

Story 1987 (1992 Tape 8)

Narrator: Latife Tekniker, in late 30s

Location: Lefkoşa, kaza town in North Cyprus Turkish Republic

Date: December 2, 1992

The Profitable Exchanges of a Crow

Once there was a crow who stepped upon a thorn. No matter how hard he tried to remove that thorn from his foot, he was unable to do so. He therefore looked for help. He knocked on the door of a nearby house. When an old woman opened the door, the crow explained his difficulty to her. After she had removed the thorn from his foot, the crow said, "I shall come back later to get my thorn from you." Then he went on his way.

But that old woman was cold. She added the thorn to some splinters of wood she had found and threw all of them into her mangal¹ to produce some heat.

After awhile the crow returned and knocked on the door again, tock, tock, tock. When the old woman opened the door, the crow said to her, "I have come back to get my thorn."

"I was cold," said the old woman, "and I burned the thorn with some small scraps of wood to keep myself warm."

¹A small portable cast-iron stove, like a brazier, used for both cooking and warmth in many rural Turkish homes. Coal or charcoal is usually burned in a mangal.

Story 1987

“I want my thorn back, and if I cannot have that, then I shall take your mangal.” Then he started chanting loudly, “My thorn or your mangal! My thorn or your mangal! My thorn or your mangal!” Then he took the old woman’s mangal and left.

He went to another house and knocked on the door, tock, tock, tock. When the residents of that house opened the door, the crow said to them, “Can you keep this mangal for me for a very short time? I’ll come back in a little while to get it from you.” He left the mangal and walked on.

The residents of that house took the mangal and stood it by a wooden chest near the fireplace. When someone accidentally brushed against that chest, it fell over and smashed the mangal.

Not long after that the crow returned and asked for his mangal. The owner of that house said, “I am very sorry that right after you left, a chest fell over on your mangal and broke it.”

Upon hearing this, the crow said, “I want either my mangal or your chest. Mangal or chest! Mangal or chest! Mangal or chest!” The people in that house grew tired of hearing his loud chanting, and so they gave him the wooden chest to get rid of him. Taking the chest, the crow continued on his way.

At the next house he came to, the crow knocked on the door-tock, tock, tock, tock. When the man of the house opened the door, the

Story 1987

crow said to him, "May I please leave my chest here for just an hour or so? I shall return then and take it away." The man complied with this request and set the chest inside the lower level of the house with the livestock. But an ox kicked the chest and broke it apart.

When the crow returned for his chest, the man of the house said to him, "It is very unfortunate, but one of our oxen kicked your chest and broke it apart."

The crow responded, "I want my chest back, but if I can't have that, then you must give me the ox that destroyed it. Either the chest or your ox! Either the chest or your ox! Either the chest or your ox!" After listening to that loud chant for a few minutes, the man of the house decided to give the crow the ox.

At the next home the crow reached, there was a large gathering of people. When the crow discovered which person was the owner of that house, he said to him, "May I please leave my ox here for an hour or two? I shall then come back and get it." The homeowner agreed to this and he tied the ox to a stake in the yard. The crow departed.

The many people gathered at that house were there to attend the wedding of the owner's daughter. Not enough food had been prepared for a crowd of that size, and so they slaughtered the crow's ox and cooked its meat to feed all the guests. When the crow returned

Story 1987

for his ox, the owner of the house explained what had happened and offered to pay the crow for his ox.

The crow answered, "I do not want your money! I want my ox, and if I cannot have it, then I demand the bride in place of it." The father of the bride objected to giving his daughter to a crow, but the crow began chanting, "My ox or the bride! My ox or the bride! My ox or the bride!" As his chanting grew louder and louder, many of the guests left the wedding party. In desperation, the owner of the house finally gave his daughter to the crow.

As the crow was walking along with the bride, he heard a shepherd playing beautifully upon his kaval²: dü, dü, dü, dü, dü. The crow was so fascinated by this music that he approached the shepherd and asked, "Would you be willing to trade your kaval for this beautiful bride?"

Amazed by this offer, the shepherd answered, "Of course I would! Here! Take this kaval and give me the bride!"

The crow then flew into the top of a tree and perched there. After playing a tune on his kaval, he sang this song:

²Although a kaval sounds much like a recorder, it is actually a fipple flute. Shepherds often make their own out of wood that ranges from bamboo to fine-grained lemon wood. Some of the tunes played by shepherds are analogous to bugle calls in that they direct their flocks to routine activities: grazing, drinking, and folding for the night.

Story 198

bought mangal with thorn
I gave the mangal for chest
The chest I traded for
Then for the got bride
But this kaval replaced the bride
Dü dü! Dü dü! Dü dü! Dü dü!