

Story #592 (1966 Tape #7)

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The Industrious Woman and Her Lazy Husband husband - 12/5/66

In a village there once lived a very industrious widow, and in that same village there lived a very lazy man. The widow used to sell milk during the morning, work as a maid in a wealthy house during the afternoon, and rub the backs of women at the bath during the evenings. She was the hardest-working woman in that entire village. The lazy man, on the other hand, did nothing but lie in the courtyard of the mosque all day long. One day some of the villagers said to him, "Why do you not get married and be saved from this indolent way of life? There is that Ayşe woman who is so very industrious. She would take care of you."

The lazy man was finally persuaded to marry Ayşe, and when Ayşe agreed to this proposal, they were in fact married. Now the man did nothing but lie around their home all day. Now this Ayşe was a very intelligent woman, and one morning she said to her husband, "You are a strong and healthy man. You can at least carry my milk cans to a few of the nearby houses and in that way lighten my work."

The husband did not like this, but at last he had to acquiesce to her suggestion. He carried milk cans to just two of the closest houses, and after that, he returned home and went to bed again. The next day the wife said to him, "That was very well done yesterday. Can you also carry cans to two houses farther along the route today?" So the man agreed to take cans to four houses that day. In this fashion the woman finally solved the problem of delivering her milk.

1 The reference here is to the attendant in a Turkish bath who scrubs the backs of bathers with a reed sponge. They are usually paid for their services by the customers rather than by the bath owner.

Pitcher -- (ibrik)

On another day the woman suggested that her husband could sweep the courtyard of the mosque in the evening, when he had nothing to do, and also carry the ² hoca's pitcher. In this way he might be able to earn a few more kurus.³ Although the man did not like this idea, he accepted it, and after a while, when he had grown accustomed to the work, he did not mind it at all. She said to him, "You see, it is not so bad! You are doing very well, and you are earning money. As you know, I go at night to the women's bath to rub backs, and you might go to the men's bathhouse and perform the same service there."

The people of the village were amazed at the change that had come over such a lazy fellow. He had become such a hard worker that he seemed not to stop either day or night, while his wife (once the hardest-working woman in the village) now did very little and remained at home most of the time. When they pointed out this curious fact to him, he agreed, "Yes, that is true."

Then they suggested that he divorce this woman who was overworking him. "This woman makes you work so hard! Why do you not divorce her? You could live better without her. Who can stand her unreasonable demands? You work day and night!"

"Yes," he said, "you are right. I should divorce her, but I have no time to divorce her!"

² When there is no fountain in a mosque yard, water must be carried there for the required ritual ablutions before worshippers may enter the mosque. It is usually carried in an ibrik (ewer with a long curved spout) or a pitcher.

³ The kurus is a hundredth part of a lira. With the continual devaluation of the Turkish lira, coins in kurus denominations are now [1982] rapidly falling out of circulation.