

English phrase, practice makes perfect, and what clearer evidence for that truth than me. Here I am, after six years of stumbling and not only did I become a columnist, but I'm an author now too.

It seems the difficulties we experience as children tend to stay with us the most vividly. I remember once while I was still working at the bank in the early nineties, an elderly Palestinian man entered. After exchanging greetings he asked, "Remember me, my son?" Of course I did remember him; it was Mr. Naim, my old Arabic teacher. He was delighted and complimented me on my good memory. He laughed when I explained that it's only because we disliked him so much that it was impossible for any of us to forget him. It was good to see Mr. Naim though and, as I helped him with his transaction, I asked if he knew how Mr. Issa was doing. My heart sank when he simply replied, "May God have mercy on his soul." I wished I could have seen him one last time, I said. I wish I could have thanked him because he was such a good teacher indeed. Mr. Naim finished his business, smiled at me and said, "You have goodness in you." Then he left and I never saw him again after that day.

Going back to my fourth year at elementary school, I was only around nine at the time when everything suddenly changed. With the death of my father, everything turned upside down and our one big family split into clans as conflict broke out. Our spacious and once lively mansion in Al-Niqra became a gloomy abode as my father's wives and their children began to move out into new houses. We were the last family to leave and in our final days the mansion was a ghost house. It was