

Story 1774 (1994 Tape 4)

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Location: İspir, kaza town of
Erzurum Province

Date: August 1994

Traditional Signal Ignored

In a high mountain village in Anatolia there once lived a very rich ağa.¹ He was so wealthy that he had forty servants,² forty horses, and forty camels. He also had a very beautiful daughter whom he loved very much, as much as his own two eyes.

One day after she had become old enough to marry, this daughter began smashing pots and pans. Neither her father nor her mother understood what she meant by doing

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.

²The narrator actually says "forty merhabas"--forty hellos. We infer that this refers to human beings of some sort: servants, soldiers, tenant farmers.

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of this tale.

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this. Then she began to break dishes and clay pots. Still they did not understand her message.³

In a final act of desperation, the girl rushed from the house, stood behind the barn, and shouted,

"Henceforth may all your tradition dry up!

Broken the pot, the pan, and the cup!"⁴

³In folktales boys who wish to marry are forthright in informing their parents of this matter. Girls, however, are not supposed to do so directly. They use a variety of gestures and/or symbolic language to hint at their desire.

⁴This is our best effort to approximate the Turkish couplet which ends this brief tale.