

Story 2066 (Transcribed from his field tape by Ahmet Ali Arslan and used later in his unpublished dissertation.)

Narrator: Nergis Dadaoğlu,
35

Location: İstasyon mahalle
of Kars, capital
of Kars Province

Date: April 15, 1977

The Silence Wager

Once there was and once there wasn't a husband a wife who owned a black cow. After a while that cow became the subject of an argument between the couple. They said to each other, "You go and feed the cow," both of them refused to do that chore.

"Let us agree that the one of us who speaks first will be the one who feeds the cow." The wife agreed to this arrangement. She went later that day to the home of a neighbor, and there she spoke at length, but her husband did not hear her do so.

While the husband was sitting at home alone, a beggar knocked on the door. When the husband opened the door, the beggar said, "May Allah bless you for all good things you do. Give me alms."

The husband said nothing to the beggar because he did not want to be the first to speak. He supposed that his wife was not speaking, and he feared that she might

Story 2066

overhear him if he made any comment to the beggar.

The beggar went closer to the husband and asked loudly, "Is there something wrong with you that you do not answer?" Still receiving no response, the beggar shaved one side of the husband's face. Then he opened the wife's chest and took something from it.

After the beggar had gone, the wife returned. She saw at once that one side of her husband's face had been shaved. "What happened to your face? One side is bearded and the other side shaved!"

Delighted, the husband said, "Now you must feed our black cow, for you were the first to speak!"

"Is your condition in some way related to our problem about feeding the cow?" asked his wife. "What happened?"

"A beggar came to the door and asked for alms. I could not speak to him because of our silence bargain. The man came in and spoke to me more loudly, apparently thinking that I was deaf. When I still said nothing, he first shaved one side of my face and then took from your chest all of your dresses."

Shocked by this information, the woman asked, "Is that true?"

"I swear that it is true

Story 2066

"May Allah curse you!" she said. "I went to our neighbor's house. Do you suppose that I didn't talk while I was there? Why did you have to remain quiet here?"

The wife was helpless at first, but then she decided to pursue the beggar. She caught up with him just as he was joining a couple of other beggars. "Alas, brothers, alas!" she exclaimed. "Wait for me! I am all alone. Take me along with you and I could become a wife to you or to one of your unmarried companions."

The beggars took her along with them. When they reached another village, they went to a large house and asked to be allowed to spend the night there as guests. They were accepted as guests. Before it was time for dinner, the woman asked the beggars, "Do you have among your baggage any female clothes? I feel ashamed to be here wearing these old work clothes." She was, of course, asking for the return of her own clothes. As soon as the beggars gave her these dresses, she put on all of them, one on top of another.

The host prepared beds for all of the guests, placing the female guest in a separate room. In the middle of the night she woke up and entered the men's room, crying, "Oh,

Story 2066

I am so terribly thirsty that I shall die unless someone brings me water at once!"

One of the men awoke and said, "Oh, woman, do not die!"

"I shall indeed die if I cannot get some water quickly!"

The man grabbed a pitcher and rushed outside to try to find water in the darkness. After running about here and there, he bumped into an old cauldron containing some foul-smelling water. Filling the pitcher with that water, the man returned, shouting, "Oh, woman, don't die! Here is some water!" In his hurry he was spilling some of the water. But by then the woman had run away.

All of the shouting and excitement had by then awakened everyone in the house. The hosts ran to the room in which the male guests were staying. There in the faint candlelight they saw spreading toward them some liquid with an unpleasant smell. They thought that the stranger must be urinating upon the floor. They shouted, "Oh, brother, what is this you are doing? What are you carrying in your hand? Are you a jinn or some other kind of

Story 2066

supernatural creature?"¹ As they asked this, they began to beat the offender.

"I am neither a jinn nor any other supernatural creature but a child of Allah. Please do not beat me!"

"Well, then, what is the matter? What has happened?"

"I swear in the name of Allah that the woman guest --I do not know her name--said that she would die unless she was given some water at once. I went outside and found some water in an old cauldron. Bringing it back here, I shouted, 'Oh, woman, don't die! Here is water!' That was why I was making so much noise." After hearing this explanation, they forgave him.

The woman returned home safely with all of her dresses. She ate and drank and lived happily until she passed into the earth. May you too eat and drink and have all of your wishes fulfilled.

¹If a person appears suddenly in an unexpected place, the viewer quite understandably becomes wary of the true nature of the intruder. The formulaic query in Turkish is İnmisin cinmisin?--are you a jinn or other supernatural being? In some early interpretations of the word in, it seems to mean human being, and so the response then is "I am a human being and not a jinn." But in most uses of this expression in Archive holdings, the question seems to be that given in the text above, for otherwise the response "Neither" would make no sense.