

Story 1776 (1994 Tape 4)

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Location: İspir, kaza town in
Erzurum Province

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The Defensive Lie

Once a man from Erzurum had some business to attend to in a village in Bitlis. While he was in Bitlis he stayed as a guest in the home of an ağa.¹ The ağa and his wife lived alone in a large house. They had no children

After dinner everyone went to bed. Around midnight the ağa arose and went to feed some sheep he had penned up on the opposite side of the village

The guest had not slept at all up to that time. He kept thinking about the wife of the ağa, who was a very

¹An ağa (English, agha) is a rural landowner, sometimes wealthy, often powerful. The word does not indicate an official title but describes an economic status. They are often the principal employers of farm workers, and they are often viewed by their employees as harsh, driving, and abusive. The term ağa is also used in a complimentary way, as an honorific, for a distinguished or just older person than the one using the term. Thus an older brother is called ağa bey by his younger siblings. Ağa bey may be used as a deferential term to one older or more prestigious than the speaker. A taxi driver may refer to his passenger as ağa bey; a salesman speaking to a male customer may call him ağa bey.

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attractive woman. While the ağa was out of the house, the guest went to the woman, and in the dark he made love to her.

In the morning the woman said, "My husband, was it you who came to my bed last night or was it our guest? If it was you, then what happened was helal.² If it was the guest, then it had the effect of an evil incantation."

Embarrassed by this situation, the ağa shouted, "It was I! Of course it was I!"

²Helal/Haram--Moslem religious concepts. That which is helal is that which is permissible according to canonical law. That which is haram is forbidden. There is no obligation or restriction or penalty for doing or taking whatever is helal, but there will be a penalty on Judgment Day for doing or taking what is forbidden. To accept something from a donor is helal; to take it or steal it is haram. To do anything morally or religiously improper is haram. Dying or endangered people often declare helal anything they have given to or done for another person, so that No. 2 will not go to Judgment indebted to another (which is haram unless declared helal by the benefactor).