Story 2046 (Transcribed from Atatürk İlkokulu tape.)

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Location: Karacabey, kaza town of Bursa Province

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Tekerleme

Once when the goat was a barber and the sheep was getting a haircut, I went for some straw. On that same day I plowed 300 dönüm of land, but while I was doing so, I broke a leg of the mother ox. My own mother said, "Don't worry about the ox. Instead, go and rock your father in his cradle."

I went to do this, but while I was rocking my father he fell from the cradle and injured his head. This angered my mother so much that she picked up an arrow and struck me with it. I jumped away and then began to run away.

Running, running, running, I kept running even during the night, though I sometimes slowed down enough to

1A tekerleme is not a tale itself but a formulaic opening for a tale. It is a nonsense jingle filled with paradoxes, non sequiturs, and other absurdities. Some of the humor of a tekerleme is clearly lost in translation, for its rimed lines cannot be rendered adequately in English. The tekerleme is entertaining, but it also serves to notify an audience that a folktale is about to be told.

2A dönüm is a piece of land measuring 1,000 square meters.
Story

pick up tulips and emeralds that had been scattered along the route I was taking.

I finally reached İstanbul. And what did I see there? I saw men with yellow turbans seated while they ate bread bite by bite. They invited me to join them, and so I sat down too. I shrugged when they gave me tarhana³ to eat. I giggled when they gave me soup. I slapped my knees⁴ when they gave me rice. I lifted to my mouth 300 okkas⁵ of rice in a spoon.

If you ask me about my head, I shall have to give you two different reports. Some say that my head is very small—even tiny. But it is large enough for the meat of three water buffaloes to be salted down in it.

And I have been sitting here without eating anything else since that time.

³ A preparation of dried curds and flour.

⁴ This is usually a gesture of grief, not humor or pleasure.

⁵ A unit in an old system of weight. An okka weighed 400 dirhems, and a dirhem in turn weighed 3.1 grams. So an okka weighed 1,240 grams, approximately 3 pounds.