

Story #154 (Tape 1969-1)

Narrator: Durmuş, Barutçu, circa 40,
farmer
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Ankara vilayet
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The Padişah and the Riddling Answer

Once on a time, there was a padişah who had been widowed at the age of 60. In those days there were veziers of the right and veziers of the left [right and left beys, as in Dede Korkut], and they used to meet with the padişah. One day they said, "Your majesty, you cannot go on forever a single man. Let us have you married."

To this the padişah replied, "No one will marry me at this age. What can I do?"

They said, "You're a mighty padişah. There will be someone to marry you. Don't worry. We'll find you a wife."

"All right. Then go and ask for the daughter of a poor man."

"But you are a mighty padişah. Would the daughter of a poor man deserve marrying you?"

"That is all right. I'd be happy to wed the daughter of a poor man."

They went and asked for the hand of the daughter of a poor man. Having been visited by the right vezier and the left vezier, the poor man was greatly honored and showed them great respect and said, "If that is the wish of the padişah, I'm very willing to give him my daughter in marriage."

While they were fixing the amount of başlık [price for the bride. Dowry: çeyiz, goods the wife brings to her new home], the girl asked, "Did you agree to give me away?"

"Yes."

"But I wish to fix my own başlık."

He agreed to this

"These will be my terms: 10 kids, 20 lambs, 30 foxes, 40 wolves, 50 mules, and 60 mares from the padişah. Let him bring these and then take me as his wife."

The veziers said, "That is no difficulty," and they left.

After they had left, the girl's parents reprimanded her, saying, "My dear, what will you do with foxes and mules and mares? What do we need them for? We have fed you and reared you. Wouldn't it have been better if we had received some money instead of these animals?"

"Wait and see, Father," she said. "You will find out at the end."

The padişah waited for the right and the left veziers. When they arrived, he asked, "Well, what did you do?"

"The problem has been solved, your majesty."

"How did you solve it?"

"Ten kids, 20 lambs, 30 foxes, 40 wolves, 50 mules, 60 mares."

"What does this mean?" the padişah asked, laughing.

"Well, we have many hunters in our village [at this moment in the story the narrator looked around at the 70 or 80 people and he used the names of his friends he saw there]. There are Ömer, Ismail, Bilal, Abdurrahman [someone from the audience prompts this name and he adds it--hunters in the village?]. Let's ask these hunters to go to the woods and catch those foxes and wolves. As for mules, there are many in the army. As for kids and lambs, there are plenty in the village."

The padişah commented on the proposal of the girl in this way: "Didn't I tell you that no one would marry me easily? The 10 kids represent a young man who jumps up and down [as goats on female goats]. He keeps jumping up and down and knows not when to stop. The 20 lambs represent a twenty-one-

year-old young man who makes love to his wife day and night without tiring, just as a ram makes love to female lambs, day and night. What she meant by 30 foxes was a thirty-year-old man who turns his back to his wife in bed for three or five years because his veins are loose. The 40 wolves stand for a forty-year-old man who gets out of control [very virile period, the folk think] and goes after his wife like hungry wolves after sheep. Fifty mules stand for a fifty-year-old man who is impotent, just like a mule, with large testicles, who neighs and jumps but can do nothing. The 60 mares mean a man like me, good for nothing [i.e., no virility]. That's why I say no one would marry me."