you will understand why till now I haven't presented myself to Rama Dokter. It is simply because, so far as I can remember, I never met him from the time I was a baby. This is the first time in my life to meet him, and I am already almost grown. That's why I feel awkward and embarrassed towards Rama Dokter."

For a while, Ibu Dokter thought over what I had said. Then she lifted her head and looked at me, saying:

⁴⁸ The text reads: *karena telah terdapat jang mendjadi kelilip matakoe*. I think it must be taken metaphorically to mean "because of an unmovable obstacle."

"Just do what I tell you, child, and your desires will be fulfilled. Stay right here for the time being. Later on, when your Father comes home, quickly present yourself."

Even before Ibu Dokter left the room, my feelings had grown even more somber. When I thought about my humiliating situation, I always felt too timid to face him. But I hadn't been turning all this over in my mind very long, when suddenly I heard the sound of shoes clattering on the floor. My heart pounded. "Ah, he's come," I said to myself. After a time, the clatter of shoes stopped. Slowly I walked over to the closed door of my room. Then I bent over to peek through the keyhole. There sat Rama Dokter, with a cup of tea beside him. I quickly stepped back from the keyhole. "He must have been sitting there for a while. So it's better to face him now, so that things can be settled quickly. How tired I am of thinking about nothing else all day all night. Let there be an end to it now."

I adjusted my clothes to look as neat as possible, and wiped my face with a handkerchief so that it would look nice and clean. "*Bismillah* [In the name of Allah]!" I said as I opened the door of my room. Then I walked over to where he was sitting, my head bowed. When I got close, I sat down cross-legged on the floor, in the polite manner of the *prijaji* in Java. Rama Dokter stared at me, then looked up and down my body.

"And who are you [*engkau*]?" he asked.

I was very taken aback by his question, but I replied clearly and politely.

"Why have you come here?"

I explained politely that I had come to ask him to put me in school and to apprentice me to some job. Rama Dokter turned his face away, then lowered his head as though thinking something over. Shortly thereafter, he turned his face back to me and said: "Well, in that regard I can't give you any help. You'd be better off serving a Dutchman in one of the sugar mills. That way you could get help."

My heart started to pound the moment I heard his words. Like oil meeting fire, it burst into flames. If I didn't do my utmost to contain myself, there would be a dangerous explosion from the pressure of the smoke seeking release. So my feelings simply churned in my heart to the point that the inside of my chest was as hot as burning charcoal. So fierce was the fire burning inside me that tears poured down from my eyes. Since I could not bear it any longer, I asked to take my leave.

"Very well," he said.

With this permission, I immediately got up and went towards my room. Once inside, I laid my body down on the bed. Because I was so hot, and my chest so dark, without realizing it I fell fast asleep. When I woke up, I felt very surprised, not having the slightest feeling that I had been asleep. I felt like a dead man come back to the world of the living. Slowly I got down from the bed, went to the door, and opened it. "What time is it now? Seeing how quiet the house is, it must be very late. If I'm not mistaken, it must be about two o'clock," I said to my heart, noticing the moon high in the sky. "My throat feels on fire," I continued, heading for the tap to drink some water.

"Ah, how fresh my body feels! And because my chest is now cool, my heart is calm. Ah, why have I come back to life? Why can't I stay sleeping as before? Without

thoughts, without grief, without weariness, without pain, without hunger, without feeling full, just silent within myself. But now the abjection of my situation and the harshness of my fate have come back to me, and the flame is flaring up again in my breast. Really and truly, I can't believe what I heard Rama Dokter say. As I see it, nothing could be less appropriate. That's why the fire blazes up again in my heart, so that my chest is burning, and even now this burning feeling has not gone away.

"So, then, Body mine," I said laying the palms of my hands on my chest, "what are we to do? Your journey has come to an end. Where will you go now? What other relatives will you approach? There is no chance that you'll be allowed to see them, since now they all know your misdeeds. So what is your wish now? Just remember ... when you left your mother in Pandji, you wanted to separate yourself completely from your relatives because you felt humiliated by what your father did.⁴⁹ Now your wish has finally been fulfilled. There's no reason to go looking for relatives any more. They have all heard how rotten you are. This means that you've accomplished what you sought to achieve. And what now?"

As I thought about all this, my mind darkened once more. I felt that there was nothing left in this world. And all this had happened because of the sins my father had committed. "So, Body mine! From now on, whatever you want, I will be at your command," I said, as my mind cleared. Then I raised my two hands to the sky.

The next morning, about eight o'clock, while Rama Dokter was chatting (*berdjandon-djandon*) with his wife, I got dressed and presented myself to him.

"Rama, now that I have received your instructions, I ask your permission to leave this house."

For a long while Rama Dokter made no reply, merely looking me up and down, over and over. Finally he said, "Very well. Just wait a minute." He stood up and went inside the house. When he came out again, he extended his hand and gave me some money. "For your journey home," he said.

"Thank you, Rama," I replied as I took the money.

After taking my leave of Ibu Dokter, I went out through the gate of the yard. I walked on aimlessly. Wherever my feet led me, that, it seemed, would be my destination. After walking for about a quarter of an hour, I reached the market of Kediri. All I did there was to walk about looking left and right. But my vision was blurred. I felt as if my eyes were darkened, and I could make out nothing.

A little later, however, I noticed a *kopjah* on display in a shop window.⁵⁰ Then this thought came into my mind. "Why should I go on wearing a *kain* and *ikat kepala*?⁵¹ It would be better for me to wear a *kopjah*, so I can change my name. Anyway, I don't want to dress the old way any more; if I go on doing so, one of my relatives will surely

⁴⁹ The grammar here is rather strange, and I am not sure I have interpreted the passage properly. The text is "sebab tertarik dari dirimoe jang hina, karena dari lantaran Ramamoe."

⁵⁰ A rounded cap very similar to the *pitji*, which is today part of a male national dress.

⁵¹ A batik ankle-length cloth wrapped around the waist and a head-cloth also made of batik: the proper dress for a *prijaji* in those days.

spot me." So I went straight into the shop and bought a *kopjah* and a plaid sarung. Once I had paid for them, I hurried out and was on my way.

I walked on and on, with my head bowed, looking neither right or left. After about two hours, I found myself outside the town of Kediri. I had no idea where I was heading. All of a sudden I found myself stopping beneath a shady tree in the midst of a rice field. It seemed to be a place where few people ever passed by. I sat down and looked up at the sun. I could thus tell that I had been walking in a northeasterly direction along the road between Kediri and Pare. "What's your plan now, and what do you intend to do?" I asked in my heart. "You have to realize that right now you don't know what you want. There is nothing left for you to hope for. So just keep going as your heart desires. In that case, what's the point of carrying so many belongings with you? Come on, open up ... "

I stood up and opened the bundle of my clothing. Then I took out the *kopjah* and the sarung I had just bought, and put them on. "Ah, you're not a *prijaji* any more! Besides, what do you need with all the money you've got?" *Pjar!*⁵² I threw all the money down on the *kain* and *ikat kepala* already spread out on the ground. "Now then, let's go, I will follow wherever you wish to go," I said to my heart. "Goodbye, Mas. Anyone who finds you, let him be your owner," I said to the clothes that I left scattered about. Then I set off again, with my head bowed, looking neither right nor left. No matter what might happen to come close to my body, I would keep walking on and on...

⁵² Onomotopoea for the clang of the falling coins.