

Story #201 (Tape #1, Summer 1966)

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Location: Ankara, but informant was a native of Istanbul

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The Grasshopper [variant of #184]

Once there was and once there wasn't, when yesterday was today and the sieve was in the hay, there was an old woodcutter. This woodcutter would go to the forest early in the morning, cut the wood, go to the market and sell it, and come back. With the few pieces of money which he earned he would get from the market the necessary things for his home. But this woodcutter had a wife who above all else just wanted to be rich. It was her sole aim.

One day this woodcutter's wife went to the <sup>Bath</sup> hamam, and what did she see when she looked but a very rich lady came out of the hamam. Behind her came servants carrying the bohças\*, and a beautiful carriage <sup>sedan</sup> was waiting for this rich lady beautifully dressed, with all the servants waiting around. She had dressed herself with all kinds of jewels, takmış, takış, tirmiş [onomatopoeia]. Immediately the woodcutter's wife was very curious, and she asked, "Who is this?"

They told her, "She is the wife of the chief astrologer."

"Ah!" she said. "Then I want to become the wife of the chief astrologer." She immediately came home and she insisted to her husband, "You must become an astrologer."

Her husband said, "Well, my wife, how can I be an astrologer? How can it happen? How can I be an astrologer?"

\*Square pieces of cloth in which clean and soiled clothes are carried to and from the bath. The four corners are brought together to the center to make a parcel. The corners are not tied. The bohça is held from the bottom.

"I will not have another word from you. I will not listen to you," she said. "Today I saw the astrologer's wife. She was coming with servants and maids from the hamam, all donned with jewels. I will be like that, too." She was after him, insisting, "You just must become an astrologer."

Her husband pleaded and pleaded with her, but the woman would not listen. "I will not take you into the house."

At that time, the sultan-hanım's very precious ring had got lost. But they just couldn't find it at all, so they called a town crier, and the town crier was walking road by road calling, "Whoever finds the sultan-hanım's ring, the sultan will reward him

Hearing this, the woodcutter's wife ran and came home and said to her husband, "All right, now is the chance of our chances. Find this ring so the padişah can reward you."

"Please, wife, but--my wife--do not do this to me. How can you be so heartless?"

She said, "No, you can go, saying, 'I am an astrologer.'"

"Oh, do not do this to me!" The poor woodcutter got up and went and told the guards at the saray, and taking him, they took him to the padişah, to the presence of the padişah. The poor man said, "Well, we heard that your sultan-hanım's ring got lost. I will find that sultan-hanım's ring, but you must give me forty days' time in which to do it

This pleased the padişah very much. They immediately put him in a room and told him, "You will not get out of this room for forty days, and if you can find the ring at the end of the fortieth day we will reward you. But if you cannot find the ring, your head will be cut off

Well, everything beautiful--good, good food--was coming to him. But did he have the eye for any food? In his anxiety, did he have an open appetite?

No, but could he eat these foods with a comfortable heart? Every day he was counting the days. He was counting the days, but how to find the days [how to keep track of the days]? Every day he would take one plate off the tray. He would say, "Thirty-nine more days." The next day, he would say, "I have 38 more days." And the next day he would say, "Ah, I have 37 more days left." He passed the days saying all these things.

But how to find? He thought and thought, and for 40 days he couldn't figure out how to find it. But at the same time, a great fright came into the heart of the man who was bringing his food. Ey vah! Woe is me!" he said. "He will find out how to get the ring. (As if the fellow knew the secret!) So what I will do," he said, "is to have an agreement with this astrologer." He came to the man two days before the 40 days were up and he said, "Please, please do not turn me in. I stole the ring of the sultan-hanım."

The astrologer took a deep breath, a comfortable breath, when he heard "Do not worry," he said. "I will take care of that business," the astrologer said. "Now you catch for me a spotless, spotless rooster with no color other than black. And to this black rooster feed the ring within some dough. You do this much and leave the rest to me."

The man was very happy and relieved about this, the man who brought the and at the end of the 39th day he went and caught the black rooster and made him swallow the piece of dough with the ring hidden in it. The 40th day the padişah called the astrologer very early in the morning. "Did you find the ring?" the padişah said.

And he answered, "Let all the residents and the animals of the palace pass in front of me one by one.

So the padişah said, "All right."

So he had all the people and the animals parade past the astrologer and the

padişah one by one. While all these people and animals were passing in front of him one by one, the astrologer said, "There--catch that black rooster, cut him up, and in his crop will be found the sultan-hanım's ring. He swallowed it."

They immediately caught the black rooster, cut him up, and really as he said the sultan-hanım's ring came out. The padişah immediately said, "I you a [court] astrologer."

He immediately presented him with a beautiful kiosk, gave him maids servants, gave him money, jewels, and diamonds. And both the woodcutter his wife were happy, and they moved into that house. They were living there very happily in that house, time come, time go. But the woodcutter's wife was not satisfied. This time, what did she say to her husband? "You will be head astrologer." Because the head astrologer had a more beautiful house within the palace courtyard itself. The head astrologer's wife had more diamonds and jewels. "You just must- you must--become the head astrologer," she insisted

"Come, now. Do not do this to me, wife," he said. "Look. We are living comfortably now. What more could you want? Let me be."

Well, she still insisted, "I will be the wife of the head astrologer. She said, "You just must become one. And I will not let you into the house until you do."

So what can the woodcutter do? He cannot get rid of his wife, and he cannot get rid of the padişah, who is at his back, and he is fearing all the while that the padişah might call him again for something. So he said, "Well I might as well act like a crazy man," and he ran to the palace. "Oh, my sultan get out of your bath. Hurry, my sultan. The hamam is going to cave in. Get out. Hurry!" And he was yelling and screaming as if it was doomsday.

The sultan barely had time to wrap himself in a towel and threw himself out of the hamam. At that moment, the dome of the hamam caved in. The padişah

seeing this, said, "You saved my life. From this moment on, I shall make you head astrologer." He gave him a more beautiful kiosk, and servants and maids, and all the rest, and of course the head astrologer's wife was very happy.

And he became more scared and more fearful, because after he became head of the astrologers he was beside the padişah all the time, always being invited to come and eat with him or have fun with him. Each time he was called, the astrologer's heart leaped into his throat. One day with the padişah they were walking through the courtyard when the padişah caught something in his hand and he said, "Now, you tell me what I have in the palm of my hand."

And the man described his own situation. He said, "You jump once, grasshopper. You jump twice, grasshopper. And the third time around, you are caught," meaning "You knew the first time around; you knew the second time. But the third time around, I am afraid I will not know it."

And what do they see when the padişah opens his hand? But a grasshopper leaps out. Really, as it happened, the padişah had caught a grasshopper

And upon this, he said, "Wish whatever you will from me."

And he said, "My dear padişah, please relieve me from being either an astrologer or the head astrologer."

And the padişah granted his wish and said, "Yes, I shall relieve you of the position of astrologer and head astrologer. But since you knew this also I will give you this much money and these many jewels

And from then on, among all those jewels and money and everything else, the woodcutter and his wife led a very comfortable, worryless life.