

Story #155 (Tape 1969-1)
(Told as a real experience)

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farmer

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Ankara vilayet

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The Captain's Woman

In the army we grazed horses in the pasture. I had a captain named Behiç Güney. He was something of a woman chaser. There we were on Beyköy Pasture [on the Bosphorus, in Anatolia] where we had a tent, and tethered the horses there.

The Captain gave these orders. "If anyone asks for me from regimental headquarters, don't tell them when I shall return. Just say I have gone to Beşiktaş Animal Hospital [near Istanbul, on the European side--opposite Uskudar--car ferry], that I am there visiting a sick horse." Giving these instructions, he left. I had just been promoted to the rank of corporal [Someone in the audience said, on tape, "That's more important than being a sergeant."]. I was a groom and was given an order to brush and curry the horses. Right then a black taxicab drew up to where we were and stopped by the tent. A woman got out, with bare arms, and naked below the knees, and around her neck something dangled. She was an attractive woman.

She said to me, "Corporal, where is Captain Behiç Güney?"

I said, "Sorry, lady, I don't know where he is," and I continued currying horses. The lady walked about the pasture for five minutes and returned again and asked, "Son, tell me where the Captain is. I have little time to wait."

"Look here, lady," I said. "I don't know how to read and write. My Turkish is short. I don't understand about politics, but you let me know what you want with the Captain and then perhaps I'll tell you where he is.

She was very cross and walked to the--they call that a casino, don't they? [the narrator asked]--well, she walked there and sat down at a table. I watched her. She ordered a cup of coffee with no sugar. Her young chauffeur waited in the car. [Peasants do not distinguish between taxis and any regular car.]. She drank her coffee and went away.

In time we returned to our regiment. The regimental commanding officer used to imprison me with bread and water thinking I used to take the horses out to ride along the Bosphorus, while in fact some lieutenants fode them. One day they said the regimental commanding officer had asked for me. "By God, he's going to jail me again," I thought. I went to the officers' mess where all the officers were. I stood at attention and said, "Yes, my Colonel

"At your ease," he said.

I noticed that Captain Behiç Güney, also there, turned his face in another direction from me. The Colonel asked, "Who was it that came to Beyköy Pasture when you grazed horses there the other day?"

When I heard this, something flashed into my mind and I knew what was going on.

"Sir, when Captain Behiç Güney set up our camp on Beyköy Pasture, he said he would visit a sick animal in Beşiktaş Hospital. Shortly afterward a black car came." When the Colonel heard this, he gathered himself up and sat on a chair, slapping his knees in great excitement.

"What did she look like?"

"She was rather fleshy and plump, thighs thick, and her arms were bare. There were some yellow things dangling from her throat. Such a woman came and asked for Captain Güney."

"Son, where is your captain?" she asked

I didn't tell her where he was. Five minutes later she asked me again. I said, this time, "Mother, my Turkish is short, I cannot read or write, I don't understand about political affairs, but what is your business with the captain, and where do you come from? Then I'll tell you where he is." When the woman heard this, she was angry and went and sat at a casino and had a cup of black coffee and then she went away. (I should have mentioned earlier that the Colonel had made it clear to me that if I told him the truth he'd send me to my village on a month's leave and if I lied, he'd jail me for one month. When I heard the word "home leave," I told the truth.) When the Colonel heard this from me, he went and faced Captain Güney and said to him, "My congratulations! I have been after that woman for six years and could not get her."

I overheard the conversation between the Captain and the Colonel. "Colonel, I had that woman come all the way to a tent on Beyköy Pasture. I didn't give her a damn. If you don't believe me, call the regular groom and ask him if it is not so." Apparently there was rivalry between the two over this woman. Although he congratulated the Captain and gave him leave to visit Istanbul, he didn't keep his promise to me for my home leave. Let alone home leave, he wouldn't even give me city leave for a month.

One day I said, "Colonel, you're a big colonel and regimental commanding officer and I'm a small corporal. Look what you have done--you went back on your word and didn't give me home leave."

"If you hadn't spoken to me in such a manner, I would have sent you on home leave."