

Story 1328 (1988 Tape 6)

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Location: Ortahisar village,  
Ürgüp kaza, Nevşehir  
Province

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The Guessing Children<sup>1</sup> --I

There were once a man and a woman who owned a shop in their village. Every morning after they had drunk their tea, the husband went to his shop to work. He always hung the key to his money chest behind the door of his shop where no one could see it. One day, however, a stranger entered his shop as a customer. This stranger happened to be a very clever thief and pickpocket, and while he was looking around the shop, he discovered the key and secretly stole it. At noon that day the owner left the shop in the care of one of his children, saying, "You look after the shop for a while. I am going home to eat lunch, but after I have finished eating, I

<sup>1</sup> There are two folktale types that involve The Guessing Children or The Detectives (as they are called in the Eberhard-Boratav type index). In the first type the protagonists solve mysteries or analyze problems by means of shrewd perception and inductive reasoning (as in the internationally known tale "The Three Princes of Serendip"). In the second type the protagonists acquire their puzzle-solving knowledge from some supernatural source--usually a form of Turkish numerology or geomancy known as remil. In this particular tale, however, the protagonists receive their puzzle-solving information via some kind of inspiration or revelation, without any physical procedures to unlock the occult. Whether they receive the information via remil or inspiration, it is always expressed in a verse passage. After each succeeding appeal for information, the verse passage is repeated and to it is added the newly acquired information. The information is cumulative, and thus the verse grows as the tale progresses.

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shall return." As he was leaving, he reached behind the door for the key to the money chest, and it was then that he discovered that it was missing

When he got home, the man asked his wife, "Have you seen the key to the money chest? Is it here somewhere?"

"No. You took it with you," his wife replied

Greatly disturbed by this information, the husband ate his lunch and returned to the shop as fast as he could. When he lifted up the money chest, it was very light; when he shook it, he could hear nothing rattling inside, and he knew that it was empty. All of his gold had been stolen.

The man and the woman who owned this shop had three very intelligent sons, and they at once offered to find the stranger who had stolen the gold. Soon after they had set out on their journey, they came to an intersection where the three roads they faced had signs reading Avanoz Road, City Road, and Makyan Road. "Which of these roads shall we take?" asked the oldest brother.

The youngest, who was cleverest of the three, answered, "Let us go toward the city." His brothers agreed with this suggestion, and they traveled toward the city.

When they arrived at the edge of the city, they saw a sitting at a street corner. They asked this man, "Have you seen anyone who looks like this and that pass this way?"

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"Yes, I did, but he did not stop here. He continued to go wherever he was going.

"Where did he go?"

"I do not know."

Inside the city the brothers sat down in a quiet street to think. Then the oldest brother said,

Go to a place crowded in summer;

Go to a street near the tall, noble peaks,

In a ward where a hoca<sup>2</sup> is living,

To a house between inn and hamam.<sup>3</sup>

There strike the right-hand side of the door.<sup>4</sup>

They went to that place, stopping at neither the inn nor the hamam, but going directly to the house between them. When they struck the right side of the door, it opened to them, and they entered the house. Inside they found a woman sitting by herself. "Where is your husband?" they asked her.

<sup>2</sup>A hoca is a Moslem preacher. Before the founding of the Republic, education was in the hands of the clergy, and at that time the hoca was both teacher and preacher. This tradition lingers on in the occasional custom of calling secular teachers hucas, but actual hucas have always been clerical.

<sup>3</sup>A hamam is a Turkish bath, usually a public rather than private facility.

<sup>4</sup>In Turkish all five lines of verse rime, an effect difficult to achieve in English but reasonably easy to produce in Turkish because of the system of suffixes and the inflected verb endings.

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"He went on a journey, and he has not yet come home," she said.

The three brothers sat down upon the floor to think. Then the middle brother said

Go to a place crowded in summer;

Go to a street near the tall, noble peaks,

In a ward where a hoca is living,

To a house between inn and hamam.

There strike the right-hand side of the door.

Go to the attic to capture the thief.

They went at once to the attic and seized the thief. When they had taken him downstairs, they asked him, "Where is the gold that you stole?"

"I did not steal any gold," he replied.

"You have stolen some gold," they said.

"I did not steal any gold," he repeated.

After this quarreling had gone back and forth several times, the brothers, gripping the thief tightly, sat down upon the floor again to think. After a few minutes, the youngest brother said,

Go to a place crowded in summer;

Go to a street near the tall, noble peaks,

In a ward where a hoca is living,

To a house between inn and hamam.

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There strike the right-hand side of the door.

Go to the attic to capture the thief,

And take the gold out of his hat.

They took the gold out of the thief's hat and counted it.

Discovering that one piece of gold was missing, "Give us the one piece of gold that you still have!" they demanded.

"All the gold that I took was in the hat. There was no more gold than that."

Still grasping the thief tightly, the brothers once more sat down to think. In a very short time, the oldest brother said,

Go to a place crowded in summer;

Go to a street near the tall, noble peaks,

In a ward where a hoca is living,

To a house between inn and hamam.

There strike the right-hand side of the door.

Go to the attic to capture the thief,

And take the gold out of his hat.

Cause the last coin to fall from within his mouth.

They clapped the thief on the back, causing him to spit out the coin which he had been hiding beneath his tongue. Then, taking the gold, they returned home with it and gave it to their parents. After that they all lived happily and comfortably.