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Story #148 (Tape # 52, 1961-62)

Narrator: Ali Bahar

Location: Nallıhan, kaza town in
Ankara Province

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The Foul Soil of Istanbul

Up in the Seven Mountains there stands the Köroğlu Castle, as you all know. Köroğlu used to live there with a couple of hundred of his men. Among those who lived at the Castle was Ayvaz, whom Köroğlu had taken from Istanbul. Sometimes when Köroğlu was out hunting, the boy would miss him and say, "What has become of my father? Why is he not yet back?"

One day one of the men said, "Köroğlu is not your father. Your father is the chief butcher of Istanbul."

Some time after this Köroğlu found Ayvaz in low spirits and said to him, "What makes you so downcast?"

"I have been up here in these mountains for a very long time," said Ayvaz, "and during the whole time I have never had a chance to visit my people."

Although Köroğlu was a bandit, he was also a very humane person, and he thought it proper that Ayvaz should be taken to visit his family. But in those days there were no buses or other things such as we have now, and so he would have to walk to Istanbul. Early on the following morning Ayvaz and Köroğlu set out for Istanbul, both of them having changed into regular clothes so that they would

be correctly dressed.

At last they reached Çamlıca, where they were to stay for the night. While there Köroğlu began to change his attitude toward Ayvaz, and though he had brought him up as a son, he now caressed him with homosexual intentions. Ayvaz knew that he could not easily change Köroğlu's mind if he had set it on something--he was such a resolute man--and so he said, "As you have this desire, we might better go to a bath and do this properly." But Köroğlu motioned him away, and Ayvaz then left Çamlıca and went to visit his parents. He returned before morning, and the next day Köroğlu and Ayvaz left Çamlıca and traveled toward home.

Along the way they stopped to rest, but Köroğlu remained silent all the time. He sat with his head lowered and would not look Ayvaz in the face. Ayvaz asked him, "What is the matter? Yesterday you were quite cheerful but today you are sad. Why is this?"

"I brought you up as a son," said Köroğlu, "and I should have forgotten that. I cannot look in your face because of what I felt toward you last night

Then Ayvaz said, "It is not entirely your fault, sir. If it were, you would have had these feelings toward me in the past when you saw that I had grown handsome, but you did not. This is all directly connected with the decaying quality of Istanbul, the soil that influences people so. We left that city, and as soon as we did so, the influence of its foul soil disappeared."