

Story #400 (Tape #3, 1969)

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*My eye depicts  
the part*

*Fish wife*

Deli Mehmet, His Mermaid Wife, and the Envious Padishah

Once on a time there was a padishah opposite whose house was the house of a poor man called Mehmet the Mad. His wife was a mermaid, extremely beautiful. The padishah fell in love with this woman, but he kept wondering how he should take this woman from her husband. One day the padishah had Deli Mehmet called to his palace. He asked him, "Would you let your wife come to the palace and work as a servant?"

He answered, "Of course," for Deli Mehmet was a poor man. He sent his wife to the palace.

When she washed the padishah's laundry, she tied it in such a neat bundle that the padishah was all the more impressed with her. He tried to open the bundle, but he couldn't do it. As a result, his love for her became even greater. All the while, he was trying to find a way of snatching her away from her husband. One day he called Deli Mehmet in his presence.

"Yes, my padishah," said Deli Mehmet.

"Do you know what I want from you?" asked the padishah.

"You may wish whatever you wish, my padishah."

"Well, I want enough food to feed my army."

*Jark*  
~~108~~  
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"I have a hard time feeding myself," said Deli Mehmet. "How could I feed an army?"

"Well, I don't know how you'll do it." The padishah was determined to have Deli Mehmet's wife.

Mehmet returned home in deep thought. His wife said, "What's the matter with you, Mehmet?"

Deli Mehmet answered, "Well, the padishah had me called to the palace and he asked me, 'Do you know what I want from you?' He added, 'I want enough food from you to feed my army.' And you know what our condition is."

*Fairy*

His wife said, "Don't worry about it at all. You see, I am a mermaid. You will go to the beach and shout three times, 'Gül Peri, Gül Peri,' and my sisters will come up. You will ask them, 'Will you give me the box that your sister used to play with when she was young?' They'll bring you the box, but don't open it. Bring it here. Hand it to the padishah, and he will open it himself."

His wife's sisters gave him the box, which he took, but on the way he said to himself, "How can food enough to feed an army be contained in such a small box? Let me see what is in it."

He opened it, and, lo!, the whole world was being covered with food. He somehow managed to shut the box and took it to the padishah. "Here you are, Your Majesty."

The padishah was amazed "Good God, how did he solve this mystery?" But he suspected that it was actually Deli Mehmet's wife

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who had solved it. But as he had carried out his command, the padishah had to let him go.

But again, the padishah asked Deli Mehmet to come to the palace.

"Yes, Your Majesty?" said Deli Mehmet.

"Do you know what I want from you? I want a carpet large enough <sup>Just</sup> to cover the whole world."

"But, Your Majesty, I haven't even a small rug in my house, and here you want a carpet to cover the whole world."

"Well, anyway, you must find it."

Relying on his wife, Deli Mehmet returned home. His wife asked him, "Well, Mehmet, what does the padishah want this time?"

"He called me to his presence and demanded a carpet that would cover the whole world. You know, we haven't even a quilt to sit on."

"Well, you go to the beach and shout three times, 'Gül Peri and Gül Pembe'<sup>1</sup> and ask them to bring you the box that their sister used to play with when she was young. But don't open it, or you will not be able to close it again."

Apparently the fellow was a bit lacking in intelligence. He took the box and on the way opened it, for he was curious about how a carpet to cover the whole world could be packed in a small box. When he

<sup>1</sup>Gül Peri means Rose Fairy. At this point the narrator, thinking of a rose, thought of its color, pembe meaning pink. Since Peri and pembe sound somewhat alike, this may have been just a slip of the tongue. Pembe is repeated later, however, and so apparently the switch was intentional.

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opened it, lo!, the whole world was covered with a green carpet.

"Good God!" he said, but he managed to close the lid somehow or another.

He went and gave it to the padishah, who was again surprised.

"Good God," said the padishah to himself. "It looks as if I shall not be able to wrest his wife from him."

Mehmet returned home. A few days later, he was called again to the palace. "Deli Mehmet," said the padishah, "do you know what I want from you?"

"You may ask anything you wish, my padishah. You have the power."

It was winter, and the padishah said, "I want enough grapes to <sup>25k</sup> feed all my armies."

"Good God! I can't even find dried grapes, and he wants fresh ones," Mehmet said to himself.

He returned home, and his wife asked him what the matter was. Again she sent him to the beach and told him to shout three times, "Gül Peri, Gül Pembe."

The fairies arose, saying, "What is the matter, Brother-in-Law?"

He told them what the trouble was, and they brought him the box which their sister used to play with when she was young

fellow never learned a thing from past experience.. He just could not help opening the box. He wondered how grapes enough to feed an entire army could be found in a small box, for it was the winter season. When he opened the box, there were green vines everywhere, with bunches of grapes hanging from the branches. Deli Mehmet helped

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himself to a few grapes and then closed the lid and walked on. He brought the box to the padishah.

The padishah was surprised. He now realized that perhaps he would never be able to get his wife from him without executing him. But he let him go.

Deli Mehmet went home in deep thought.

"What is the matter?" asked his wife.

"Well, I don't know what the padishah has in mind. He keeps asking me to go to the palace."

"You don't know his plan," she said, "but I do. In the end, he will fall into his own trap."

A few days later the padishah had Deli Mehmet called again. "Do you know what I want, Deli Mehmet?"

"You may wish for what you will, my padishah."

"I want from you enough lions and tigers to cover the whole world."

*Jack*

To himself, Deli Mehmet said, "There is hardly a cat in my house, but the padishah wants lions and tigers from me."

He went home and explained to his wife exactly what was the situation. She sent him to the beach again, where he was to shout three times, "Gül Peri! Gül Pembe!"

When they came to the surface, he said, "You are to give me the box that your sister used to play with when she was young."

His wife had warned him, "Don't ever open the box, for if you do, the lions and tigers will tear you to pieces. But if you do happen

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to open it, remember to say to them, 'Pardon me for the sake of the mermaid,' and they will not harm you."

"All right," he said. He took the box and started on his journey, but on the way he wondered how enough lions and tigers to cover the world could be squeezed into such a small box. He just opened the lid a little, but as soon as he did so, lions and tigers started jumping out from all sides and catching Mehmet Ağa by the collar and trousers cuffs, and threw him on the ground.

"Please spare me for the sake of the mermaid," he said.

Then he walked on, unharmed. On the way, he met a shepherd who had a stick in his hand. When he said to his stick, "Hit, my stick," the stick would start striking and knock down what it hit. After giving their names to each other, the shepherd proposed this: "Let me give you my stick in exchange for your box."

"If I do that, I shall be executed," said Deli Mehmet. "I cannot do it."

But the shepherd said, "My stick has a power of its own." Having said so, he said, "Hit, my stick. Hit, my stick!" and the stick started hitting Deli Mehmet as hard as it could.

"Aman!" cried Deli Mehmet. "Let us make this exchange!"

They traded, and Deli Mehmet went home, taking the stick. This time, he went home first, before going to the padishah.

"Where is the box?" his wife asked.

Deli Mehmet said, "I met such and such a fellow on the way. He took

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a fancy to the box, although I tried not to give it to him. He had a stick with a strange behavior. As soon as Deli Mehmet said, "Hit, my stick!" right then, the stick started beating both Deli Mehmet and his wife.

It is a mystery to us how he stopped the stick, but it stopped, anyway. His wife said, "You take this stick back to the shepherd. Give it to him and take the box and we shall pay him back in some way or another."

Deli Mehmet searched and searched for the shepherd and finally found him. He explained to him, "As I told you before, I was supposed to take this box to the padishah. If I do not give it to him, he will have me executed."

"But how is this?" asked the shepherd. "We have traded these things, haven't we?"

"Well, if you wish, you can refuse to give it to me, but I have the odds with me [the stick]."

The shepherd refused to give the box to him, but Deli Mehmet ordered, "Hit, my stick. Hit, my stick!" and the stick started striking the shepherd. The shepherd was thrown on the ground, and Deli Mehmet took the box as well as the stick and returned. He again stopped at his house. His wife warned him, "Do not open the box yourself in the presence of the padishah. In the end, leave the stick there, after giving the proper command. You know, we have gained two opportunities at the same time."

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Deli Mehmet went to the padishah then and said, "Bringing it is my responsibility, but opening it is yours."

At first the padishah objected, "You should open it yourself, Mehmet, and see what it does."

"No, my padishah," said Mehmet, "I would not do it even if I knew that if I refused I would hang from the gallows."

Mehmet looked around and saw that the hangmen were wandering about here and there. While the padishah held the box by one corner, Mehmet ordered, "Come on. Hit, my stick. Strike, my stick!"

The lions and tigers on the one hand and the stick on the other hand fell upon the padishah.

They afterwards ate and drank and became happy and had their wishes fulfilled.