

Story 913 1961-62 Tape 72) Narrator: Hasan Özgürbüz
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Separation Born of Suffering

There were once an elderly couple and their only child, a son. They were very poor, and they had no livestock except a cow to support them. One day while he was grazing his cow the father came upon a large hollow rock that was partly filled with water. Somewhat tired by then, the man sat down in the shade of that rock and fell asleep.

When he woke up, he saw a large snake drinking water from the hollow rock. He saw that the snake acted very thirsty, and so he decided to help it. After the snake had drunk the water from the rock and withdrawn, the man poured into the hollow place a bottle of milk which he had brought along for his own lunch. The snake returned to the rock and drank the milk. When it had finished the milk, it vomited from its mouth a gold coin. Very pleased, the man took the gold coin home.

"Where did you get that gold coin?" his wife asked him

"I got it from a snake."

"From a snake?"

"Yes. I saw a large snake drinking water thirstily

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from a hollow rock. After it had drunk all of the water, I poured my lunch milk into the hollow rock, and the snake drank the milk too. Then it vomited this gold coin and left."

The old man decided to continue this practice, for gold coins were very valuable. Each day he took a bottle of milk for the snake, and each day the snake vomited a gold coin for him. This went on for five years. Then one day the man fell ill and was unable to go to the forest to get the daily coin. He sent his son instead, giving the young man careful instructions about what he should do. Following these instructions, the young man went to the forest and returned with the gold coin.

Because his father's illness continued for some time, the boy had to repeat this trip to the forest day after day. He grew tired of it after a while and decided to kill the snake and extract from its body all of the gold at one time. He went to the rock and poured a bottle of milk into it. When the snake started to drink the milk, the boy took out his knife and attempted to cut the snake in half, but he succeeded only in cutting off the snake's tail. Enraged by this attack, the snake sprang upon the boy, coiled itself about his neck, and strangled him.

The boy did not return home that night, nor did he return for several nights after that. When five days passed, the

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father was so worried about the welfare of his son that he decided to seek him in the forest in spite of his own illness. When he reached the rock, he found his dead son, swollen and decayed, lying beside it. Looking around, he saw the tail of the snake lying on the ground. The snake then came from its hole and spoke to the old man: "Mehmet Ağa,¹ do not bring me milk any more. If you do, it will not be good for either of us. Your son injured me, and I killed him. As a result, you are now my enemy, and I am yours."

"I do not think of it in that way," said the man. "You were right to kill my son. If he had not injured you, you would not have killed

"No, please don't bring me milk any more. As long as I remember the pain of my lost tail and you remember the pain of your lost son, we two cannot get along with each other."

¹An ağa (English, agha) is a rural landowner, usually rich, often powerful. But the word ağa may also be used as a complimentary or honorific epithet after a person's name, whether or not that person is either rural or a landowner. Thus, the snake is here being respectful to the old man himself despite the grave offense committed by the old man's son.