

Before his downfall, Tankiz had been driven to distraction by the incessant croaking of frogs, and had had them removed from the waters of the city. A certain person said this of the affair:

'Ah, Tankiz, in Damascus you've gone sore astray—
A sign, I think, that you have had your day.
They say, "A thousand joyful tidings to the frogs
Upon his death!" I say, "And to the dogs!"'

Tankiz might have benefited from the antidote to noisy frogs mentioned by the 15th-century Cairene scholar al-Magrizi: Mix crocodile fat with clarified butter, place the mixture in lamps and light these in the offending pond or reed-bed. As long as they remain lit, no frog will croak.

Human-animal antipathy worked both ways. An Andalusian contemporary of Tankiz, the poet and writer Ibn al-Murabi', told the story of a goat in Granada that took extreme exception to people. In this excerpt, the narrator has been looking for a ram to

slaughter for the post-Ramadan festival meal, but he is strapped for cash. He eventually finds a monstrous billy-goat, "smaller than a mule but bigger than a donkey," at an unexpectedly cheap price. Alarm bells ring in his mind when the goat's owner advises:

You'll need four porters, 'cause there's no way you can carry it yourself, and you'll have a job getting it to follow you—or rather, the other way 'round.

But to save money, the narrator hires only a single porter. This was, indeed, a mistake:

A loose rendering of "Abu Uways," which is a man's name euphemistically given to wolves.

Itell the porter to bring the goat and keep up with me until we get to the slaughterhouse. And when we do—well, the animal's nowhere to be found. So I say, 'Okay, Wolf-Face, what have you done with my goat?' And he says, 'It got away, and I don't know where it is.' ... So I go 'round the market and the whole neighborhood, calling out to all and sundry that whoever finds a goat should let me know, and that there's a reward in it. Then this man comes out of a show-room, all grumbling and mumbling, and says, 'Who's the owner of that damned goat? Whoever it is—damn him too! If I clap eyes on him, there'll be words, I can tell you.' So I say, 'I'm the owner. What's up? What have I done to hurt you?' And he says, 'When that goat of yours broke free, it took off like a lion and went on a rampage around town. It left nobody unharmed, and when it got into my pottery showroom, it went totally crazy and turned the place into a hell's kitchen. In short, it trashed everything!'

Appropriately, the author wrote his tale when he himself was short of cash and in need of festive mutton. He recited it to a wealthy patron. The story ends with fulsome praise of the addressee, and thus we may assume that the hint worked.

"Hell's kitchen" is interpreter's liberty. The original has, "the work it did was cooked and raw."

The unfortunate narrator foots the bill for the broken crockery and, after more disasters, eventually gets the goat home—to the consternation of his wife, who chides him, saying, "You've brought home a demon!"

A few decades earlier, another Andalusian, Abu 'l-Barakat al-Balafiqi, celebrated in verse a happier example of human-animal (though certainly not human-human) relations. The journey described took him and his companion from Almería to the hot springs at Pechina and back:

i.e., of the city of Vevefique, in Almería province.

"Qatmir" is the name given by tradition to the faithful dog, mentioned in the Qur'an, that guarded the People of the Cave during their 300-year sleep.

I set off with Qatmir, my dog, a fellow traveler
Whose presence warmed my heart along the way.
For every time I paused to rest, he'd pause by me,
Regarding me with looks of love and tenderness.
Fulfilling all the dues of good companionship,
As if he were of all friends the most true.
And this while my own people—of the human race—
All treat me with a meanness that's insatiable ...
Among them there's no single bosom friend,
No one to show fraternal feelings, true and pure.

A round trip of 15 kilometers (9 mi). The spa is still going strong.