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The Köse and the Sultan (peddler)

Tekerleme

Once upon a time when there wasn't such a time, and it was sinful to speak too much, there was a köse in a village who did not get along very well with his neighbors. One day one of the villagers said, "Let us all go and defecate down the chimney of that köse." And that night they actually did this. Köse -- neighbors of -- defecate down his chimney

When the köse got up the next morning, he found his fireplace completely filled with excrement. <sup>-- human</sup> Without appearing at all disturbed, he got two sacks, filled them with the excrement, and loaded them on his mule. Then he left the village with his loaded mule. On the way he saw a traveling peddler with two mule loads of merchandise. "Selâmünaleyküm," said the peddler. "Aley-kümselâm," said the köse. "Where are you going, my fellow countryman?"

The peddler answered, "I am going to such-and-such a place."

"What does your merchandise consist of?" asked the köse.

"Oh, clothes and small items of various kinds. What have you in your packs?"

"I have pearls and corals in mine," answered the köse. Köse -- exchange mule load of human excrement for load of clothes and valuable objects

"How about exchanging your load for one of my mule loads of merchandise?"

"All right," said the köse, "but only on the condition that you will not open my sacks until you reach your destination."

"Very well," said the peddler, and-such a town."

"Come here, wife. Look at this.

harm by defecating down our chimney."

"What are you talking about?" asked his wife.

"Well, I exchanged the two sacks of excrement for a mule load of fancy goods. Will you stretch a rope from our house to our neighbor's so that I can hang all these fancy things on it?"

The villagers saw that he had acquired some very colorful and pretty things, and they admired these on the rope that stretched between his house and that of his neighbor. They asked him, "How did you get such fine things?"

"Did you think that you did me a bad turn by defecating down my chimney?"

asked the köse. "Well, you didn't, for the Sultan of Ankara is having an <sup>Sultan -- of</sup> apartment <sup>house -- as present conception of residence suitable for King or pasha // Ankara -- alleged</sup> built of excrement, and he is paying high prices for building material. <sup>to be</sup> I took my mule load of excrement to him and he paid me a lot of money, and <sup>building piece</sup> made of <sup>luxury excrement</sup> with this money I bought all these pretty things that you see hanging here.

[There was no sultan ever at Ankara, but this is "the city" for residents of Çavundur, and wouldn't it be likely that the center of all life, including a sultan, should be there? Here, as in Story #22, the sultan lives in an apartment.]

As soon as the villagers heard this, a crier was sent <sup>ode -- as village council room</sup> around in all the streets announcing, "One man from each house must report to the oda tonight at sunset." [The word oda means simply room, chamber, or office. In a village, however, it designates an official room, the place where village meetings are held--what would be called the "town hall" in America. The oda may be part of the muhtar's house; it may be built by a well-to-do villager; there may be two or three, or more, in a village. Quite often it is attached to a house, like a shed, rather than being under the same roof as the rest of the house.] When the meeting was held, it was explained to all the villagers that the Sultan of Ankara was having an apartment built of excrement

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and that he was paying high prices for his building material. The muhtar said to them, "Why don't we all use this opportunity to earn some money? We can all sell excrement to the Sultan."

The villagers all thought this a good idea, and so on the following morning they all set to work immediately to bag all the excrement from their outhouses. They loaded this on their donkeys and took it to Ankara. There they discovered, to their delight, that the Sultan was indeed having an apartment built, and so they went to his home. After the customary greetings, they asked, "Where is the sultan?"

"He is in his room," the servants told them

News was brought to the sultan that there were some peasants who were looking for him. He received them and asked them, "What is the matter, my sons?"

"Well, your majesty, we have heard that you were having an apartment built of excrement," said the muhtar. "We have brought many loads of excrement for you."

"Who told you to do this?" asked the sultan.

"A köse in our village did," they all said.

Explaining in a kind way to the villagers that he really did not need any excrement, the sultan called two gendarmes. [Except for the korucu, there is no police force in a Turkish village. Law and order are maintained by army troops whose services have been assigned to the Ministry of Interior. These troops are national conscripts--in Turkey every man must serve two years in the armed forces, even in peace time--who complete part of their required service as gendarmes. They first take basic training, as do all soldiers; they are then screened from the rest of the troops and sent to the Ministry

of Interior where they are given a short course in rural law. The last part of their two-year term is then spent in this police service. They wear regular army uniforms with special insignia. In Ankara, the city police would have been called, but the peasant telling this story speaks in terms of the village situation.] He told the gendarmes to go to the village and bring this köse to him

The köse was brought, and after the customary greetings, the sultan said to him, "How did you trick the villagers into bringing all that excrement to me?" After the köse had explained all that had happened, the sultan said, "You tricked the villagers, but do you think that you could trick me, too? Let us see if you can."

The köse said, "Well, your majesty, I can do that all right, but unfortunately I left my tricking stick back in the village." *--fictitious implement of trickery*

"Well, let us have that stick sent for, then," said the sultan.

"It will not allow itself to be brought here unless I go for it in person," said the köse. "But if you will lend me a cart and two oxen I can go home and carry this heavy stick here to your apartment."

The Sultan loaned him the two oxen and the cart, and he asked, "How long will it take you to get the tricking stick and return?"

"I shall be back by the end of a week," said the köse, and he started for his village. When he got there, he called to his wife, "Bring me a knife at once." He took the knife, cut the oxen's throats, and skinned them. With the hides he made many pairs of gariks [a type of sandal worn by peasants for want of sturdier shoes] and he sold these sandals. When he was asked by the villagers what had become of the sultan's two oxen, he told them that he had killed them for their hides. "In the village of Çubuk there is a great shortage of sandals, and the people there are paying many times the usual price for sandals."

*Köse -- tricks neighbors into slaughtering their oxen to make sandals from hides*

*Trickster (Köse) -- same as above*

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Hearing this, the villagers called a meeting that night in the oda, the muhtar addressed them again. "This is an opportunity for us all to become rich," he said, "for we all have oxen that will provide hide enough for many pairs of sandals." And so the villagers went to their stables next morning early and killed all their oxen. From the hides they made many pairs of sandals, and they packed these on their donkeys and took them to Çubuk. they got there, however, they found that no one was interested in buying their sandals

It was now time for the köse to return to the sultan, but instead of going to Ankara he stayed in his village. Finally, the sultan sent men to fetch the köse, but when they arrived at the köse's house, they could not find him there. The köse had put on woman's clothes, and when the men came to the door, he answered their calls, appearing in the form of a beautiful young woman. He told them that he was the köse's daughter. [The köse, being beardless, might get away with this sort of ruse more easily than anyone else.]

When news of this was brought to the sultan, he ordered that the young lady be brought to him instead. When she arrived in his presence, he asked her, "Where is your father, young lady?"

"My father killed the oxen that you loaned him," she said, "and he has gone to another town to sell the sandals which he made from the ox hides."

The sultan was greatly taken with the köse's daughter, and he ordered a wedding ceremony to be held at once, and he married the köse's daughter. But, you know, she wasn't a girl at all, and the sultan had married the köse himself. He did not say anything about the trick he had played on the sultan, but after the feasting and the music was finished, it was the wedding night. And it was then that the sultan discovered that he had married the köse.

*Köse -- in disguise of woman -- tricks sultan into marrying him*  
Trickster (Köse) -- same as above

"Well, köse, now I understand what you mean by your tricking stick,  
said the sultan. "You tricked me just as completely as you did the villagers."