

Story 2046 (Transcribed from
Atatürk İlkokulu tape.)

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Location: Karacabey, kaza
town of Bursa
Province

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Tekerleme¹

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 dönüms² 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.

³A preparation of dried curds and flour.

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

⁵A 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.