

I. Lazaro Tells about His Life and His Parents

The chapter begins with the author's preface, stating his intention to entertain the reader with his life story, marked by numerous misfortunes and challenges. Born on the banks of the Tormes River to Tome Gonzales and Antona Perez, Lazaro's early life is shaped by his father's arrest for theft and subsequent death in military service. His mother moves them to the city, where she struggles to provide for her family, eventually giving birth to Lazaro's half-brother through an affair with a black man, Zaide. Zaide supports the family but is later punished for theft, leading to their further impoverishment.

Lazaro's life takes a pivotal turn when he becomes the guide to a blind man, his first master. Through various misadventures, Lazaro learns to fend for himself, developing cunning and resourcefulness to survive the blind man's stinginess and abuse. The blind man, adept at swindling others for money under the guise of religious piety, provides a harsh but effective education for Lazaro in the ways of the world. Despite the hardships, Lazaro's witty and resilient nature allows him to outsmart his master on several occasions.

The relationship between Lazaro and the blind man is characterized by a mix of dependence, manipulation, and betrayal. Lazaro's narration includes humorous and cunning schemes to satiate his hunger and retaliate against the blind man for his cruelty, showcasing a complex relationship where Lazaro is both a victim and an active agent in his fate. Through these experiences, Lazaro gains a cynical but practical perspective on life, acknowledging the necessity of wit and deception for survival among those more powerful and deceitful than himself.

Their journey together ends in Escalona, where Lazaro, driven by desperation and the desire for revenge, replaces a sausage meant for the blind man with a turnip, finally leading to a violent confrontation. Despite the violence and humiliation he endures, Lazaro's reflection on his escapades reveals a sense of pride in his ability to navigate and sometimes overcome the challenges posed by his harsh circumstances. The chapter closes with Lazaro separating from the blind man, marking the end of his first apprenticeship in the harsh realities of life.

