

Story 1841 (1981 Tape 1)

Narrator: Niyazi Özden

Location: Melekli village,
İğdir kaza,
Kars Province

After the time of taping of this tale, İğdir became the capital city of a new province of the same name.

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Bad Omens Generated by Human Beings

Once a traveler stopped at a village near Kars. He was accepted as a guest and given a room in the home of a family there. When the man prepared to go to sleep in that room, he discovered that there was also a baby in its cradle there. He did not mind that, for he was so tired that he was sure that he would sleep well.

In the middle of the night the guest woke up with the need to go to the toilet. He opened the door of the guest room in order to go outside to the toilet. As soon as he stepped outside, however, he was met by a large, vicious-looking dog that snarled at him. The man quickly retreated into the room and went to bed again.

A couple of hours later the man woke up again, and this time he had to go to the toilet very badly. Going outside, he was again threatened by the fierce dog, and so, as before, he hastily returned to

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the guest room. He now desperately needed to go to the toilet, however, and he quickly decided upon a solution to his problem. Carefully lifting the baby from the cradle, he defecated a great amount into the cradle. Then he returned the baby to the cradle and went back to bed for the rest of the night.

When morning arrived, the host went to the guest room to take the guest to breakfast. As soon as the host entered the room, he noticed a very heavy odor there. He looked everywhere to find the source of that odor. When he finally found half a pailful of feces in the baby's cradle, he was astonished. He called the other members of the family, and they too were amazed. They could not understand how such a small baby could make such a very large mess. They said, "It is not a good sign! It is an omen of bad luck! Something very unfortunate is going to happen!"

They called the village muhtar¹ and the village hoca² to their home. They explained all they knew about their situation to the two

¹The village administrator and head man. Until well past the middle of the twentieth century, the muhtar was the only elected official that many villagers ever saw. All other government personnel were appointees of one or another of the federal ministries.

²In modern times the hoca is a preacher and religious leader. Prior to the founding of the Republic (1923), the hoca was also a teacher, for during the Ottoman era education was the responsibility of the clergy.

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village leaders. Those two leaders responded in the same way that the family had. The muhtar said, "This is a very ominous sign."

The hoca said, "It indicates misfortune of some kind for the family. It is not auspicious for a baby to have such unnaturally large bowel movements."

By this time several villagers had gathered at the home of this confused and unhappy family. One of these villagers said, "Why don't you ask the guest for his interpretation of this event?"

When the guest was asked for his opinion of what the incident might foretell, he thought for a minute. Then he said slowly, "If you do not get rid of that hostile dog that lives outside the guest room, you will continue to have signs so ominous that they will suggest the woes of Doomsday!"