

Story 2048 (Transcribed from
Atatürk İlkokulu tape.)

Narrator: Nermin Akova

Location: Karacabey, kaza
town of Bursa
Province

Date: Spring 1966

Two Sisters-in-Law, Crazy One and Clever One

There were once two sisters-in-law who lived together. One was wise, and the other was crazy. One day the crazy woman took all of her yarn down to the bank of a creek. She spoke to the frogs there, saying, "Weave a kilim¹ for me from this yarn. I shall return for it in a few days." Near the creek she found a bag of gold. She took this bag home with her and gave it to her sister-in-law.

A few days later the crazy woman returned to the bank of the creek. When she reached the bank, she called to the frogs, "Tak, tak, sisters-in-law! Bak, bak, sisters-in-law! Have you finished weaving my kilim?"

¹A kilim is a flat carpet which is literally woven, as opposed to Turkish "Oriental" rugs. The latter are not woven but are knotted and tied. Making a tied rug requires much more work than making a woven one, and so "Oriental" rugs are usually (though not always) more expensive than kilims.

²Tak, tak and bak, bak may be just meaningless sound effects. Tak, tak is in Turkish tales commonly used onomatopoeia for a rapping sound, such as a knocking on a door. Bak is the imperative form of bakmak, which means to look.

Story 2048

The frogs answered only, "Vırak! Vırak!"³

The woman picked up her yarn and started home with it. While she was walking, she came upon a stray camel with its saddlebags full of gold. Taking the camel's halter, she led it to her home. When she arrived there, she said to the clever woman, "Here, I have brought back my sister-in-law with the dangling lips."

After they had hidden all of the gold, they slaughtered the camel and made pastırma⁴ with its meat. A great amount of pastırma was made.

Although the women did not know it, that camel had belonged to the padishah of that land. When the camel did not return to the palace stables, a search was made for the animal. Investigators were sent to examine every house in the city where the padishah lived. When one of them reached the home of the two sisters-in-law, those two women asked, "What are you looking for?"

³Vırak, vırak is the way in which frog voices are rendered in Turkish folktales.

⁴Pastırma is the Turkish word for pastrami, a meat dish preserved by salting and drying. It may be flavored with pepper and/or other spices.

Story 2048

"I am looking for pastirma made of camel meat," answered the investigator.

When the crazy woman heard this, she said to her sister-in-law, "You remember that we made a great amount of pastirma from camel meat. Why don't we give this man some of it?" But when the investigator heard that piece of information, he left at once to report it to the padishah

The clever sister-in-law tried to think of some way to save them from punishment. She said to the crazy woman, "You hide under the tub in our garden, because it will soon hail hard. I shall hide from the hail somewhere close to you." The clever woman then sprinkled wheat on the upturned bottom of the tub. Chickens came right away and began to peck the wheat.

The crazy woman thought that the pecking of the chickens must be the sound of hail striking the tub. When she poked her head out to see the hail, a chicken pecked out one of her eyes. "O my Allah, I have lost an eye!"

A few days later the crazy, one-eyed sister-in-law was called to court to be questioned. By coincidence,

Story 2048

the judge of that court was also lacking one eye. He first asked the crazy woman, "When did you find that camel?"

"Well, it was on the day it hailed really hard. That was the day on which you and I both lost our eyes. That was when I found the camel."

The clever sister interrupted at that point. "Your honor," she said, "you heard how foolishly she answered your question. She does not know what she is saying. She is incapable of understanding anything about money or about camels."

The judge agreed with this comment. Without any additional questioning, he dismissed the case and permitted the two sisters-in-law to leave the court. They lived together happily after that and had no further difficulties.