

Story 958 (1973 Tape 9)

Narrator: Unidentified

Location: Aşaköy village,
Bursa Province

Date: February 1973

Language Slowly Learned, Quickly Forgotten

In the old days a man went to school to learn the correct use of language,¹ and he went to school for fourteen years. Among the many things that he learned was how to speak properly.

There was one such educated man that I knew who finished his education and then set forth on a journey to teach others what he had learned. As he was traveling along, he decided that he needed some rest and so he stopped at the next fountain that he came to. After tying his donkey to a fig tree, he washed his hands and face at the fountain. Then he lay down in the shade and fell asleep.

While this educated man was sleeping, his donkey somehow managed to pull its rope loose and wander away. When the man awakened, he looked for his donkey, but it was nowhere to be seen. He looked here and he looked there, but nowhere could he find his donkey. After a while he came upon a farmer out plowing one of his fields. Without even extending any

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¹ This is less than accurate. Not that much attention was given to language before the time of the Republic.

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greeting, the professor called to the farmer. He said, Friend, have you seen any equus asinus² which was tied to a ficus carica?"³

The poor farmer was exhausted from his hard work and sweating beneath the heat of the sun. Unable to understand the professor's fancy language, he said, "Oh, Friend, ask me again what it was that you thought I might have seen

The professor repeated his question, still using his fancy language. It annoyed the farmer, hot and tired as he was, that he could not understand what this stranger was saying. In anger he struck the professor with his whip said, "Will you tell me again what you said?"

After having been struck sharply by the farmer, the professor asked very plainly for what he wanted: "I lost my donkey that I had tied to a fig tree while I napped. Have you seen my donkey?"

Relieved to know what the stranger was talking about, the farmer answered, "Well, why didn't you say so at once? No, I haven't seen your donkey!"

² Latin for donkey, ass.

³ Ficus is Latin for fig. Carex, carica means reed or sedge, though the narrator had said that the man had tied his donkey to a fig tree.

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The professor then left the farmer. After he had gone meters, he said to himself, "That damned fellow! In only minutes he forced me to forget the words that I had taken fourteen years to learn!"