

Story #404 (Tape #4, 1972)

Narrator: Nuri Çirakoğlu

Location: Bodrum in Province
of Muğla

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Why Behlül Dane Laughed

There was once a man named Behlül Dane who was never observed to laugh. His brother, the padishah,¹ announced that he would reward anyone who observed Behlül Dane laugh.

One day Behlül Dane was observed to laugh as he stood before a butcher shop. A man who observed this ran to the padishah and said, "Good news! Your brother, Behlül Dane, laughed today in front of the butcher shop."

The padishah had Behlül Dane called to his presence right away. When he asked him why he had laughed, for the first time in his life, before the butcher shop, Behlül Dane responded: "I have always felt uncomfortable about your unjust rule, and particularly because I have always imagined that I would be punished for it along with you. But today when I looked at the butcher shop, I realized that each sheep is hung by its own leg.² When I realized this, I was greatly relieved, and that is why I laughed."

¹This is the first time (up to Tale #404, that is) that the ruler has not been designated as Harun Reshid. Behlül's very existence in folklore depends upon the context of the caliphate in Baghdad and the court (or divan) of Harun Reshid.

²The expression "Every sheep is hung by its own leg" is proverbial in Turkish and is used in other places besides this tale. Her koyun kendi bacağından asılır."