

Story 2144 (1999 Tape 5)

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Quarrel Reconciled but Years Later Renewed

There were once two friends who were so close they ate and drank from the same cup. Both hunters, would go hunting together every day, and every evening they would return happily together. One day while they were walking along a small creek, they saw ahead of them a fox jump across the creek. Mehmet Ağa¹ said, "Ahmet Ağa, that fox barely reached the opposite shore of this creek. In fact, its tail touched the water

"No," Ahmet Ağa said. "Its tail did not touch the water

"Yes, it did!" responded Mehmet Ağa.

¹An ağa (English, agha) is a rural landowner, sometimes wealthy, often powerful. The word ağa does not indicate an official title but describes an economic status. Ağas 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 (bey also being an honorific) by his younger siblings. Ağa bey may also 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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They began to quarrel about this matter, and soon their quarrel grew into a fight. Very angry, each struck the other, injuring his mouth and nose. They were so upset with each other that they walked back to their village on opposite sides of the road.

When the other villagers observed this separation between the two hunters, they were very surprised. They asked, "What is going on? What happened?" They explained to the other villagers what had happened, but the two hunters did not speak to each other again for seven years.

After they had been separated for such a long time, an effort was made by mutual friends of the two ağas to bring them together again. One day after the early morning prayer service at the mosque, these mutual friends invited first Ahmet to breakfast and then Mehmet to the same breakfast. Ahmet Ağa arrived first, and then came Mehmet Ağa. When Mehmet saw Ahmet in the dining room, he at first refused to enter that room. But one of their hosts said "Come on in! Come on in!" and the other mutual friends insisted that he do so.

After breakfast had been eaten, it was time for a

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cup of coffee, and it was during the drinking of that beverage that the two hunters were reconciled. Ahmet and Mehmet Ağa hugged each other and agreed that their separation had been foolish. Mehmet Ağa said, "Our quarrel is all over now, but, as you know, the fox's tail did touch the water."

Ahmet Ağa said, "No, no! Don't say that, Mehmet I was there, too, and I know that the fox's tail did not touch the water."

That response caused their quarrel to break out again. They not only struck each other, but in the process of doing so, they also broke many cups and several coffee pots. The fight that was renewed that day has continued to the present time.