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Leaving the Small Town

By Connor Lanoie

Mad Ahmet is coming.

THE SMALL TOWN:

Based on a story by

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Production

NBC Film

Written and directed by

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Good morning. -Thank you.

- I swear to be honest...

to protect my youngers.

To respect my elders.

To love my homeland

and nation.

My ideal is to rise,

to progress.

O Ataturk

I vow to

walk your path...

to... to...

towards the

goal you set.

I surrender my being

to that of Turkey.

Happy is he

who is a Turk.

Good day friends.

- Thank you.

- Good morning!

- Thank you! - Sit down.

Pinar? -Here.

- Elif? -Here.

Nazli. -Here.

Ismail. -Absent.

Yes Gkhan, read

today's passage aloud.

Love and Loyalty

in the family.

Families are like

small societies.
They share joy and sorrow.
Family relations are based on
love, respect and solidarity.
The family is the nucleus of
the nation and human society.
It is the source of
social peace.
Peace and order within
families radiates outwards...
to affect the entire society.
It is our duty to
uphold this structure.
Children, is there a
strange smell in the room?
Yes. There is a smell.
Everyone, take out
your lunch boxes.
Put them on the desks.
One of the meals smells.
Asiye, dear. Didn't you
notice this smell?
No, I couldn't
smell anything.
This could poison you, my girl.
Your mother should be more careful.
How could she do this?
Please go and throw it away.
I will arrange something
else for you to eat.
Tell your mother
to be more careful. Come.
Today's subject is the rules which
govern social life. Who wants to read?
The others should
listen carefully. Well.
Doesn't anyone want to read?
Yes, Nazli.
The rules that regulate social life.
Society needs rules so that
people can live in peace
in safety together.
These rules prevent
the individual..

from acting selfishly
within the society.
In order to live together
in our society
are certain rules
and restrictions.
If we don't obey
these rules
we must suffer
the consequences.
These rules
which regulate the society
may be written or unwritten.
Unwritten rules concern
customs and morals.
They take shape
by themselves
and are passed down from
generation to generation...
and are based on
respect and..
Ismail. Take
your seat, son.
Pinar. Now you continue
reading.
Start reading where your
friend has stopped.
The rest of you...
follow from the book.
I may ask any of you.
Go on Pinar.
- The importance of
solidarity in social life.
Solidarity means loyalty to
one another regarding...
individual feelings, interests
and thoughts.
The feeling...
of belonging together...
encourages...
living together.
People can not live alone
and meet their
needs.

That's why
people always
need each another.
We should help the poor...
as best we can...
either directly or
through charities.
And help...
does not just
mean giving money.
Because... people...
also need moral support.
During hard times..
...people...
comfort each other..
Everyone is responsible...
of the sorrow of others.
to a certain extent.
They do their best...
to make each other happy.
They experience
joy together too...
and share it.
Shared joy and sorrow...
strengthens...
national unity.
The problems that arise...
Such a bond
is called national unity.
Should we eat plums
growing in the cemetery?
You are stepping
on the grave.
What does it say here?
It says what it says.
Why do you care anyway?
You can read better if you
outline it with a piece of red tile.
Won't its shell break?
- No.
- Even if a car goes
over it, it won't break.
They only die if you
leave them upside down.

They can't turn
themselves over again.
- Shall I ride on it, too?
- Alright, but be careful.
Come on, move.
Come on.
It is slippery.
It really is strong.
Won't it poke its head out?
Won't it poke its legs out?
- If it forgets about you it might.
- How can it forget about me?
You must stand still
for a long time.
A thorn pricked me.
Couldn't you find a better place
than the grave to place it on?
Stop fidgeting.
It won't come out then.
Don't move.
What was that?
- A rifle.
Father. They are coming.
Where have you been? You
have lost track of time again.
We met a hunter by the
cemetery. He knows father.
- That must be Huseyin.
He hunts blackbirds there.
What he wants with those tiny birds
I will never understand.
Didn't I tell you to come
up directly. It is nearly dark.
Don't trample
the corn, child.
Come round the other way. You'll
get shot one day.
But we cross the field
without trampling the maize.
Don't exaggerate.
Nothing will happen.
You never know son.
Corn fields are dangerous.
On just such an evening

as this, ismail from...
Torhasan was lying
in wait for wild boar and...
when he heard a rustling
sound he pulled to trigger.
He looked. It was
Kasirahmet's son.
He was seriously injured
and died on the way to the hospital.
You should avoid the fields.
He was the same age as Ali.
You should stick to the road.
Has the tailor finished my trousers?
- Yes. -Good.
- It's 50 lira. -What?
- He says he wants 50 lira.
-50.
Did you have the hems put up?
- Yeah.
Let him give me 50 lira,
and he can keep the trouser.
All he did was turn up the
legs and let out the waist.
Goodness gracious!
You can't get anything
altered anymore.
- Give the child 50 lira.
- Don't be ridiculous.
So will the trouser stay there?
I've got no hair left. I went to
the barber. He just cut twice.
And how much?
I won't pay him 50.
As if he is selling a field to me.
- This damned...
When I paid 20 lira
for our house...
everyone said it was expensive.
That was in nineteen...
When I was in America a dollar
was less than one lira. - Ali, come!
- What is it?
- Come here I say.
A skinny barber used to

come to village...
in summer and in Winter.
He'd cut your hair for
a couple of tomatoes.
He always thanked people.
I never heard him
complain once.
Now the guy sits in his shop...
and you have to go to him.
Two clicks and he wants 50 lira.
Who can afford it?
He just turned up hems and
took in the waist a little.
How time has flown.
I can hardly believe it.
That's life.
We were much more
energetic earlier.
I was young and
strong then.
I was only 15. But the war was on,
so who cared about age.
I, who had never been beyond the
hills around the village...
found myself in Istanbul. They put us
on a train at Sirkeci Station.
It must be Haydarpasha Station.
- It was very crowded.
Many guys who like me never had left
their villages were there.
A Kurdish boy
kept on following me.
I made friends with him.
What was his name?
He was a bit simple
but he had a good hearth.
- May God bless him if he's alive.
- Where is Nusaybin?
- What?
- In Iraq.
What happened then?
- We set out for Mosul.
There was poverty
in those parts.

We asked for food from the villagers
but they just said "maho".
"Maho" means "nothing".
We asked at other houses
but it was again "maho".
The cherries are over
early this year.
Not only the cherries,
you know. Blackberries, too.
I was passing under the
cherry tree yesterday..
and a sound came from above.
- Was it a squirrel.
I thought so too
but it was a snake.
- Snake? What kind of snake?
- A huge grey snake.
What it was doing up
in the tree I can't imagine.
Everything is
strange these days.
Even the walnuts
don't ripen on time.
- The cranes don't come any longer.
- Why?
- Don't know. The
pesticides probably.
What happened then, father?
That damned cough. I can't
get rid of it.
Where was I?
- You had got to Mesopotamia, Baghdad.
Yeah. We came to that plain...
and crossed that
long, desert-like plain...
and reached Kutulenmare...
near Baghdad.
We were there.
We suddenly encountered
the British.
We defeated them even though
we were hungry and thirsty.
And do you know what
happened next?

The English commander committed suicide.

- He couldn't bear the defeat.

But when their reinforcements
arrived, they beat us.

We could have won if
we hadn't been starved.

Then we were taken prisoner.

They put us
on a ship to India.

From Bombay we were taken
by train to Semerpor.

We worked there as building
labourers.

I was so weak that..

I couldn't even carry
two bricks on my back.

Even that was too much.

The English guard kept shouting:

"Come on Joe, come on Joe. "

Actually, if we could feed
ourselves properly we would...

wipe out the English.

But we had no strength.

Most of us died of
starvation or disease.

- Those damned jackals are
down by the stream again.

They're cunning creatures.

They hide during the day.

They must be hungry to
come down to the stream.

Whether it was luck or fate
which brought me back, I don't know.

I came back safely

but I had nothing.

What's there to do?

Perhaps it would have been better
if you hadn't come back.

You returned and then what?

Did you get a reward for it?

It's all in vain.

- Saffet.

I thought you
were asleep.

What a way to talk, Saffet.
How can you think that way?
Homesickness is a
suffering unlike any other.
Even if you starve
it's still your homeland.
Look at Gobak Ismail.
He worked in Germany for years but...
- Aunt. To be buried
in your homeland...
or not, why should
it matter, anyway?
No, you are young
and far from death. That's why
you can talk like that.
What do you mean?
When death approaches you
prepare yourself spiritually.
Otherwise it is unbearable.
You must have faith.
It is so difficult to be far
from home.
and everywhere you look
are strangers.
- That's true. I don't even
feel at home in the town.
- Who knows how I'd feel?
So why go?
Wherever you go, it is..
the same sky, the same trees.
But still we dream about..
our own sky, our own trees.
Look! That dry tree over there
is dead
but it still
sways in the wind.
I believe that when we die
we remain a part of..
life one way or another,
just like that dry tree.
In India my mother used to
appear and smile at me.
I used to freeze with awe.
I found out she died in those days.

- The thing called telepathy is..

- Some people feel like that..

If your spirit is elsewhere you
don't feel if you have a brother.

Maybe it's better this way.

Why better?

- I don't know.

I don't want to stay here
and rot.

While I was in the army

I thought about that all the time.

People always

discussed these matters.

I think these are all in vain.

- Vain? Vain in what way?

What else is there to do?

- That's the law of nature.

Only the strong survive.

Evolution.

We shouldn't waste our lives.

We should work.

Grandfather has worked for
years and what did he get?

Yes. That's right.

But what

else can we do but work?

And what else do we do
anyway? Look at my hands.

- We are so inadequate, and
there is so much work to do.

It is not likely to finish.

- We should add new things.

Many legends arose from Mesopotamia,
where civilization was born.

You were in some really
important places, father.

Is it raining?

I don't think so.

- I felt a drop on my hand.

- Stone carving.

What?

- It also began in Mesopotamia.

Yes. That's right.

The cradle of civilization.

"La barceau de la civilisation" in French.
Then, Babylon for instance.
Have you seen Babylon?
- I have heard about it.
Babylon is very important.
That is where Alexander the Great died.
He conquered the world from end to end in his youth.
Dad, tell us how did they cross the river?
- Tell us about the elephants.
- All right. Listen then.
Alexander comes to the river Hidaspes.
On the other side of the river is King Poros, with his army.
Alexander first builds his camp and later splits his army into three..
And marches down the river with one part..
Poros' army was very strong because of the elephants.
Of course there were plenty battles. Four are important.
The first one was at..
Granicus in 334 BC.
Then at Pineros, which is called Delicay now..
somewhere around Iskenderun.
And then the third on Gaugamela plain... northeast of Mosul.
Finally there was the one against Poros.
I met a man from Iskenderun, and asked him about Delicay.
He was amazed
I had heard of Delicay.
But, didn't he win all the battles with his army?

No one remembers
their names.
Only Alexander.
- You are wrong.
Of course
he needed his army,
but 2300 years ago
to go on a campaign
and winning all battles under
those circumstances isn't easy.
Do you think it is easy
to lead an army all that
way for 13 years.
Sultan Selim couldn't
even reach Caldiran
because his army
rebelled against him.
- But why did he do it?
Just to make history?
He invaded
peaceful countries.
That's enough
about Alexander.
- What's so special
about this Alexander?
- People who don't know the
past can't see the future.
We have many great commanders too.
Fatih the Conquerer for instance.
Or Urukagina, that
great Mesopotamian king.
Urumachine?
What kind of name is that?
- Urukagina. The king of Lagesh.
He appeared when the priests
were exploiting the people.
And about invasions.
Alexander expanded civilization.
He built new cities, and...
brought cultures together.
The Persians had been
making the Greeks suffer,
constantly attacking them.
First he dealt with the attacks.

He wanted to conquer
Egypt so that...
Mother.
Get down, mother.
Get down.
He reached the Gedrozia
Desert in southern Pakistan.
It was a terrible place
almost impossible to cross.
Only 12.000 men survived
out of 60.000.
Some of them died of thirst
and some of starvation.
They were so hungry
they ate their horses.
Exhausted they struggle
across that endless desert.
Then they saw flocks of crows
flying through the empty sky.
They thought that the crows
were flying to a water source.
After they struggled
for some time...
they saw something like
water.
First they thought it
was a mirage.
Suddenly they saw
water in the middle
of the desert.
One soldier walked
towards the water, and..
- Son! Forget about other
people's troubles
and let's worry about us.
I'm still grieving for
my poor son's death.
That's right.
But there is
nothing we can do about it.
He was always reckless and
he never liked working.
He insisted on going away
and we couldn't stop him.

And he loved you a lot, Saffet.

- What kind of love was it?

It was my mother who
brought me up. What did he do?

He wasn't here
when we were in trouble.

He visited us once
or twice a year.

- Am I right?

- And you take after him.

You want to go, too.

You've turned out to
be a rebellious lad.

You still haven't got
a proper job.

I can't understand
why you resigned
from the registry office?

- I changed jobs.

I was condemned to work
all my life. It was too much.

- I know the registrar.

He's a fine man.

Yes, he is really
an easy going man.

If you can't get along with
him, there's no one you could.

He said you're here for the sake
of your grandfather
otherwise I would have
flown away.

I told him he overestimated..
my abilities to fly.

- And what did he say?

- "Take the mister away. "

We arranged all possible
jobs for you in the town.

Either you were fired
or you quit.

You went into the army but it
didn't make a man of you.

What else can we do?

What do you want?

I want to tell you this.

Yes. Maybe I am a loser.
You are fed up with me
being discontented.
I think I've got no
talent for anything.
My youth is being wasted
like a useless cigarette end.
I've got no home,
no friends, no job.
I wasted my best years
stuck in this town.
My manhood and my heart are
melting away before my eyes.
Let me add this, too.
I thought of nothing but
leaving this town before military service.
On that particular morning..
I felt there were deeper ties
binding me to this town.
There was the scent of
pines in the air.
That day I felt
I saw the pines
and the oaks for the first time.
So early in the morning,
there are usually..
only stray dogs out in the
streets, wandering aimlessly.
I love these quiet mornings,
the dogs, the smell of the soil.
I don't understand the
people's petty concerns.
I find them alien and
offensive.
Now tell me.
What's wrong with wanting
to go to some place where..
something serious is going on?
Mother do you remember
when I was at highschool we were
living in that damp basement?
One night he suddenly came.
We were very poor, then.
We were eating the

provisions from the village.
We used to secretly collect
pieces of soap.
We were eating porridge when
there was a knock at the door.
It was him.
- Is there any corn left, grandma?
Well dressed as usual.
He came inside..
and saw the porridge
on the crooked table.
Turning up his nose he said..
- Son, stop
"What's that? Are you
eating wheat porridge?"
Emin! Stop it!
Whatever.
He was an interesting man.
He lived and died.
without ever getting tired,
carrying any burden.
- You have contributed,
and look what happened?
You had a channel built and now
the villagers talk about you.
- I don't care what the
villagers say.
Whenever I go
past that
channel I feel very proud.
Didn't your field happen to be
at the end of the channel?
Wasn't your goal to bring
water to your field?
Didn't it make all
the valley get greener?
A channel with no water.
- Even so, it doesn't matter.
Even this small sapling has...
wonders of nature
hidden in it. Look at
these branches.
A new branch every year. This
one is short because it rained less.

So what?
Nature holds the answer
to all our questions.
You have to feel yourself
as part of the whole.
Your father
abandoned this place.
Let's get
somethings straight.
Not everyone is lucky
enough to go to college.
Luck? You call this luck?
What else could have
my father done?
You feel strong.
But the reality is that you
have to live in the town.
There is nothing
but the trees.
Maybe he was right.
- Listen.
- When your father left...
- He was your brother.
You played together
in these meadows.
You have laughed
in the same streets.
But I haven't once heard you
say anything good about him.
People should have a little
compassion or tenderness.
How can you be so
distant and insensitive.?
But Saffet, what about..
Why I'm the only one
suffering for my father's faults?
Aren't you his
relatives, too?
Why am I the only one
suffering?
- Saffet, son..
- How can you shrug off...
responsibility like
water off a duck's back?

Certainly not.
What makes you
think that?
Maybe I'm ignorant.
I don't know about Alexander...
But what use is knowledge
if you don't share it?
It's not enough
to read books.
Did you learn all that
for yourself alone?
Now this is absurd.
What do you know?
It's easy to talk
and hard to do anything.
I started with nothing.
I was determined to study
and I never gave up.
I went to school on
a donkey back all winter.
I know what I went through.
I worked in the fields.
Do you think it was easy?
Do you?
I worked hard on my own
and made it into university.
My back saw its first
coat at the university
I learned English by myself,
and went to America.
And how did I do all this?
While the others discussed..
football matches all night.
What was your father doing then?
Dressed in fancy clothes he was
running around after deputies.
Wasn't he?
Yes, maybe I live
a secluded life
and my best friends
are my books.
I don't believe
in people anymore.
Only in nature.

Your father thought
I had wasted my life.
He used to tell people
I didn't know how to live.
Isn't there any corns left?
- No.
Dad. Shall we go and
pick some corn?
Why do you stare at me like that?
- Nothing.
Stop crying, woman.
Now why did you bring
up the subject again?
Do you think
you are perfect?
Saffet, you've got the same
troubles as your father.
You still haven't
got a proper job.
Now your military service
is over, make up your mind.
Get married
and have kids.
You are the only person in our
village who has gone to college.
You went abroad, learnt
foreign languages.
but in the end you came
back and settled here.
Didn't you study to get
away from these fields?
I don't understand what all
that education was for.
One of us is under
the earth, and..
that's where we
are all destined for.
I have an absolute faith in
God, but we come and we go.
Where is my mother, father and
uncles? They have all gone.
We're all older now.
But why does God take away
an innocent child's life?

What sin could a two year
old child have committed?
Take Kezban's child,
for instance.
No one can know.
No one but God.
We shouldn't know
everything.
Just know what you need
that's enough.
What's the point
in knowing more?
God gave us two ears
instead of four.
Because you can hear
with two ears, too.
Yes woman, we've lost our
son but
it is the will of God. There are
good days and bad days.
When I came back from India
I was totaly exhausted.
While I was shivering on the
ship's deck I was thinking.
If I ever reached my country,
I would never be
unhappy again as long as
I had a shelter and food.
We got home,
but the place was in ruins.
The war had affected
these places too.
My fiancée had given me up
and married someone else.
She even had a child.
That's right.
Now I'm a farmer.
So what? It's all right.
But I don't want to die,
you know.
I hope God let's me live
another 20 years at least.
- You have to live and eat
healthily like the Americans.

- To cut a long story, I've had good times and bad times. You should always have hope.

- You will outlive us all, father. You can see the state I am in. My mouth shakes and my left eye twitches. But the worst of all is trying to sleep. Just as I start to fall asleep, suddenly I get a pain in my right side. Then the pain moves up to my head and I have terrible headaches.

- Age brings its aches and pains. But I still want to carry on living. At least 20 more years. Can you hear music?

- Father is right. When my mother died I thought I couldn't bear it. But now I can hardly remember her face. But when I was pregnant I felt something I had never before. I don't exactly know. May be a wish for goodness? As if I had realised what life was about.

- Soon no one will even visit our graves. Change your pillow, father. Use a thick wooden rolling pin like the Japanese do. Right under your neck. Most headaches are caused by the nerves at the back of the neck.

- Last year when the fire broke out I ran home. I was so relieved to see

it wasn't at our house.
Ali and Asiye were
watching the fire with the...
looks of horror, panic and
pleading on their faces.
It scared me to
see them like that.
I thought these kids will see so
much throughout their lives.
All the people were
running around shouting.
And that imploring look on
the children's faces.
I couldn't get it
out of my mind.
Mother! At which
direction lies India?
- Don't know.
This way I think.
- You mean, towards Yenice?
- I guess so.
That's east, isn't it?
- Then it is over the mountains.
Yeah. I think so.
If she had had the title
deeds made out in her name
while her husband was alive she
wouldn't be penniless now.
She asked if I had any
laundry to be done.
- Who?
- Your wife.
I said there are only those
that I am wearing.
She didn't offer
to wash those.
So I didn't take them off.
I dumped them in a bag.
Maybe I should have a few
deeds made out in my name.
Asiye, are you
asleep my lamb?
I was going to ask you
to massage my shoulders.

You carry on sleeping.
My head is aching again.
It is keeping me awake.
Nuri! Come and
massage it for me.
Massage my shoulders
a bit.
This damned pain. Why is it
tormenting me like this.
My neck feels like
a block of wood.
I'd like to chop it off.
Wait. Let me tie this.
Do you want me to press it?
- Look.
This pain is like
a weather forecast.
Let me sit down and
rest for a moment.
Are the children in bed?
- They are.
They didn't finish
eating the melon.
I didn't take it in. They can
eat it when they wake up.
God preserve us.
For my Mother and Father...
subs ripped by barfly