

Story #205 (Tape #5, Summer 1970)

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 Kızılcabamam kaza
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Troubles in Youth Rather Than in Old Age [variant of #93]

Once on a time there was a ruler who had a dream one night in which a bird came to his window and said, "O, your majesty. You are going to suffer a disaster. Would you like it in youth or age?"

The ruler kept quiet. The next night he had the same dream. The same bird came, and asked the same question. "O, your majesty. You are going to suffer a disaster. Would you like it in youth or age?"

The ruler again kept quiet. In the morning he told his wife that he had had a dream. She said, "May your dream be an auspicious one."

"For two nights in succession, in my dream, a bird came, stopped at the window, and said to me, 'O, your majesty. You are going to suffer a disaster. Would you like it in youth or age?'" he said.

The ruler's wife was more intelligent than he. She said, "Your majesty, let what will befall one happen in his youth. We can escape if we flee in youth, and we can catch whatever we pursue, and we can bear all things well in youth. If this disaster comes to us in old age, we can neither flee and escape nor catch the one we pursue, nor can we bear the disaster that may then befall us. May God send whatever disaster he will in our youth. May he make us happy in old age

The next day the same bird came again in the padişah's dream. "O, your majesty, this is my last word. A disaster will befall you. Do you wish it in youth or old age?"

"Let whatever God will send come during our youth," he answered.

A few days later, one of the countries declared that she was at war with Turkey and the war started. Then another state declared she was also at war with the Ottoman state. He sent troops this way and that way, but couldn't cope with the situation. Finally the people decided to dethrone this padişah, claiming that he was not competent and that he could not lead armies well. He was dethroned. The padişah left his capital and went to a town where he lived a few years and later, as the saying goes, "Saved money won't last long" [if you have no job, even if you are wealthy, it won't last long "even if you have a han," the narrator says], the padişah had spent all his money and finally moved to a village where he was so reduced in poverty that he was forced to be a cowherd.

Although he was so reduced, he had so far never said, "O God, save me from the worst!" and he kept asking, "O God! What other disaster will you send to me?" But he never said, "O God, protect me from other disasters." One day when he was herding cows, he had watered his cows at a fountain, just like the one where we sat today,* and the animals lay down there to rest. Some caravan drivers stopped at the fountain to water their animals. The chief caravan driver came and said, "Cowherd, our clothes have been soiled. Take these to the village and get someone to wash them while our camels rest. We shall pay them and you a few kuruş for the job. Please clean these clothes

He took the clothes, went to his wife, and said, "Wash these clothes. We shall get a few kuruş for it," and then he returned to his cows.

*Most of the taping of the tales of Ahmet Kalaycı (Süslü) was done by a watering trough, along a stream, some 10 kilometers south of Güvem.

His wife washed the clothes and took them to the caravan drivers, but her husband, the cowherd, had moved his herd further along by then. She found him and said, "Here are the clothes." The cowherd then took them to the caravan drivers.

The chief caravan driver took a look at the clothes and saw they were well washed and neatly packed. The pulled seams were restitched and all nicely pressed. He was extremely satisfied with this work, and said, "Who washed these clothes?"

"My wife," he answered.

"All right. Take this money and go away," he said, giving him a few kuruş.

Then the caravan driver said to his men, "Load the mules and move on and reach such and such a place." He mounted his horse and after sunset came to the middle of the village. He asked, "Where is the home of the cowherd?"

They said, "He lives in the home at the other end of the village."

He spurred his horse and went there. "Cowherd, cowherd--Come here."

"What is the matter?"

"Take this Ottoman lira. Go back to the place where we camped, and bring my cloak which I forgot and left there."

When the poor cowherd saw the money, he was very excited. He would have done anything for money. If you asked him, "Become an infidel," he would have become an infidel for money, God forbid! He started going to the place he was told to go.

As soon as he left, the caravan driver went to his wife. "Get up!" he said. He grabbed her, and the two children hid in a corner for fear. He carried the woman, put her on the back of his horse, and off he rode.

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When the poor cowherd reached the place he was to go, he searched for a cloak but could find nothing of the sort there. He returned home to find everything was upset and disordered there. He asked the children, "Why are you crying? Where is your mother?"

"Our mother has been carried away by the man who sent you to that place. He came in, caught our mother, after you left, and carried her away crying."

The cowherd then said, "O God! What disaster will you send me next?" But he never said, "O God! Save me from the worst!" [i.e., people should always fear the worst. Süslü critical of the cowherd's arrogance]. He arose early in the morning and said to the village people, "Neighbors, I return my cowherd's crook to you. Let everyone have his animals cared for." He took the children, put one on his back and took the other by the hand, and set out.

On the way, he came to a fast-flowing stream. He said to one child, "Son, you sit here, and after I take your brother across, I shall return for you. When he was wading through the stream with the child on his back, the other child, left on the bank, started running after him, because he had been badly frightened by the loss of his mother -and so he ran after his father. When he went into the stream, the child was swept away. When the father left the one child on the opposite bank, he returned to catch the second child, being swept away by the current, but couldn't catch it, and it was carried away. When he abandoned hope and returned to the bank, he saw that the first child was being carried away in the mouth of a wolf. He ran to help this child, but could not do anything; he ran to the other, and could not do anything. Having been left alone now, he said, "O God! Save me from the worst."

The child carried away by the wolf was seen by some peasants who said, "Yu ha" to the wolf [to frighten the wolf and signal for the dogs to come and

chase the wolf]. Then the wolf dropped the child, unhurt, and ran away. A man said, "Let me have the child, for I have none of my own." They gave him the child, and he took it to his village

The other child was carried to the savak of a mill [a long pipe, wide at the mouth, gradually narrowing, to give the water greater force] and was held there by the grill. The mill stopped all of a sudden, because the water stopped. When the miller ran and had a look, the child was placed on the grill by the water. It was not dead yet. The miller took the child to the mill, where he recovered. A person who had come to have wheat ground had no child of his own. He said to the miller, "Take what you want from me, but give me this child."

Saying, "All right," the miller gave the child to him.

The two children were thus taken by different men and they had no knowledge of each other's plight. Some time passed, and both children were sent to school and grew. Let us leave them growing and come to the padişah.

This poor man who was once a padişah had gone to Ankara and worked as a water and wood carrier for a big coffee-house there. The padişah of the time had either died or been dethroned. In those days they used to fly the Bird of State [Devlet Kuşu], and on whosoever's head it alighted, that man would then be elected padişah of the land. (As you know, we still use the saying, "The devlet kuşu has landed on his head" [often the proverb uses talih kuşu].) He was carrying water to the place where the bird of state was to be released. But when he took his water to the little room where tea was made in the coffee-house, there was an announcement, "Let the doors be closed. All who are supposed to be here are here." The bird of state was released and turned and turned and turned and came to the kitchen and alighted on the head of that man.

People wondered if it was their tea maker. "Is it our tea maker the bird landed on? Will he be our padişah?" They took the bird from his head and saw that he was an old man, this man, and contended that the bird was confused. "He alighted on the head of a water carrier!"

They released the bird again. It went round and round and round and came and entered the kitchen and landed again on the head of the same man who was still there. Again people objected to this and asked that the man be thrown out. They started to throw him out, but the owner, who liked him very much, gave him a few kuruş and said, "Uncle, go to that coffee-house across the street and sit there. He went and sat on the porch of the coffee-house across the street.

The entire population of the country was excited about who would be the new padişah. When they released the bird a third time, it went round and round and round, hit the window, broke it, went round and round and round and then left to go and alight on the head of the same man.

The people, excited, shouted, "The bird has escaped!" They went out and found him on the head of the same man. Some shouted, "The bird is confused!" Some shouted, "Justice has been done! The title belongs to him. This is the third time." (Of course, no one knew that that man had once been a padişah, and he told no one of it. They took him to the palace and said, "This is your throne, and may God help you!"

He sat on his throne. Let us leave him there and return to the children to see what they are doing. He pursued his royal duties and the state affairs progressed. Let us leave him to his royal duties.

The children were going to school, one here, and the other over there. One had a fight with another boy at school. He was called a bastard by the other child.

"Am I a bastard?" he asked.

"Of course you are. Who are your parents?"

The child returned home excited. In fact, he knew himself, but he thought it was not known publicly. He knew who originally were his parents, but who could have told of this? He went and told his adopted parents, "I cannot remain here any longer. Absolve me of your parental rights over me. A boy said such and such to me in a fight today. Everyone knows I have no parents. I cannot live in this land where everyone thinks me a bastard. Absolve me of your rights, and, God willing, I shall repay you for what you have done for me." Saying this, he set out, thinking to go and work in Istanbul.

The other child also happened to go to a village where he could not stay. Eventually he also went to stay in Istanbul. On the way to Istanbul they came to a place like our Kızılcabazam. They looked at each other and became friends without knowing they were brothers.

One asked, "Where are you going?"

"To Istanbul to work."

"I am going there, too. Let us go together."

They became friends and traveled to Istanbul together. They were one day visiting the (slave market in Istanbul, looking for work. While there, the padişah of the country was also visiting the same place with his aide. He said to the aide, "Those boys look like decent boys. Bargain with them and hire them to work in our house [at our door, he said]. They can chop wood, tend the turkeys or wander about in the gardens, or they can be generally useful."

The aide went, bargained with these children, and hired them at wages of

a few kuruş. They helped in the court of the padişah in whatever way they could. Of course, they were gradually growing. One day that caravan driver a wealthy man, had a mansion built somewhere near the padişah's palace. He was one day playing checkers [dama] with the padişah and beat the padişah twice in succession. The padişah's head was upset [he got angry] and he said to himself, "How could a fellow beat me so much at this game?" In the evening the caravan driver asked for permission to go.

"No," said the padişah. "I cannot let you go."

"Why? Your majesty, I have a wife at home, someone I love so much--a very honest woman--and it may sound unbelievable to you, but she has not yet surrendered herself to me. How can I leave her alone at home and stay with you until the morning, playing checkers with you?"

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The padişah said, "I have two boys whom I trust more than myself. We shall send them to guard your house."

"Since you insist, you may send them."

The padişah called the two boys. "Come, sons, go to such and such an apartment and guard the door and never fall asleep there."

They said, "All right," and arose and went.

The padişah and the caravan driver went on playing checkers. The padişah did not know that he [the caravan driver] had taken his wife, nor did he [the caravan driver] know that he [the cowherd] was a padişah nor that he [the caravan driver] had taken his [the padişah's] wife, nor did the caravan driver know he was like that. No one knew who the other was.

When the boys were guarding the door of the house they felt sleepy, and the woman was unable to sleep alone in her house. She was listening to the talk of the boys at the door.

One said, "Friend, we are sleepy. Let us talk about something to drive away our drowsiness. We do not want to be executed by the padişah." (One was a little older than the other. Of course, one brother is bound to be a little older.)

The elder said, "You tell me something that befell you, and I shall listen to avoid sleeping."

"All right. We are servants of the padişah today, but do not be misled by this. My father was also a padişah once."

"What then?"

"Well, what then. My father was relieved of his position. He was reduced to poverty, but he said, "Does saved money last long?" He spent all his money. He was reduced to such poverty that he could do nothing. Finally he became a cowherd in a village. While he did that work there, my mother was carried away by a caravan driver. My brother and I were left with my father at home. One day my father said goodbye to the villagers and took us and started somewhere--we did not know where. When we reached a stream, he left my brother on the bank and started carrying me to the opposite bank. He said to him, "Son, let me take him over first and come back for you later." When he was halfway over the stream, my brother, whose heart was wounded on account of the loss of our mother, said, "Daddy, where are you going, leaving me alone like this?" and he started crying. He ran after us, but he was swept away by the waters of the stream. He [my father] dropped me on the other side and ran after my brother. While he was trying to catch my brother, I was standing on the other side in my white pants. A wolf came, and thinking I was a white kid, grabbed me and bore me away. There were some farmers who shouted at the wolf, and then the wolf dropped me from its mouth, and one of

the farmers there adopted me. I do not know what happened to my brother. At school I had a fight with a boy who called me a bastard. Who would have believed me if I had said I was the son of a padişah? If I said I had parents, then where were they? This is how I happen to be here."

When the other heard this he said, "O, you are my brother!" and they embraced there before the door of that house

The woman, who had been listening all this while, opened the door all of a sudden, saying, "O my dear sons! I am your mother." They all embraced. Their mother took them in, laid one on one side of her bed and the other on the other side, she lying between them. Until the morning she kept kissing them. They could only go to sleep toward sunrise.

When the caravan driver came home, he saw the door of the house wide

He entered and saw one boy lying on one side of his wife and the other on the other. He thought of killing both right away, but as they were in the service of the padişah, he might execute him for such a crime. Quite afraid he went at once to the padişah. He said, "Your majesty, this woman has not surrendered to me for so long, saying, 'It is against our religion,' and say-

'Our husband is not yet dead,' and she still wed to him, for if her husband were dead, she insisted, God would have let her know--a woman whom I have not yet been intimate with--that such a woman should have two boys, one on one side, and one on the other--what would you say to that?"

The padişah called his hangman. "You will execute all three of them," he said.

The hangman went and took them. While the three were being taken, the boys shouted, "We shall go past the padişah's palace--not this way." The hangman told the padişah, "Your majesty, we could not take these boys to the

place of execution. They insisted they first would walk past the padişah's palace and then go to the place of execution. What is your order?"

"Since they wish it, let them walk by the palace," he said.

When passing the padişah's palace, the boys shouted from below, "O, Padişah!"

[Tape 5--Side 2--story continued]

The padişah said, "So far I have taken no one's evidence. I like these boys much, and so I order that their evidence be taken."

The boys were called and they told what had happened. As soon as they had revealed the truth, the padişah said, "You are my children!" The two children and his wife all embraced him and one another. They said to the caravan driver, "Which type of death do you wish?"* Then they tied him to the tails of the mules and the mules were whipped and allowed to run through the market. ~~They a~~

They ate and drank and had their wish fulfilled. May God save everyone from the worst. May God give one only what is auspicious. One should not say, "What have I become?" but "What shall I become?" [i.e., the future is important].

[Süslü gave Adnan Menderes as an example--what he was and what happened to him.

*There is obviously a great amount of telescoping throughout this "recognition scene." In the complete version, a regular formula is inserted here. The villain is asked whether he will have forty swords or forty horses. He always chooses the horses, the swords too obviously dangerous. He is executed, then, by being dragged apart by the forty horses. This formula is here clearly part of the tale, for the question is asked, "Which type of death do you wish?" Then he is executed by being tied to the tails of forty mules. Mules are commonly substituted for horses.