

Story #534 (1969 Tape #12)

Narrator: Mehmet Tekçe, a green grocer, hence called Manav

Location: Aliçerçi köyü, Bozkır kaza, Konya Province ; but taping done at adjacent village of Akça Pınar.

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How the City Man Slept with the Wife of the Yürük

*Tricky -
straight*

A Yürük¹ had an old army friend who lived in the city. About six months after they were discharged from military service, the city man visited the camp² of the Yürük. When he reached the camp, he asked, "Where is the tent of Lâtif Ağa?"

"That is it--over there," they said.

His [Lâtif Ağa's] wife came out of the tent, and her scenic organization³ was just right. The city man was impressed with her beauty. "Where is Lâtif Ağa?" he asked.

"Lâtif Ağa has gone to the seaside.⁴ Come inside."

I cannot enter if Lâtif Ağa is not here. Just give him my greetings."

That night when Lâtif Ağa returned, his wife told him that Ibrahim Ağa, his friend from the city, had come to visit him. "As you were not here, he did not come in," she said.

¹ Yürüks were among the later tribes to enter Turkey. Although many have become sedentary, and others have been assimilated into the general population, there are still large groups that remain totally nomadic.

² The word used here is oba.

³ The narrator consistently uses this metaphor to indicate female attractiveness.

⁴ Yürüks pasture their flocks in mountainous grazing lands during the summer. During the winter they move to the warm Mediterranean coast. Lâtif Ağa has apparently gone for the day to their winter encampment along the coast.

Story #534

"Did you ask him to come in?"

"I did, but he refused to come in."

"Fill the goat skin with yoğurt⁵ and let me go and visit him," said Lâtif Ağa. After his wife had filled the goat skin with yoğurt, he shouldered it and went to the city.

When Ibrahim Ağa saw Lâtif Ağa, he was very pleased. He stood up and said, "Oh, we have not seen each other for six months. Where have you been?"

"Şapır, şupır."⁶ They kissed each other and embraced.

The city man was kissing his friend, but he was imagining that he was kissing his [Lâtif Ağa's] wife, for he was a rascal.

When evening came, Lâtif Ağa said, "Ibrahim Ağa, let me now return to my camp, or wolves may get my sheep."

Ibrahim Ağa said, "No, I shall not permit you to go. Even if all of your sheep should be eaten by wolves, I shall not let you go, but I shall pay for them. We have missed one another so much! You must stay at my house as my guest tonight." He filled a bowl with pekmez⁷ and placed it and a loaf of bread before the Yürük. When he had eaten it, his host said, "Lâtif Ağa, let me bring you some more."

⁵ Rural people, especially nomads, tan whole goat hides as containers for white cheese and yoğurt. The black hair is turned outward, and ten to twenty pounds of cheese or yoğurt is packed inside.

⁶ Onomatopoeia for the sound of bussing.

⁷ A thickened grape syrup favored as a confection by rural Turks.

Story #534

"No, no. I have had enough."

After he [the guest] had eaten, he [the host] made up a bed for him in one of the rooms. Later he went to the center of the town, hired a female dancer, and put her in the Yürük's bed. As soon as she got into the bed, she started handling the Yürük here and there and saying, "Oh, my husband!"

"God damn you, get away from me," Lâtif Ağa said. To Ibrahim Ağa he shouted, "Hey, Ibrahim Ağa, come here!"

"What is wrong, Lâtif Ağa?" asked Ibrahim Ağa.

"What does this mean?"

"Lâtif Ağa, it is our custom to have our wives sleep with our guests."

"What a terrible custom!" said Lâtif Ağa, and he managed to keep the woman away from him until morning came.

In the morning Ibrahim Ağa paid the woman her fee, and he asked, "Did anything happen?"

"Nothing of the sort. He hit me and sent me somersaulting to the other end of the room." Saying this, she took her money and left.

Then Ibrahim Ağa brought Lâtif Ağa pekmez and bread for breakfast. After he had eaten it, the Yürük said, "Now let me go home."

"All right. You are now permitted to go."

As he was seeing him [the Yürük] off, Lâtif Ağa said, "Why not come up and visit me some time? Come and let us have a good time together."

"I would like to, but, you know, you do not like that custom of ours."

"I know, I know," said Lâtif Ağa. After walking a few paces, he added,

"Anyway, you come. We may find a solution for that."

Soon after that, Ibrahim Ağa arrived at the Yürük camp. The Yürük had a sheep slaughtered for him and directed his wife, "Fry some of this meat and stew some of it. In that way we shall not be embarrassed in presence of our guest."

As Zeliha was standing by the fire frying some of the meat, Lâtif Ağa was standing by in deep thought. His wife asked him, "O Latif Ağa, are you in trouble? Are you worried about something?"

"Oh, Zeliha, I wish that I could tell you, but I do not know how to do so. It is not one of those things I can speak of flatly."

"What is it?"

"Well, when I visited this fellow, he pushed his wife into my bed at night. It is their custom down there."

"Oh, oh!" she said. Then she asked, "Did anything bad follow?"

"No, not at all. I would not even let her come near me."

"Well, if there were no bad effects, I could do the same and lie by him."

"That would be all right. Let him just sleep by you in order that we not be humiliated."⁸

They ate the fried meat and were well satisfied. Then Lâtif Ağa took his kepenek⁹ and stick, saying, "Ibrahim Ağa, you and my wife may sleep together. I am going to graze my flocks."

⁸ Throughout, this tale turns on the differences between rural and urban manners. Rustics are frequently embarrassed by their ignorance of urban equipment and urban ways, and Lâtif Ağa is trying to avoid such humiliation. Most anecdotes and tales about Yürüks, Kurds, Lazes, and other provincial types utilize rusticity for humorous purposes.

⁹ A very heavy felt coat (almost an inch thick) worn by shepherds. It serves both as coat and tent to protect the shepherd from the cold.

Story #534

"Go, go," said Ibrahim Ağa. "Your sheep may be eaten by wolves."

As soon as Lâtif Ağa had gone, Ibrahim Ağa and Lâtif Ağa's wife went to bed. He made love to her until the morning, squeezing and rubbing her like Manastır¹⁰ flax and biting her body. At dawn the two lay asleep exhausted.

Lâtif Ağa returned after the sheep had been put in the folds. His wife and Ibrahim Ağa were sleeping in the tent, locked together. Lâtif Ağa started beating a large rock with a stick, saying, "Damn this custom of theirs!" He took a walk and then returned. By striking the rock again, he finally awakened them, and they unlocked.

To his wife Lâtif Ağa said, "Thanks to Allah! Nothing bad happened--did it?" As Ibrahim Ağa was getting ready to leave, Lâtif Ağa asked him, "Aren't you going to stay for breakfast?"

"No, no. My shop is locked, and I must go and open it."

After seeing his guest off, Lâtif Ağa returned to his wife and asked again, "Did anything bad take place?"

"You, Lâtif, you had me chewed up by a city pig!" When she bared her breast, it was completely black-and-blue.

"Oosh! I shall go and get even with him." He started for the city at once, saying, "If I do not level out both his wife's front and back sides, I am not a man!"

Ibrahim Ağa saw him coming in the evening. He wetted a handkerchief and placed it around his head.

¹⁰ This is a proverbial expression. Manastır is a Turkish city now in Yugoslavia.

Story #534

"Selâmünaleyküm," said Lâtif Ağa.

"Aleyküselâm," answered Ibrahim Ağa.¹¹

"What is wrong with you?" asked Lâtif Ağa.

"My wife has died. We have just buried her and returned from the cemetery."

Lâtif Ağa started cursing his luck. "What bad luck I have! I had come here to take revenge for my wife."

"Don't worry. I shall take a new wife in a week's time, and then you can come and have your revenge."

Lâtif Ağa had come in vain, and now he returned to his camp. When he arrived there, his wife asked him, "O Lâtif, did you get your revenge?"

"Oh, Zeliha, they had just buried the woman by the time I reached their house."

"Oh, Lâtif, they must have played a trick on you! I am sure that his wife has not died."¹²

¹¹ It is ironic, though not intentionally so, that the greetings, indicating good will, are anything but sincere.

¹² The peasant audience, including women and girls, found this a most amusing story and laughed heartily at it. --There may be a play on words based on the name Lâtif. The word means pleasant, but lâtife means joke.