

Story 1197 (1990 Tape 9)

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Location: Karacabey, kaza town of
Bursa Province

Date: August 15, 1990

Fox Takes Revenge Against Two Wolves

TEK Once there was and once there wasn't,¹ when the sieve was in the straw,² when the camel was a barber and the donkey a town crier, there were two wolves and a fox who were clinging to life together along the shore of a lake. Because the wolves were large and strong and the fox was small, the fox often suffered from this relationship. He was often abused by the wolves and he seldom received an equal share of the food that the three managed to find.

One day when a fisherman was coming down the road with a cart full of fish, the fox lay down in the road and pretended

¹Formulaic opening for many Turkish folktales, this is known as a tekerleme. A full tekerleme may run to several lines though most narrators nowadays use only one or two parts of a tekerleme. The tekerleme is a nonsense jingle filled with paradoxes and other comic incongruities. It is meant both to amuse and to alert the audience to the fact that a tale is to follow. Some of the humor is lost in translation because it is difficult to reproduce in English the rhyme scheme.

²The sieve is never in the straw. While threshing grain, workers pass the detached grain and finely ground straw through a large-mesh sieve. Longer pieces of straw which may still have grains attached to them do not pass through and will need further threshing. So, the straw is in the sieve, not the sieve in the straw.

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to be dead. When the fisherman saw the fox lying in the road, he said, "I shall skin that fox in the next town and sell its fur to someone there." Climbing down from his cart, he picked up the fox and threw it on top of his load of fish. While the fisherman was absentmindedly driving down the road, the fox threw several fish from the load to the ground behind the cart, and then he himself jumped down. Gathering the fish from the ground, the fox took them home and began to eat them

As he was doing this, however, the wolves returned and took the fish away from him. After they had eaten the fish, the wolves said, "Tell us how you managed to catch so many fish, or we shall eat you too."

"Come with me, and I shall show you how to catch even more fish than I did." He then took them out on the ice which had begun to form on the lake. Cutting two small holes in the ice, he said to the wolves, "Put your tails down through these holes into the water below. Fish will soon come along and cling to them.

After the two wolves had been sitting there for some time, their tails began to freeze fast to the ice. The fox said to the wolves, "Pull your tails up just a little so that we can see if there are any fish attached to them yet." As the wolves began to pull their tails upward, the ice began to crackle. "Stop! Stop!" said the fox. "The fish are just now beginning to gather around your tails, and it will take a little longer

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for them to start clinging to your tails." After the wolves had sat there for another hour, their tails were frozen solidly to the rest of the ice. "Pull your tails out now! They must be loaded with fish!" said the fox. But when the wolves tried to pull their tails out of the lake, they were unable to do so "Let me go and find some tool I can use to help you pull your tails out," said the fox. "I shall be back soon

The fox ran to the nearest village, and there he taunted several big ~~sheep~~dogs,³ which immediately began to chase him. As these sheepdogs were pursuing him, the fox ran past the two wolves. When the dogs saw the wolves trapped in the ice, they forgot all about the fox and attacked the wolves, killing both of them.

In this way the fox got rid of his abusive companions. He lived peacefully by himself after that.

³Turkish sheepdogs are unusual. They are shorthaired, large, and powerful. They have no hesitation about attacking wolves or other predators. They are often equipped with spiked collars to prevent wolves from biting their throats. The best of these dogs are bred at Kangal, a large village between Sivas and Malatya, and these are known as Kangal Dogs. White or light-colored Turkish sheepdogs often have black heads and they are named Karabaş (Black Head). Conversely, the black sheepdogs usually have white heads and are so named (Akbaş).