

דער קטלן (1945) /

1. Live storytelling: Matl surrounded by group of (elderly, pious) women
lit. a *bohe-mayse*!

opening line picks up on the key word: *katlonis*, i.e., the proper subject will be Zlateh, not Pelte; will keep them in suspense until the end

standard pious formulae: May such evil never befall us vs. titillating her listeners with some lascivious tale of married life; other eggs.

ס'זאל אים צו קיין גנאי נישט זיין; זאל איך אזוי וויסן פון א ביז שטערנטיכל; אייך צו לאנגע יאר; רוען זאל זי אין א ליכטיקן גן-עדן; נישט געשטראפט זאל איך ווערן פאר די רייד

function of **memory**:

I remember it as if it happened today

today vs. yesterday

don't think that it's only today that passions rule over reason; men were no angels then either

anyway, this didn't happen here, but in my native Turbin

her **descriptive powers**:

Pelte was nothing much to look at -- what did women see in him anyway?

his oak chest; built to outlast all disasters vs. the story's ending where all is turned to dust

Wife # 1: dispensed w/ in one sentence

Wife # 2: young widow; though he was in love w/her, immediately set to gratuitous cruelty; pretends she threw him out of the house (will later actually happen)

fatalistic denouement: wife accepts her fate; community quiets down after initial protest among members of her class

Transitional paragraph: underscores his extreme isolation, misanthropic nature; obsessive hoarder; and **learned**, too; i.e. could find scriptural justification if need be

Wife #3: **Finkl**: beauty and good breeding all in one; luxuriates over the rabbi's eulogy. Why? "He ordered black and got white..." = the story's theme; we girls cried our heart out; adolescent tear-jerker

Reactions to her remarriage: (1) Matl's mother: Satanic business; run him out of town in an oxen-driven wagon! (2) Matl so fearful must sleep with her (now deceased) sister (3) plethora of shprakhfolklor: can't figure it out; must have been from God...

Evil omens at the midsummer wedding

Now we're getting to the scary part, but you probably shouldn't hear anymore, etc.

2. How Pelte Got His Name; Enter Zlateh

It's all in the stars; I'm still afraid of him today; but was he even to blame? it was just his fatal attraction; "fate" intervenes even when it came to his inheriting Finkl's wealth

Interlude: will not bow to societal pressure; demands the rent due = his only human contact

Zlateh the Bitch: It isn't right to gossip about the dead, yet who can resist?

[Note that the juiciest sections pertain to her; women enjoy hearing of their own sex even more than of the other]

3. The Battle

marriage of sheker and shlimazl
 the whole artisan class takes bets
 Botshela the Maid and What She Recounted
 not just they waged battle, but their stars as well; demonic actors
 Rabbi Ayzikl Teumim tries to intervene, but fails
 Zlateh seems to be bested
 Matl's mother shed no tears for her demise

4. Surprise Ending

Intimate secrets of her sex life: stopped attending the mikveh
Cunegunde casts a spell and Pelte is vanquished and banished
 Until the divorce ceremony, when she is suddenly felled = climax
 Denouement: everything goes to rack and ruin