

Story #502 (Tape #16, 1974)

Narrator: Mehmet Büyüklér

Location: Belekçe Han Kavađı
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Hamal Hasan Marries the Daughter of the Grand Vizier

There was ^{a hamal} a porter as beautiful as Holy Yusuf ([Joseph]). This Hasan was a porter in Konya. A wise gentleman said to him, "Son Hasan, what are you going to achieve by working as a porter like this?"

"What should I do?" said he.

"Put on a clean suit," said one, "and stick it¹ on the Galata Bridge." (You know, the Galata Bridge existed in old times.)

[Ahmet Uysal: What will he stick there?

Mehmet Bey: His photograph.

Another informant: His picture. He will stick his picture there.²]

After sticking the picture there, he went home and returned the suit of clothes which he had borrowed.

¹It here refers to a picture of himself.

²This is a peasant concept of how one may in Istanbul come to the attention of the rich and powerful. It also involves the motif (common in Turkish folktales) of falling in love with someone by seeing his or her picture. A very old motif, it is here adapted to the time by the use of the word photograph for picture.

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 The threes, fives, forties, and sevens³ went to answer the Grand Vizier's questions.⁴ On that day, hour, and minute, it [the picture] caught the eye of the Grand Vizier's daughter. She answered her father's questions. While she was going to him in a carriage,⁵ she saw Hasan's photograph. (Women may not be called Muslims, but one is necessary for each Muslim. What's more, there is not always a man under a hat. Furthermore, there is not always a good woman under a cover, although there aren't covers any more.⁵)

[Mehmet Bey: Now, Sir, shall we tell that part too?

Ahmet Uysal: Yes, tell it. Tell it.]

³The Three, The Five, The Seven, and The Forty are groups of saints in Moslem mysticism who supposedly rule the earth unseen by most mortal eyes. The terms here seem to refer to masses of people who go to the Grand Vizier's home to attempt to answer some questions he has posed.

⁴The narrator here uses a convention of this folktale type although he does not actually understand its function in this tale. Many tales in the Archive describe the way in which a poor peasant goes to Istanbul, there to become famous as an adviser to the ruler. War is threatened by some other country unless the ruler can answer correctly some riddling questions. The peasant boy, with his native shrewdness, answers the questions when all the wise men of the court fail to do so. He is then usually rewarded by being married to a daughter--perhaps the only daughter--of the ruler. In this tale, we are never told what the questions are nor what ingenious answers are provided, and thus this whole dimension of the tale is lost. In some other tale types the answers to difficult questions are provided for the hero by his wife or beloved. Here, without much point, the vizier's daughter answers the questions.

⁵Covers here refers to veils and head squares.

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(Now, the Greeks and Turkey were confronting each other. Of the military leaders, İnönü⁶ should have been alive now. Fevzi Çakmak⁷ and Kara Kazım⁸ should also have been alive. Then we would see whether the voice would come from Selanik or from the governor's seat.)⁹

[Ahmet Uysal: And then? Excuse me. She sees his photograph while crossing the bridge. What happens then?

Mehmet Bey: Yes, yes.]

Now, people saw it while crossing the bridge. When she saw it, the Grand Vizier's daughter went home, dressed as a man, and went to the old house of porter Hasan. But Hasan was a porter. When he returned home, he saw that the Grand Vizier's daughter was there. "Let Istanbul also be closed to me,"¹⁰ said he. He took the pad¹¹

⁶ İsmet İnönü--colleague of Atatürk, general, prime minister, and for many years before his death in the early 1970's head of the Republican People's Party.

⁷ Fevzi Çakmak--Chief of the General Staff, under Atatürk in the mid-1920's; later a political as well as a military figure.

⁸ Kara Kazım--apparently Kazım Pasha, Minister of War in the mid-1920's

⁹ This whole paragraph is a digression that has nothing whatever to do with the tale. Having commented unfavorably upon contemporary values, he is apparently led to criticize also contemporary political and military leadership as contrasted with that provided in the early days of the Republic.

¹⁰ As the narrator indicates later, Hasan leaves Istanbul because he fears that one of his position might be executed for presuming to any relationship with the daughter of the Grand Vizier.

¹¹ Porters sometimes place a simple pad (such as a folded burlap bag) between their backs and hard, heavy objects. For very heavy loads they sometimes have a heavily padded saddle of sorts, thicker at the bottom than at top.

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off his back and said, "I shall go to Izmir."

Let the Grand Vizier's daughter stay there. Hasan set out on the road to go to Izmir. He left Istanbul to go to Izmir. After he traveled for an uklet [?], he came to a water-well. A caravan arrived while he was sitting there. The owner of the caravan said, "Son, go down this well and pass up water for our animals, and we shall give you a few kurush."¹²

Poverty is difficult

"All right. Let me descend," he said. He went down and passed up water for the animals, the horses.

A servant said, "Sir, if he now comes out of the well, he will ask for a lot of money from us. Let us leave him in the well and let us go on our way." They left Hasan in the well and departed.

All the water had been used up. Now when the water had risen up again as high as his ankles, a beautiful girl appeared in the well. At the same time, a snake and a frog appeared. "Oh you human being," said they, "we were looking for you in the sky and found you in the ground." They found him in the well. "Which of us is beautiful?" they asked

If he called the girl beautiful, the snake would bite him. And the frog could not be called beautiful, although it is one of God's creatures. So he said, "Whomever the heart loves, that person is beautiful."

¹²The kurush, 1/100th of a lira, was worth about 1/10th of a cent at the time this tale was recorded. In earlier times it was worth much more than this.

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They said, "Congratulations, oh human being," and gave him three jewels.

As they did so, another caravan arrived and stopped there. By now the water had risen up to Hasan's waist. They lowered a bucket with a lot of jingling, and Hasan filled it. When they pulled up the bucket with a chain, Hasan held onto the chain and came up too.

"Well?" said they.

"Well or not," said he, "a caravan came here. I passed up water for the animals, but they left me in the well and went away."

"Come, son," said the caravan owner, "water our animals too, and we shall give you three hundred silver kurush." (It was the old-fashioned kind of money. There wasn't any paper money at that time.) He went down again and passed up water for the animals. When he came out, "Here are three hundred kurush for you," said the caravan owner. He gave him the money.

"Sir," said Hasan, "where are you going?"

He said, "I will take the cloth on these animals to the Galata Bridge in Istanbul, sell it, reload the animals, and return."

"In that case," said Hasan, "take these three hundred kurush and give them to my mother in such and such mansion." He had wrapped the jewels and the money together in a rag.

After selling the goods and reloading the animals, the caravan owner said, "Let us go now and deliver what Hasan entrusted to us." They found the house and delivered it. When they asked for his mother, the Grand Vizier's daughter stretched out her hand. Anyway,

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he delivered it and the girl took it.

About what shall we give news now? Although the Grand Vizier was looking for skin on the ox's horn, he could not say that his daughter had run away. The caravan owner completed his business and left. Hasan left the well, Sir, and said, "I shall go to Izmir. Let Istanbul also be closed to me." She was the Grand Vizier's daughter; there could be hanging at the end of this.

He arrived in Izmir. Sir, poverty is difficult. He went and entered a coffee-house. When he sat down in the coffeehouse, the owner said, "Will you drink coffee or tea?"

He said, "Let me rest a little bit." The owner repeated his question and he again said, "Let me rest a little bit." He would drink either coffee or tea, but he was without money.

There was a gentleman like you sitting there. "Come, son; come here; come," said he. He made him sit opposite him. "Waiter, bring one tea and one coffee," said he. Sir, the waiter brought the tea and the coffee, and he made Hasan drink. "Son," said he, "what do you do?"

He was a valiant man, beautiful like Holy Yusuf. "When it comes to business," said he, "I am a lonely man." When he thus said that he wanted to work in business, the gentleman said, "Son, you manage our grocery store, bakery, and the blacksmith shop." He was very rich.

"All right." He began to work for him.

As for the Grand Vizier's daughter, upon seeing the jewels, she went to a money-changer and said, "Sir, would you buy this?"

The man said, "We do not have the money."

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She came to Idris.¹³ She said, "Would you buy this?"

He said, "We don't have the money." At a moment of weakness, he said, "Son,--she was wearing ^{Disguise} men's clothes--we have one hundred and fifty million liras. I shall buy it if you will take the rest later."

"Take it," said she. She took the money and returned home. She had the town crier announce [her plans] and gathered together all the master craftsmen. She had a mansion built similar to that of the Grand Vizier, one that words cannot describe. It was exactly like her father's mansion.

Hasan went on working. He didn't know anything about the mansion. If God favors one, that is how it happens. While Hasan was working there, that gentleman invited Hasan to his house. When the gentleman went to the door, his wife said to Hasan, "Hasan."

"What is it?"

"Take these keys and spend the money in that safe. Will you be one with me, or do you want to be hanged?" said the woman.

Well, Hasan had been treated well by the gentleman. He earned bread from him. Hasan left the house and went away. He did not near the gentleman for three days. And the wife was waiting for him to come and be one with her. Hasan was far from doing that. Hasan used to eat a loaf of bread each meal, but he now reduced it to one slice

¹³The next narrator on this tape is named Idris, and Mehmet Bey probably chose the name of this friend both to please Idris and to give a touch of realism to his tale.

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When three days had passed, the woman said, "Did you hear what the servant you hired did?"

"What?" said he.

"He asked me to be one with him," said she, "and I refused. He will be destroyed tonight."

"All right," said the gentleman. He was angered. He went to the bakers and said, "At three o'clock at night, a man will come to get twenty-five loaves of bread. You will have the oven going. As soon as the man opens the door, you will catch him by the arms and throw him into the oven. Don't let ^{him} say anything."

"Yes, Sir."

The gentleman returned and said, "Hasan, go and bring twenty-five loaves of bread from the bakery."

When he spoke thus, Hasan said, "All right," and put the bag on his shoulder. While he was going to the bakery, he saw a cinema.¹⁴ He said to himself, "I am not a soldier; let me watch the movie at this cinema for a while and go after that."

The woman was watching the clock. She was watching and kept looking at the clock. "Oh, they burned Hasan, alas!" she said. Although she was at first willing to have him killed, now she could not bear it. She looked at the clock, said they had burned Hasan, turned the lamp down, and went to the bakery.

¹⁴The appearance of a cinema in this ancient tale is an obvious anachronism. The delay which causes the death of the evil person instead of the persecuted innocent is usually more integral to the plot.

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While she was going to the bakery, her husband came home. He said to the neighbors, "Is my wife at your house?" The neighbor said no, and the gentleman went from there towards the bakery. As for Hasan, he had taken twenty loaves [the narrator was apparently confused here] of bread and was walking home leisurely. The gentleman said nothing to him. He went to the bakers and said, "Hey, you! What did I tell you to do?"

He said, "We did it, oh elder brother."

"Well? How?"

The woman's death being destined to occur before Hasan's, she had gone to the bakery. You know, they had been told to throw into the oven whoever opened the door at three. They grabbed the woman immediately by the arms and threw her into the oven. "We did it, Sir."

Hasan came and said to him, "She asked me to be one with her, but I didn't." He spoke these words to the gentleman. Hasan worked there for some time after telling him this.

The mansion similar to the Grand Vizier's had been built. But the Grand Vizier could not say, "My daughter ran away" to anybody. The Grand Vizier was better than the sultan

After working there for several more days, Hasan said, "Would you mind, Sir, closing my account so that I can leave?"

"Of course not, Hasan," said the gentleman.

When he came home, he saw that the mansion had been built and that

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everything was new and clean. They completed their marriage ceremonies and became man and wife.¹⁵

As it is clear, the Grand Vizier was a bereaved man. "Hasan," said his wife, "you will buy plates of this type, armchairs of this type tables of this type." She told him all the needed things--cups, and what not. She had served her father. "You will bring these," she said. And he brought them. "Come now, Hasan," she said

"What is it?"

"You will invite my father and this and that vizier," she said.

Hasan invited them and brought all three of them. Upon sitting down in the armchair, the Grand Vizier sighed sadly. The food was brought. When they had dinner, the Grand Vizier again sighed sadly. Hasan said, "Sir, you sighed when you sat in the armchair. You sighed again when the food was brought. What is the meaning of this?"

"Son," said he, "a daughter of mine has been missing for five years. This place, this arrangement of things, this order, are all in my daughter's manners."

"My sultan, would you be able to recognize her if she appeared now?"

"Let her come," said he.

¹⁵The whole relationship between Hasan and the daughter of the Grand Vizier is skipped in this version of the tale.

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(Their asses weren't in the open as they are now; their faces were covered.) She removed her veil, and knelt in front of the Grand Vizier. They left without saying a word.

[The narrator, 70, immediately launches into disjointed comments on the mores of the time, political and social degeneration.

Ahmet Uysal: All right--they got up and left. Did he recognize her?

Mehmet Bey: Her father recognized her, but he had the other viziers, great men, with him. So, he did not say that she was his daughter. The setting and arrangement of everything was just like that in his house.

Narrator again comments adversely on modern marital arrangements.

Ahmet Uysal: Does this story end here?

Mehmet Bey: Yes, it ends here. Hasan and the Grand Vizier's daughter live happily. And her father, seeing that they are happy, doesn't say anything to anyone, but leaves.]