

Story 1827 (1989 Tape 7)

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Location: Konya, capital of  
Konya Province

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Scent as a Legal Factor

When Poet Eşref<sup>1</sup> was kaymakam<sup>2</sup> of Kırkağaç,<sup>3</sup> there was among the residents of that town a man known as Ahmet Ağa.<sup>4</sup> This Ahmet Ağa had a neighbor whose toilet had a faulty connection with the sewer pipe. As a result, much of the water from the toilet spilled out upon the ground

<sup>1</sup>The poet Mehmet Eşref (1847-1911) was born in Aydın Province.

<sup>2</sup>A kaymakam is the federally appointed administrator of a Turkish kaza, roughly a county.

<sup>3</sup>A kaza center in Manisa Province. The name Kırkağaç means forty trees. Mehmet Eşref was in fact kaymakam in this town.

<sup>4</sup>An 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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and flowed to Ahmet Ağa's house, giving that house a very foul smell. Ahmet Ağa wrote a letter of complaint to Poet Eşref.

After considering that letter carefully, Poet Eşref wrote a letter to the local court instructing it to take appropriate action about Ahmet Ağa's complaint. Being a poet, he chose to give his instructions in a quatrain.

Numerous are the problems of mankind.

A leaky sewer distresses Ahmet Ağa.

You are to hear this case, but wait till May,

For such a lawsuit turns upon a stench.

Any difficulty with a toilet is likely to be a smelly matter. But when the heat of May arrives, the stench will be so strong that there will be no question about its exact point of origin.