

Story 1508 (1970 Tape 19)

Narrator: İshak Kemali

Location: Erzurum, capital of
Erzurum Province

Date: 1970

Blowing Leaves Convict a Murderer

There were once two friends in a village who decided to go to a big city in order to earn some money. One of these men was tall and very strong, but the other was a small man who was rather weak. Both of them, however, managed to get jobs in the city and began to work there

The small man lived very frugally and saved almost all of the money he earned. The big fellow, on the other hand, spent all of his money as fast as he earned it. Things went on in this way during the entire seven years that they spent in the city

One day the smaller man said to his friend, "Let us return to our village. We have been away from it for seven years, during that time I have missed greatly my mother, my father and my friends."

The big man refused. He said, "I shall not be able to go with you. I have not been able to save any money at all, and I cannot return home empty-handed."

His friend answered, "That is no problem. I have saved 10,000 kurus¹ and I shall give you 5,000 of them."

¹In pre-Republican days--in fact, until about 1965--this would have been a large sum of money. There were 100 kurus to

Story 1508

"No, I shall not accept your money! After we returned, you might say, 'Don't suppose that he is a good man just cause he looks so prosperous! Because he was unable to save any money during his seven years in the city, I gave him 5,000 kuruş with which to return."

The smaller man took an oath that he would never say anything to anyone about giving his friend that money. The of them therefore set out together for their village. Along the way, however, the large man paused for a minute. The other man asked him, "What is the matter?"

"I have decided to kill you!"

"Why? What have I done to you to make you want to me?"

"When we get back to our village, you will say, 'Don't suppose from his appearance that he is a good man. Because he was unable to save any money during his seven years in the city, I gave him 5,000 kuruş.'" "

The smaller man tried to convince him that he would never say such a thing, and again he took an oath to that effect.

the lira, the largest denomination of Turkish currency, and so 10,000 kuruş would have amounted to 1,000 liras. Devaluation of Turkish money since the late 1960s has made even the lira almost worthless, since by early 1992 it took more than 6,000 Turkish liras to equal the worth of one U.S. dollar. Thus, the kuruş has become extinct as a monetary unit and is now only a collector's item.

Story 1508

But once the Devil had gotten into the large man's heart, he would no longer listen to reason. He knocked the smaller man upon the ground to kill him.

As the smaller man lay among the blowing leaves, he said, "O leaves, you will be witnesses for me in the presence of Allah on Judgment Day."

"Oh, yes! These leaves will be your witnesses, for by that time they will have learned to speak!" In this way the large man mocked the smaller man.

"If Allah is Allah, I know that He will hold you accountable for this act, and these leaves will be my witnesses in the next world."

Those were the last words he said before the larger man killed him, took all of his money, and continued on his way to their village.

In those times there was neither telegraph nor telephone. If someone left his village, there was no way for his family or friends to know whether he was dead or alive until he returned. The large man's family welcomed him, and then the small man's parents asked why their son had not also returned. The large man reported that their son had died, and he pretended to feel great sorrow about his death.

After a while the large man entered the Turkish army in

Story 1508

order to fulfill his compulsory military service. He was made a hostler to care for the horses of a cavalry major.

One day as this cavalry unit was traveling across the countryside, it passed the spot where the hostler had killed his friend. Again the leaves were blowing along the ground there, and when the large man saw them, he laughed loudly. Hearing this sudden laughter, the major asked his hostler, "Why are you laughing? What happened?"

"Nothing!"

"I am ordering you to tell me what happened! Do so, or I shall kill you with my sword!"

Upon hearing this threat, the hostler explained to the major everything that had happened. "Exactly where did you kill him?" asked the major. "Show me the place.

They went to the place where the hostler had killed his friend, and they were both greatly surprised at what they saw. Although several years had by then passed since he had killed his friend, the small man still lay there on the ground looking as if he were simply sleeping and not dead.²

"Did you have no fear of Allah when you committed such a

²In Turkish folktales Moslem holy men are sometimes supernaturally preserved after death. When their tombs are opened long after their death, their bodies show no signs whatever of decomposition. In this case the miracle is a Divine act that leads to the punishment of the slayer of a good but secular person.

Story 1508

crime?" asked the major. Then, drawing his sword, he cut off the head of the hostler.