

Story 1700 1977 Tapes 9-20) Narrator: Behçet Mahir, 68

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Province

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Hamzai Sahip Kiran<sup>1</sup>

Today I shall begin the story of Hamzai Sahip Kiran but before talking about him, I wish to make some comments about Nuşirvan,<sup>2</sup> and it will be through these comments on

<sup>1</sup>This tale is an amalgam of myth, legend, history, quasi-history, folklore, and echoes from early literary masterpieces. Folk narrators are often unaware of the various sources of their materials, and they often have only very vague ideas of history and historical dating.

Hamza or Hamzah, one of the ten sons of the powerful Abdu Muttalib, was Mohammed's uncle and one of his most valiant supporters in the early years. Sahip Kiran is a Persian title or honorific meaning "Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction /of planets/." Jupiter and Venus were considered to be auspicious planets, and their conjunction was an especially auspicious occasion. --In most Islamic records he is referred to simply as Hamza or Hamzah.

During the early 1980s the film Message dramatized the sources and earliest days of Islam. Hamza played a lead role in that film, which was produced in both Arabic and in English versions. Anthony Quinn starred as Hamza in the English version. This film was so cherished by Turkish Moslems that it is rerun in theatres and on television every year in Turkey during the holy month of Ramazan.

<sup>2</sup>Nuşirvan is not really a name but a title or honorific attached to a name. It is variously translated as "happy soul" or "of immortal soul." Behçet Mahir is not alone in using the title as a proper name, for it is so used by Farid al-Din Attar in his The Ilahi-Name, or Book of God. Nuşirvan here refers to Khusraw I, the most illustrious king (531-579) of the Sasanid or Sasanian Dynasty of

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Nuşirvan that we shall come to our story about Hamzai Sahip Kiran.

Gentlemen,<sup>3</sup> the name of Nuşirvan's grandfather was Key Kubat,<sup>4</sup> and it was from this grandfather that Nuşirvan inherited his throne while he was still quite young. Key Kubat had his men build a palace for Nuşirvan in Ani,<sup>5</sup> a city which Key Kubat had earlier founded. There is an old proverb which says, "If the rest of the world were ever to be destroyed, Ani could rebuild it, but if Ani were ever to be destroyed, the rest of the world could never replace that city." Key Kubat, the grandfather of Nuşirvan, founded that city and then later built Nuşirvan a palace there.

Persia (3rd to 7th centuries A.D.). His name is spelled in several different ways: Kasra, Kusra, Khosrow, and Chosroes. He is referred to in Ferdowsi's The Epic of the Kings.

<sup>3</sup>This tale was performed and taped over several evenings at a coffeehouse. In many parts of Turkey coffeehouses are frequented only by men.

<sup>4</sup>Key Kurbat here but King Qobad in The Epic of the Kings and Kavad in The Cambridge History of Iran, Vol. III was not Khusraw I's grandfather but his father. He was not the founder of Ani, which was not founded until the 9th century.

<sup>5</sup>Ani was not a Persian city but an Armenian city. Ruins of Ani lie in Kars Province, extreme eastern Turkey.

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(People come to and depart from this world continuously, for we are here really only as guests. Allah gives a different life to every person, and thus everyone has his own form of livelihood and his own part of the soil. We must realize that we are given only a limited number of breaths, and we cannot draw even one more breath than that.

Allah did not create anything superior to Adam. As you know, when Adam was created, all of the other creatures prostrated themselves before him--all, that is, except Satan. Satan refused to show Adam this respect, saying, "How can I prostrate myself before a creature made of clay when I was made of fire?" As a result of this refusal to honor Adam, Satan had a curse placed upon him. As a result of this, I am always led to think, "Do not consider what you are but rather what you might become." Allah created us from nothing and can return us to nothing. He can send you to bed as a rich man but awaken you at dawn as a pauper. The power is His. Let me remind you that there are some people who complain about their lot and say, "Fate, may your wheel<sup>6</sup> break; may your house be demolished!" Such words achieve nothing but making the

<sup>6</sup>The Wheel of Fortune is a favorite Middle Eastern figure of speech for the agency apportioning people their respective destinies.

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speaker feel even more rebellious. Isn't Fate like an angel who get his orders from Allah? Is it possible that Allah's order will be canceled by your saying, "May the wheel of Fate be broken"? No, it will not be canceled. Because of that fact, there is no point in our being rebellious. Speak more wisely than one using angry words! As our forefathers instructed us, "Speak with a good tongue." Train your tongue to speak wisely. Those who do may speak falsely even about unimportant things; they spend curses upon trivial matters. This is a mistake. Speak only the truth, the plain truth.)<sup>7</sup>

Key Kubat built the city of Ani, and he built a very palace for Nuşirvan. Nuşirvan was a very merciless man.<sup>8</sup> A traitorous man has no compassion and no faith. Before the time of Key Kubat or Nuşirvan, there had been people living in this world for six or seven thousand years. Then

<sup>7</sup>A poet before he was a teller of tales, Behçet Mahir assumed the bardic role of advising, warning, even threatening his people. Didactic and moralistic interpolations are common in his tales. These "preachy" interludes range from trivial matters of diet, hygiene, or speech to sophisticated philosophical concerns. Because they have little or no bearing on the narrative of a tale, we have placed these harangues within parentheses.

<sup>8</sup>This is counter to the reputation given to him in Attar's work, where he is referred to as a just and kind man. Also the honorific Nuşirvan indicated that he had a "happy soul," hardly an epithet for a traitor and infidel.

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came Rüstem,<sup>9</sup> son of Zal. What did people say?

Have a look, take a glance  
 At those who come and go  
 Look at Rüstem, son of  
 Who slew the tens of thousands,  
 A madman also a padishah.  
 Look too at the Prophet David,  
 And Solomon, David's son,  
 Who ruled mankind from his throne.

The fourth grandson of Rüstem, son of Zal, became the grand vizier of Nuşirvan. He had been a blacksmith originally, but he was an unusual man in that he understood the language of birds.

The name of Rüstem's grandfather was Dal,<sup>10</sup> and this Dal was a padishah. His son, named Zal, was not only a very handsome man but also a very strong man, for he was a wrestler. Dal said to himself, "I shall go forth and

<sup>9</sup>A mythical hero of ancient Persian times, he is mentioned in legends that range over the reigns of several rulers and about three centuries. The Persian name is Rustam, but we are here using the Turkish form Rüstem.

<sup>10</sup>The Epic of Kings gives his name as Sam.

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find a bride who will be a match for the admirable qualities of my son. I wonder if there has ever really been produced such a girl?" But Dal did find such a suitable wife for his son, and Zal married that girl.

Rüstem was the first child to be produced by that marriage. He was born prematurely, two months before full term of gestation. But he had threatened to be even more premature than that. When his mother was only five months pregnant, she began to shake and was unable to walk. The doctors and the astrologers were consulted, and they said, "This child cannot be born in a normal We should cut her belly just below the rib cage and remove the child at once. If we do not do that, the mother die."

But others said, "A baby carried by its mother for only five months will not be able to live."

Then Dal intervened, saying, "No, the child must live whether or not the mother lives." The woman remained in bed on her back for another two months, often crying out in great distress.

Observe the work of Allah here. What had Dal said? "My son is very handsome, and his wife is a great beauty.

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offspring of two such people should be even more attractive than they are." But no one can interfere with work of Allah. He can create an attractive child from a pair of beautiful parents, but He can also create a very ugly one, if He wishes.

Allah had placed a very awesome child in the womb of woman, and eventually the doctors did have to cut the mother's belly just below the ribs in order to deliver child. Those who caught a glimpse of the child were quite amazed by its size, for Allah had produced a really enormous baby. Zal grew quite furious. He said, "Take this child to the wilderness and leave it there for the wolves and the birds to eat. I said, 'Let us see how beautiful the child of two beautiful people can be, but this child! Anyone would become frightened just looking at this baby!'" (Long before that, Solomon, the son of David, had been informed that in a distant land there would be born a boy who would some day succeed him to the throne.<sup>11</sup>)

<sup>11</sup>The point of this remark is not clear. The child of Zal would be no threat to Dal, for it would be Zal, not Zal's child, who would be his immediate successor. This may be an echo of The Epic of Kings in which Zal's father, Sam, cast Zal into the wilderness because Zal was born with white hair, which Sam thought very ugly. Thus, in the Epic . . . Sam/Dal is attempting to get rid of his own successor.

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Gentlemen, the power of performing miracles is in the hands of Allah, but often Allah has human beings enact the events which lead up to miracles. They left the child of Zal in the wilderness with no name attached to it or any other indication of its origin, but the child was nevertheless rescued.

While the Emerald-Green Anka<sup>12</sup> was flying over that area, she heard beneath her the crying of a baby. The anka, who was the padishah of birds, swooped down, picked up the baby, and took it to her nest in a great cypress tree. Knowing the source of the child, she named it Rüstem, Son of Zal.<sup>13</sup> She gave it that second name so that the child would grow up knowing who its father was. The anka reared Rüstem with her own children. Seven years passed, and the bird had just finished nursing Rüstem as she did her own children.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup>The Anka is one of a number of huge birds which appear in Middle Eastern lore. Others are the simurgh, the phoenix, and the roc (ruk). These are capable of carrying human beings and even horses on their wings.

<sup>13</sup>Rüstem is the great culture hero of Iran, as he was of ancient Persia. Zal, his father, is almost as often referred to. Both belong to the Heroic Age of the Persian/Iranian people. Both are legendary rather than historical figures.

<sup>14</sup>Here again there is a similarity to the Epic of Kings in which Sam casts his son Zal into the wilderness,

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But after fifteen years had passed, Rüstem was able to repay her for all of her kindness. Whenever in the past the anka had reared a brood of nestlings to the of fifteen, she had begun to teach them to fly. But always in that same fifteenth year a large dragon had appeared and devoured her brood of children. This had always occurred at times when the anka was away from the nest working to find food for her family's livelihood (Even she, the huge bird so powerful that she could ships from the sea, had to work for her daily food! Therefore, I say to you, "Work, O sons of Turks Work!")

Every time the anka children were fifteen years old the dragon came and ate them. Well, another brood of chicks were fifteen years old, and Rüstem, Son of Zal, was also fifteen. The chicks had taught him the language of birds. Therefore Rüstem, Son of Zal, knew the language of human beings<sup>15</sup> and the language of birds. One day the chicks asked the Emerald-Green anka, "Mother, why can't where that abandoned infant is reared by a simurgh. When Zal has grown to young manhood, he repays the giant bird's kindness just as Rüstem does here.

<sup>15</sup>Just how Rüstem would have acquired human language by this time the narrator does not say.

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Rüstem, Son of Zal, fly like us?"

The anka answered, "Oh, my children, he comes from the race of human beings. He has two arms instead of wings. You can fly, but he cannot. Allah created him as one of a race which is superior to our race.

When the Emerald-Green Anka left the nest that day to find food for her family, the dragon appeared, grinding his teeth. The chicks were now fifteen years old, and Rüstem was also fifteen. Both he and they had been nursed for seven years by the anka. When the dragon appeared, the chicks were frightened and immediately flew away from the place where they were playing to the cypress tree. Rüstem was also frightened, but he was unable to fly up into the cypress tree. Instead, he hid himself behind the trunk of that tree.

(The chicks and Rüstem were fifteen years old, an age which is a quarter of our present life span of sixty years. Human life span was once much greater, but people then often thought about their lives in the same way that some people now think. They thought, "Why should I take the trouble to build a house when I shall be here for only seven hundred years? We are here today and gone tomorrow."

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Didn't they have any brains? Were they not capable of building an apartment house? Of course they had brains! And of course they were capable of building an apartment house or a palace. But they said, "We are mere guests here, where we shall live for only seven hundred years. It is pointless to build an apartment house or palace in this mortal world where we shall remain so briefly. We shall be dead in seven hundred years!"

But what are we doing now? We are constructing buildings of many storeys, and they are supported with steel beams. We do not look back to where we have come from, and we do not look forward to death. Yes, have such buildings, O sons of Turks! Have great buildings! I am not saying that you shouldn't construct such buildings. Work, O sons of Turks! Work! Beautify your own country! In later times, even if the country were conquered by enemies, people will admire you and thank you for raising such buildings.

The dragon intended to eat the chicks of the anka, and Rüstem understood this. As the dragon was beginning to climb the tree slowly, Rüstem gripped the section just beyond its large head very tightly with his bare hands.

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He kept squeezing more and more tightly until he finally strangled the dragon. Even though the monster was dead, Rüstem continued to squeeze it with all of his strength.

Later in the day the anka returned from its search for food. She saw at once that her chicks were still alive and that the dragon was dead. She called to Rüstem, "Relax your grip now, Son. Drop the dragon, for it is dead! Bravo! The milk with which I nursed you I now make helal.<sup>16</sup> I have long wished to see a brood of my children flying about, but every brood that had reached the flying age was devoured by that dragon. You have made it possible for me to attain my greatest desire. I shall now see my children flying unmolested."

Yes, gentlemen, the fourth grandson of Rüstem was the grand vizier of Nuşirvan. After having talked about those who preceded him, I now wish to talk about Sahip Kıran.

<sup>16</sup>Helal/Haram--Moslem religious concepts. That which is helal is that which is permissible according to canonical law. That which is haram is forbidden. There is no obligation or restriction or penalty for doing or taking whatever is helal, but there will be a penalty on Judgment Day for doing or taking what is forbidden. To accept something from a donor is helal; to take it or steal it is haram. To do anything morally or religiously improper is haram. Dying or endangered people often declare helal anything they have given to or done for another person.

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One day Nuşirvan and his grand vizier went walking together. Because the grand vizier was a grandson of Rüstem, he understood the language of birds. But now that I have said that, O respected listeners, an anecdote comes to my mind which I must tell you.

Solomon, the son of David, knew eighteen thousand different languages. The grand vizier's knowing two languages--that of human beings and that of birds--was insignificant alongside Solomon's knowledge of eighteen thousand languages. Solomon had a very good friend (See here! Human beings cannot be without friends of some kind. Some are friendly only with their tongues while within their hearts they are really enemies.) One day this friend of Solomon asked him, "Can you teach me some of the animal and bird languages?"

"Yes, I can do that," answered Solomon, "but you must never reveal to any other human being that you know these languages. If you make such a disclosure, you will die."

"No, of course not," said his friend. "I shall not tell anyone."

so that No. 2 will not go to Judgment indebted to another (which is haram unless declared helal by the benefactor.)

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Solomon taught that friend the languages of several domestic animals and fowls--the language of donkeys, oxen, dogs, cats, and chickens. After he had finished teaching these languages, he again warned his friend, "Now remember Do not tell anyone of your knowledge of these languages!"

"No, of course not," said his friend. "I shall not tell a soul

The man who had just learned these languages enjoyed listening to the animals on his farm talk to each other. Not knowing that his owner now understood their languages, the donkey one day said, "Oh, brother ox, if you wish to avoid going to hard labor in the fields again tomorrow morning, don't eat your food tonight. Then our owner will conclude that you are ill, and as a result of that he will not have you do any plowing tomorrow

The ox replied, "That is an excellent idea, brother donkey. I am glad that you told me about it.

But their owner overheard their conversation. That evening he said to his son, "Son, go and give food and water to all of our farm animals

The boy went to the barn and fed and watered the animals as his father had directed. After a while, however, he noticed that one of the oxen was not eating. When

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morning came, the boy saw that that ox still had not touched its food or water. He went to the farmer and said, "Father, one of our oxen is sick. He has not eaten any of the food or drunk any of the water which I gave him last night."

The farmer knew perfectly well why the ox had not eaten food or drunk water, but he could not explain this to his son, for he knew that revealing that information would cost him his life. He therefore simply said to the boy, "Son, get the donkey and harness him to the plow with the other ox.

"All right, Father," said the boy, and he did exactly what his father had ordered him to do

The donkey worked very hard that day from early morning until the time that they returned to the barn at night. As soon as he was back in the barn, the donkey said to the ox who had been there all day, "Alas, brother ox, you had better eat your food tonight, or our owner may sell you to the butcher." Of course, the donkey was worried about himself and not about the ox. He knew that if the ox again failed to eat its food, he himself would again be harnessed with the other ox to do another day of heavy field work.

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The farmer had been listening to the conversation between the donkey and the ox, and when he heard the donkey's remark, he could not keep himself from laughing aloud. His wife, who had just happened to come along, heard the farmer laugh and asked, "O, my husband, why did you laugh just now?"

"It was not for any reason, Wife. I just felt like laughing."

But the woman did not believe that, and she insisted on having an answer to her question. "But why, Husband? No one is here but you, I, the donkey, and the ox. So why did you laugh?"

I laughed for no reason at all," said the farmer  
no, no! You laughed at me! I know!" said his wife.

The man found himself in a helpless situation. To gain time he said, "Oh, Wife, I did not laugh at you, but if you insist on knowing what caused me to laugh, I shall tell you tomorrow morning." He was, however, greatly concerned about this matter, and he began at once to think of some excuse that he could give his wife in the morning.

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While he was deep in thought about this, he overheard a conversation between the cat and the dog. The cat said, "Our master will die in the morning. Well, I like helva<sup>17</sup> very much."

The dog answered, "Yes, I know that he is going to die. Well, I like meat very much."<sup>18</sup>

The rooster then joined the conversation. He said to the dog and the cat, "I do not understand this situation. I have forty wives here, and although I am only one rooster, I can make all of those forty hens obey me perfectly. But here is our owner, who has only one wife, but he cannot make even that one woman obey him. If I were he, I should get a stick. Then when she demanded to know why he laughed, I should strike her with that stick and say, 'That is the reason I laughed.' If he did that, she would not ask him that question again."

Hearing the rooster's comment, the man said to himself, "Ah, yes Now I know what I shall do tomorrow morning!"

When morning arrived, the woman asked the farmer, "Husband, why did you laugh yesterday? Tell me now!"

<sup>17</sup>A candy made of sugar, syrup or honey mixed with sesame-seed oil. In some parts of Turkey, helva is offered to mourners at a wake or requiem service.

<sup>18</sup>This may be a reference to a funeral banquet.

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Striking his wife with the stick, the man said "This is what I laughed at. I laughed at the thought of striking you with this stick!" In this way the man saved himself from death.<sup>19</sup>

While the grand vizier was walking with Nuşirvan, he overheard a conversation between an owl and a sparrow. The grand vizier was able to understand the language of birds because he was descended from Rüstem. The sparrow said to the owl, "Oh, brother owl, let us have our children married to each other. Give your daughter to my son in marriage."

owl responded, "Oh, brother sparrow, there is no way that you could pay the bride price for my daughter. I want forty houses for my daughter, and there is no way that you could provide them."

"There is nothing easier than doing that," said the sparrow. "Sahip Kiran will one day invade this country and possess all the realm of Nuşirvan. Everything will then be so changed that I could get not just forty but

<sup>19</sup>This interpolated story is a folktale in its own right. In order to avoid losing its identity entirely in this extremely long tale, we have (for indexing and cataloguing purposes) entered it in the ATON holdings as No. 1556.

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even a thousand houses for you."

When the grand vizier heard this, he laughed. Nuşirvan asked his vizier, "Why did you laugh just then?"

grand vizier answered, "My padishah, there was no reason for my laughter. I just laughed."

I do not believe that," said Nuşirvan. "If you do not tell me why you laughed, I shall send you to the executioner."

Then the grand vizier said helplessly, "My padishah, I shall tell you why I laughed if you will first promise not to kill me for anything that I say."

After Nuşirvan had given his word not to harm his vizier for anything he said, the vizier explained his reason for laughing. (Yes, I should advise you never to lie. I have been advising this now for forty years. O sons of Turks: never lie! Speak only the truth) The grand vizier said, "O my padishah, I was listening to the conversation between an owl and a sparrow. The sparrow wanted to have the owl's daughter become the wife of his son, but the owl said that the bride price of forty houses would be more than the sparrow could afford. The sparrow then replied that such a price would be no obstacle, for

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after Sahip Kiran had invaded and conquered all of Nuşirvan's territory, everything would be so changed that he could afford to pay a thousand houses for the girl. It was that bird conversation that made me laugh."

"Aha! Then this means that Sahip Kiran will some day conquer my country?"

"Yes, my padishah. Your injustice will eventually make it possible for Sahip to conquer your country."

They then returned to the palace, and Nuşirvan began immediately to change his whole behavior. Instead of basing his decisions on injustice, he now began to them on justice. In fact, he became a very righteous man. One day soon after that, he said to his grand vizier, "Cast remil<sup>20</sup> and discover where Sahip Kiran is located want to be a righteous and a just man. Justice will help me to protect my country from seizure by Sahip Kiran. Unless I am just, I shall not be able to withstand sword of Sahip Kiran." Oh, gentlemen, even if there were

<sup>20</sup>Remil is a form of numerology used for acquiring information, including information about the future. The practice of remil involves the casting upon the ground of a number of small cubes (like dice). On each of the six sides of each cube there is a letter or number. Whatever letters and numbers face upward after a casting of the cubes supposedly provide coded information to adepts at this kind of numerology. In rural areas of Turkey, sheep knuckle (aşiklar) bones are the ready-to-hand cubes which are marked and then used for remil.

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a thousand Nuşirvans, they could not stand before the sword of Sahip Kıran! But Nuşirvan's turning to justice protected him from that sword. Oh, honorable gentlemen, he who is just has power.

The grand vizier cast remil and received some information about Sahip Kıran. He then said, "My padishah, Sahip Kıran has not yet even been born, but he will soon be born at Mecca, the center of the world." He then predicted the exact time--the month, the day, and the hour--when Sahip Kıran would be born.

Nuşirvan then said, "Go to Mecca and when Sahip Kıran is born, put him immediately upon a salary from me. If he grows up eating my bread, his sword will never kill me." (O people gathered here, nobody can survive without food in his stomach, and so do not deny the hand that gives you bread. If you do so, then sooner or later you will be punished. If you are not punished in this world, then you will be in the next. Therefore, do not look with malice upon anyone who has helped you.)

Before the Blessed Hamzai Sahip Kıran was born, the grand vizier of Nuşirvan arrived in Mecca. But Hamzai Sahip Kıran had been acting in this story forty years

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before our Prophet was born. --We are telling this story as it was told to us, but if we were to give the actual dates here, we should have to say that there were only three years' difference in age between Hamzai Sahip Kıran and the Blessed Mohammed. Hamzai Sahip Kıran was born just three years before the Blessed Mohammed, but we shall say here that the difference was forty years because that is the way people before us told the story, and we are following in their footsteps <sup>21</sup>

In Mecca at that time there were two notable families of them was the family of Haşimi and the other was the family of Hurişi. Abdüzalülahim came from the Hurişi family, and Mehmüttellüalemin, Hamzai Sahip Kıran, came from the family of Haşimi.<sup>22</sup> But even these two families were related to each other

Allah can make a person blind if He wishes, but He can also give a person powerful vision if He wants to do that. When the grand vizier of Nuşirvan arrived in Mecca,

<sup>21</sup>Because we have not identified Hamzai Sahip Kıran, we do not know what his actual birth date was. We do know that Nuşirvan's rule began in 531, just about forty years before the birth of Mohammed in 570.

<sup>22</sup>Although there seems to be reason to think that Mohammed was a descendant of the Haşimi family (clan), most of this material of Meccan genealogies is unclear.

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the noble families there welcomed him with great respect. The grand vizier said to these nobles, "On such and such a date a certain boy will be born in this city; you are to inform me about this matter, for Nuşirvan has ordered me to put that boy on a royal salary from the moment that he enters this world." As we know, Nuşirvan wanted to do this so that the sword of Sahip Kıran would never slay him. Well, gentlemen, a baby boy was born at precisely the time that the grand vizier had predicted. It was in the middle of the night that Hamzai Sahip Kıran entered this world, and the news was taken at once to the grand vizier that this boy had been born into the Haşimi family. The grand vizier put this baby on a royal salary immediately, just as he had been instructed to do by Nuşirvan.

just two hours after the birth of Hamzai Sahip Kıran, Ömer Ümmiye also was born, and thus on the same night two baby boys had entered this world. The father of this second child went to the grand vizier and said, "O vizier, a son was also born to me tonight. You told us that you would put on royal salary any boy who was born here tonight. You have already placed the heir of the Haşimi family on royal salary, and you should also

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place my son on such a salary--something which he really needs, for we are poor."

When the grand vizier heard this plea, he again cast remil and then studied the signs that were given. He discovered from these signs that Ömer Ümmiye would become even more powerful than Hamzai Sahip Kıran, and he therefore immediately put him on royal salary, too. These two boys grew up together. Their lives were uneventful for fifteen years, and they grew up in comfort, for they had during all of that time drawn a royal salary. When they were old enough to do so, they spent time together hunting in the nearby mountains.

When he reached the age of fifteen, Hamzai Sahip Kıran became interested in wrestling. He soon became such a good wrestler that no one could throw him to the ground, neither boys his own age nor even adults. Not only was he very strong, but he also exercised and trained day and night. Of course it was Allah, Creator of Hamzai Sahip Kıran, who caused him to practice wrestling so steadily. Wrestlers from Mecca and from the surrounding area kept coming to Hamzai Sahip Kıran's arena, but none of them was able to defeat him. Was there any possibility that a

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wrestler, regardless of what family he came from, could throw Hamzai down on his back? Of course not. Hamzai Sahip Kiran won every contest, and he continued to improve his skill every day.

Hamzai Sahip Kiran and Ömer Ummye went everywhere together. They always ate and drank together. They always worn the same kind of clothes. And both of them received money to support themselves from royal pensions. They liked each other very much, and each was the other's best friend

One day when the two boys were hunting, a colt began following Hamzai Sahip Kiran. Since the colt was only an animal, without human mouth or tongue, it could not speak, and as a result, he was unable to tell Hamzai whose he was or why he was there. Hamzai Sahip Kiran searched everywhere in an effort to find the colt's owner, but he was unsuccessful in this search. But apparently this colt came from a noble line of horses.<sup>23</sup> It was Allah that made it follow Hamzai Sahip Kiran. It was Allah gave Hamzai Sahip Kiran that fate. Hamzai not only searched personally for this colt's owner, but he also sent messages about the colt to more distant places. But all such efforts

<sup>23</sup>The term used by the narrator here is askeri devzade.

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were in vain, and there seemed to be no way that he could discover the owner of the colt

By the time that two years had passed, the colt became a very fine horse, but Hamzai Sahip Kiran hesitated to ride it. He said repeatedly, "How can I ride on a horse that isn't mine? It belongs to someone else, and it would not be proper for me to use it." It was the fear of Allah that made him feel that way. (How different it is in our time. If you turn your back now, someone is likely to take something that belongs to you. Everything has changed so much! We may say that we can do this or that forbidden thing because nobody will see us doing it. But there is still Allah, Who sees everything that we do. Our minds do not always realize that nowadays. There are always eyes that see you when you are taking what is not yours.

Then one day Hamzai Sahip Kiran heard a great voice speaking, "The horse came to its owner. O Hamzai Sahip Kiran, this horse has been following you for two years. It is yours! Now take the horse which belongs to you Hamzai looked around for the source of that voice that he heard, but all he could see were rocks, the mountainside,

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and Ömer Ümmiye. He heard the voice speak this way three times, and Ömer Ümmiye heard that voice, too. Therefore, Hamzai Sahip Kiran took the horse, and when they returned home that night, he put it into his stable.

But Ömer Ümmiye ignored the message that they had received from the great voice. He said, "We were born on the same day; we have grown up together, and we have always shared everything that we have had. We should, therefore, share this horse, too."

Hamzai Sahip Kiran answered, "But Ömer, this horse is not like other kinds of goods. We cannot divide this horse. If we did, it would die.

But Ömer Ümmiye did not accept this statement. He insisted that they should share the horse equally. Hamzai tried very hard to change Ömer's mind about this, but he could not succeed in doing that. He said, "Ömer, everything that belongs to me also belongs to you. Tape 10 begins here. Everything which is mine is yours, too.

While they were arguing about this, they heard the great voice speaking again. It said, "Oh, Ömer, fortune is in the nearby cave. Go to that cave, and there you will find a sheepskin hanging on the wall. Take that

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sheepskin, and it will enable you to get whatever you want." It was the skin of the sheep which Prophet Abraham had sacrificed to Allah instead of his son Ishmael.<sup>23</sup> The skin of that sheep had been waiting there for Ömer Ümmiye since the time of Abraham. The sheep had been sent by Allah to replace Ishmael as sacrifice. Ömer went to the cave, took the sheepskin, and made a pouch<sup>24</sup> for himself it.

Oh, gentlemen, observe the working of Fate in this matter. Ömer went to Hamzai Sahip Kiran, who was sitting astride his horse, Askeri Beyzade.<sup>25</sup> He said to him, "O Hamzai Sahip Kiran, you refused to share the horse with but Allah has provided me with a fortune that is of greater value than a horse."

Hamzai asked, "But what is it? It looks like only an old leather pouch

Ömer answered, "You may see only an old leather pouch. Aha! See what I can get from my old leather pouch. I

<sup>23</sup>In the Moslem version of God's preventing Abraham from sacrificing his son, the son is Ishmael, not Isaac (as it is in the Old Testament). Ishmael (İsmail) is considered to be the progenitor and patriarch of the Arab people.

<sup>24</sup>The term used by the narrator here is dağarcık.

<sup>25</sup>Chief (or Prince) of Warriors.

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shall now put my hand in my pouch and draw forth some helva so fresh that it is still hot."

Hamzai Sahip Kiran did not believe that. He laughed, thinking that Ömer must have gone mad. He said, "Ah, Ömer, it is really nothing but an old leather pouch. You must be joking!"

Ömer replied, "Just wait a moment, Hamzai. Just wait and see." Ömer reached into the pouch, drew out two large pieces of helva, and began eating one of them.

Hamzai Sahip Kiran said, "Oh, Ömer, give me some, too. Don't eat all of it yourself."

Ömer answered, "Oh, Hamzai, that horse belongs to you, but this pouch belongs to me." However, he did give some of the helva to Hamzai Sahip Kiran.

As Hamzai ate the candy, he realized that its flavor was better than that of any helva he had eaten previously. He said, "This is the best-tasting helva I have ever eaten."

Ömer Ümmiye then said, "Well, Hamzai, whatever you may wish can be gotten for you from this pouch." Then Hamzai began to ask for all sorts of things that no one else could possibly provide, but Ömer produced every one

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of these things from his pouch. Gentlemen, behold all of the buried treasures that have been discovered across this whole land. Most of them were placed underground by Ömer Ümmiye. Allah made him gold mad and silver mad. When he withdrew from his pouch the gold and silver objects he had acquired, he buried them on moonlit nights for safe keeping, but then he usually forgot where he had buried them. His pouch never seemed to be without at least some gold and silver, but no matter how much he put into that pouch, it was never completely full. It was a magic pouch, the result of its having been made of the skin of the sheep sent by Allah as a substitute for Ishmael in Abraham's sacrificial offering.

Now we shall see how Ömer Ümmiye stole gold and silver dinner plates from Nuşirvan's dinner table and hid them in his pouch. Nuşirvan's guards examined the pouch but were unable to find anything in it because it was a magic pouch. They searched and searched inside the pouch, but they were unable to find any of the gold and silver plates.

Now I am beginning my main story. Listen very carefully in order to learn about some of the people who lived in this world before our own time. Gentlemen, all of the

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residents of Mecca heard about Ömer Ümmiye's magic pouch. Ömer Ümmiye was superior in some ways to Hamzai Sahip Kıran, for if he wished to do so, he could deliver a thousand human heads to Hamzai. When he told this to Hamzai Sahip Kıran, Hamzai said, "Don't do such a thing! We grew up together fed by Nuşirvan's bread. I have not requested a thousand heads from you, and it would be embarrassing to me if you were to bring them to me. People would say, 'Hamzai Sahip Kıran kills as many men as he can, but those he cannot slaughter he has killed by Ömer Ümmiye.' This would be a great disgrace for me, for it would be viewed as a sin in the eyes of Allah. Don't kill innocent people."<sup>26</sup> If Hamzai had not compelled Ömer to swear that he would not slaughter the innocent, Ömer would have brought him at least a thousand heads every night. Why? Because he did not have complete religious faith. How could he managed to catch so many people? Because he did not ordinary legs, and he could run faster than anyone else

<sup>26</sup>The unattractive qualities given to Ömer in this tale may well be a matter of Shi'ite bias. Ali, fourth caliph and symbol of Shi'ism, was deposed and killed by the Umayyad /sic/ clan, which then set up the Umayyad dynasty of caliphs, and in doing so caused the great schism between Sunnites and Shi'ites.

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Because Ömer Ümmiye did not have any kneecaps, he was able to run very swiftly. He could race with the wind. Hills and mountains were as easily crossed by him as flat plains were by other people. He could cover days' distance in two hours.<sup>27</sup> That was the reason he lived forty years longer than he was supposed to live

Azrail<sup>28</sup> was unable to catch him to take his soul because of Ömer's great speed. He could run faster than Azrail could fly. Unable to carry out his duty, Azrail appealed to Allah for advice. "O my Allah, I am not able to catch Ömer Ümmiye to take his soul. What should I do?"

Allah replied, "Azrail, get a golden pickaxe and a silver shovel and place them in a newly dug grave. Ömer Ümmiye will come to get that golden pickaxe and that silver shovel. When he climbs down into the grave to get them you can trap him there and thus catch him." Because Ümmiye was, by the will of Allah, passionately fond of gold and silver, he was unable to resist the lure of such metals whenever he saw them. He would do anything to get

<sup>27</sup>Turkish peasants until recently described distances in terms of the time it would take to traverse them on foot

<sup>28</sup>Hebrew and Moslem Angel of Death.

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them and put them in his pouch. Then in the moonlight he would bury these precious objects. Most of the buried treasures that people find were placed in the earth by Ömer Ümmiye. He lived for forty years longer than he should have.

While Azrail was digging a grave with the golden pickaxe and silver shovel, Ömer Ümmiye detected the presence of those precious metals nearby. Some feeling within him drew him to the grave to get those precious tools. When Ömer arrived there, Azrail said to him, "Oh, Ömer, come here and lie down in this grave."

"Why?" asked Ömer.

Azrail answered, "Someone died today, and he just your size. If you lie in this partly dug grave, I shall be able to tell how much more I shall have to dig. Ömer was so eager to get the golden pickaxe and the silver shovel that he did as Azrail had requested. Once was lying in the grave, Azrail jumped on his chest and said, "That is enough! You have not allowed me to take your life for the past forty years, but now it is for that to happen." Having said that, Azrail took Ömer

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Ümmiye's life <sup>29</sup>

(Gentlemen, no matter how long you may live, the last stopping place is always the grave. We must all go there. Let me now tell you something about that last stop, the grave

Some of them go on foot and others may ride  
on horses

If a loved one departs, you must bear all the  
grief

Arise in the dawn with all of your family.  
Whoever comes into this world must leave again

They come on the road that leads from Kirman.<sup>30</sup>

Clear hearts will see and steady hands write:  
That the last of our homes upon earth is the  
grave

Whoever comes into this world must leave again.

<sup>29</sup>This interpolated story is a folktale in its own right. In order to avoid losing its identity entirely in this extremely long tale, we have (for purposes of indexing and cataloguing) entered it in the ATON holdings as No. 1558.

<sup>30</sup>Kirman (or Kermen) is a middle-sized city in eastern Iran. What significance, if any, does Kirman have here?

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Though the nightingale flies, at the end, from  
its cage,  
it leave not the path of the justice of  
Allah,

The path that is shown in the mirror of Fate  
Whoever comes into this world must leave again

Avoid the curse of the innocent;  
Avoid revolt against authority;  
Avoid a life of sin on earth.  
Whoever comes into this world must leave again.

Meaningless is the inn you entered,  
what is water? What is air?  
And what is the sorrow of Solomon?  
Whoever comes into this world must leave again.

One day you will say, "Mahir has gone."  
An hour above is a thousand here.  
My grief will pass quickly in the sky.  
Whoever comes into this world must leave again  
Yes, one day you will speak about me, saying, "Once

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there was a Behçet Mahir. He used to tell us stories entertain us, but now he has gone." May Allah give us all well-being! May Allah give us our daily bread We long for those who have departed. We should work hard and we should perform good deeds so that, after we have departed, people will remember us favorably. What we do here should cause them to say, "Though he has gone, we have been saved." We should cause them to say, "May Allah have mercy upon him, for he was a very good person." It is only that which keeps this world from being a meaningless place, for we are here today and gone tomorrow.)

Hamzai Sahip Kiran trained to be a wrestler, but he also trained to become a skillful hunter. (Hard work can make you whatever you want to be, but laziness achieves nothing except to make you lazier every day; it makes you an unhealthy person. Why is that? Because your body becomes accustomed to not doing anything. After a while can reach the point at which you cannot even pick up a small stone. That is the reason that I keep saying, "Work! Work!" Those who preceded us in this world accomplished what they did by means of hard work. Nowadays, people have their children educated all the way from elementary school through the university, but unless the child has

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good sense, all of his education may come to nothing. You have to have not only great mental capacity but also good judgment. One must be clever in order to benefit from the ideas of his predecessors. Just being able to read and write is not enough. You must have cleverness and a willingness to work hard.

Gentlemen, we now see and hear about universities being built in every city in the land. Because of that, every young person can learn a foreign language without leaving home. In former times one had to go to a foreign country in order to learn a foreign language. Then one was sent abroad, to Europe or elsewhere, at great expense to one's parents, and at great anxiety to those parents who were, as a result, unable to see their children for long periods of time.

Now everything has changed. We have a valuable education system in which well-qualified instructors can teach our children everything. Our money need no longer go elsewhere to provide that education. This change was made possible by Atatürk, who started a program of university construction which continues to this day. It takes an intelligent person to realize the value of this system. Unless one has a clever brain, one cannot appreciate this

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change. I have a poem about universities which I shall now recite to you.

Atatürk built universities.  
 Friends rejoiced, but foes grew sad.  
 goal struck the eye of enemies  
 Great is the stature of universities

House of Science is on a campus.  
 A beautiful flag waves from its roof.  
 Its hearth never ceases to be aglow.  
 Great is the stature of universities.

Attending your classes can bring success.  
 Even the wise need the knowledge you teach,  
 without it all wisdom is functionless.  
 Great is the stature of universities.

Education has given our hands twelve fingers.

/Narrator makes this extraneous comment  
 before completing the quatrain!/ Before,  
 we could not help strangers in this country  
 because we could not understand them when  
 they asked for tea or asked for bread. And

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when we ourselves went abroad, we cursed for being unable to understand the languages there, but now we have the words to throw the curse back at such people. They claimed that the book of Jesus and the book of Moses<sup>31</sup> were theirs but not ours, but they are ours, too. --Now let me finish my quatrain.

Your worth is fully appreciated.

May your efforts be blessed by Allah!

Great is the stature of universities.)

Gentlemen, Nuşirvan had only one daughter, who was very dear to him and was the apple of his eye. She was a very beautiful girl, and her name was Mehli Nigâr Hamzai Sahip Kıran and Ömer Ümmiye did not know about her when they decided that they had an obligation to visit Nuşirvan.

Hamzai Sahip Kıran and Ömer Ümmiye said to each other, "Nuşirvan has now been supporting us and feeding us for fifteen years. We should go to his country and visit him." Hamzai and Ömer, along with ninety-seven wrestlers

<sup>31</sup>The books referred to are the New Testament and Old Testament respectively.

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who had by this time gathered around Hamzai, went to visit Nuşirvan.

When he discovered that these men had set out for Nuşirvan's land, Nuşirvan's grand vizier traveled half the distance between the two countries to welcome them. He then conducted the visitors into the presence of Nuşirvan. Hamzai Sahip Kiran was greatly excited by this visit, for Nuşirvan was the wealthiest and most powerful man of his time. His treasury was filled with jewels, gold, and silver. He was the ruler of seven countries <sup>32</sup> History says that he was first a shah and later a padishah. He had complete control of Shiraz <sup>33</sup> and supreme authority over all of its shahs. All of the lands up to the very border of India were in his domain. Nuşirvan had control of all these armies for his use at any time. The soldiers were all his

Nuşirvan's daughter and Hamzai Sahip Kiran were of the same age: fifteen. As I said, Mehli Nigâr was the only child of Nuşirvan. When Mehli Nigâr saw Hamzai Sahip

<sup>32</sup> Whether this refers to parts of what is now Iran or to external lands which comprised the Persian Empire is not certain.

<sup>33</sup> A major city in south-central Iran.

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Kıran, as he entered the palace with his wrestlers and Ömer Ümmiye, she at once fell madly in love with him and wished that she could throw herself from the balcony to be down where he was, but the iron bars on the windows prevented her from doing so. The servants of Mehli Nigâr also restrained her, saying, "O beautiful lady, what are you doing?" Mehli Nigâr fell madly in love with the handsome Hamzai Sahip Kıran. It was a love that was sudden but also very deep. Hamzai Sahip Kıran's face was not only handsome but also beatific, like the face of a saint (Even if a Moslem person reaches the age of one hundred years, his face may remain lighted with a divine glow His face may look the same as it had when he was in his twenties. It keeps both its fresh and saintly appearance. His face gleams continuously. The faces of infidels are not preserved as well as the faces of Moslems. They change with age and grow dark, lacking any glow.

Hamzai Sahip Kıran stole Mehli Nigâr's heart during her first glimpse of him. In that same instant, Hamzai Sahip Kıran glanced at the girl on the balcony and fell in love with her. He was astonished by the incredible beauty of her face, a beauty as great as that of the

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fourteenth of the moon.<sup>34</sup> Gentlemen, their Fate had been written before they were even born.

(Now let me speak briefly about Fate. Listen, and he who wishes to understand will do so. A word to the wise is enough. The words that I am uttering here do not belong to me; they were spoken by those who came before our time.

If the world were mine, why would it be all  
sadness?

I am formed from the soil of sadness never  
ending.

author of this Fate wrote of endless grief  
same pen wrote Creation and our Fate.<sup>35</sup>

Gentlemen, before Allah created anything else, He said to the pen, "Write, pen; write!"

The pen asked, "What should I write, my Allah?"

"Write the Moslem confession of faith, 'There is no

<sup>34</sup>Throughout the Moslem Middle East the moon is greatly admired as a symbol of beauty. Both oral and written literature testify to this. To compare any woman's beauty to that of the moon is to flatter the female. Here the girl is not only being compared with the moon, but she is even said to equal the celestial orb in beauty. So great is her beauty that it seems to be saying to the moon, "There is no point in your rising tonight, for I am more worthy of that role."

<sup>35</sup>Turkish poets and raconteurs often speak of Creation, Fate, and Divine Will not as things established or achieved but as if "in the beginning was the Word." John I, i.

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God but God.'"<sup>36</sup>

Having written that, the pen prostrated itself before Allah. As it did that, three beams of divine light burst forth from the pen. One went to heaven; one went to the arch above heaven; and the third remained there. Before He created all of the other creatures and things, Allah created the spirit of the Prophet Mohammed.

Just the brief moment during which Hamzai Sahip Kıran and Mehli Nigâr saw each other was time enough for them to fall madly in love. As I said, Allah had written their Fate before they were born, and no one can escape that Fate once it has been written.

Hamzai Sahip Kıran and Ömer Ümmiye were brought into Nuşirvan's presence, but neither of these men could understand the language of Nuşirvan. There were, however interpreters who could communicate the meaning of what each said to the other. Hamzai Sahip Kıran, Ömer Ümmiye, and all of the wrestlers were seated

Nuşirvan called his grand vizier to his side and said, "Oh, vizier, all of your predictions have become reality. Hamzai Sahip Kıran is a very strong and honest man."

<sup>36</sup>"Lailahe illallah" is the Arabic for this important expression.

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The grand vizier answered, "O my padishah, you must observe him from now on so that you will understand what kind of a person he really is." Nuşirvan looked at Hamzai Sahip Kıran and his ninety-seven wrestlers with great admiration

After a short while the dinner tables were set with golden plates and golden knives, forks, and spoons. Everywhere one looked there were expensive pieces of jewelry to be seen, all of which had been provided by Key Kubat. Hamzai Sahip Kıran was astonished at so much wealth and luxury. Servants then brought great quantities of food to the tables and began to serve it to everyone

to pour wine for them. Hamzai Sahip Kıran, Ömer Ümmiye, the ninety-seven wrestlers were seated at tables all around Nuşirvan

Everything seemed to be proceeding very pleasantly, but, alas, there was a serious problem. This was Ömer Ümmiye's irrepressible lust for gold and other precious things. He took three of the golden plates and put them inside his magic pouch, but he was observed doing this by Nuşirvan's grand vizier. The vizier reported this to the servants, saying, "The man seated by Hamzai Sahip Kıran

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has stolen three golden plates." The servants did not at first believe this, but when the dinner was finished and counted the golden plates, they discovered that three were indeed missing. The servants then informed Nuşirvan about this situation. The ruler was shocked by this information, but, upon second thought, he refused to believe what he had been told. (Now listen to what is going to happen as the result of a rift between Hamzai Sahip and Nuşirvan caused by two devils.)

Nuşirvan had the servants who had reported the theft bound hand and foot, but the grand vizier intervened on their behalf. He said to Nuşirvan, "Why have you had those servants tied up? I also saw what happened. I saw Ümmiye steal three golden plates and put them in his pouch. Examine that pouch, and if you do not find the golden plates inside, then turn the servants over to the executioner."

Nuşirvan replied, "Go back and sit down, Mehdi, and do not talk too much." Mehdi went back to his place, sat down, and remained silent. But then Nuşirvan called him back and said, "Go and tell Hamzai Sahip Kıran that I forgive Ömer Ümmiye, and I do not want the plates back tell him also that Ömer Ümmiye must never repeat such

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a deed in my presence.

Mehdi went to Hamzai Sahip Kiran and, speaking to him in his own language, said, "Your friend Ömer Ümkiye stole three golden plates from the table and put them in his pouch. He was seen doing this by our servants. ever, Nuşirvan said that he had forgiven Ömer Ümkiye that he did not want the plates back. But Nuşirvan warned that Ömer Ümkiye should never repeat such an act in his presence."

Hamzai Sahip Kiran turned in the direction of Ömer Ümkiye and glared at him angrily. He then stood up and said to Mehdi, "I do not want Nuşirvan to forgive Ömer Ümkiye! He should instead order someone to examine the inside of the pouch. If the plates are found inside, then he may, if he wishes, kill or punish Ömer Ümkiye right now. I am not responsible for that kind of bad behavior." Inasmuch as Hamzai Sahip Kiran knew the secret of the magic pouch, he knew that he could speak safely in a tone of anger

Hearing Hamzai's loud remarks but not understanding them, Nuşirvan asked his interpreter, "What is it that he is saying so loudly?"

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The interpreter explained: "He said that he was not responsible for whatever bad behavior his men committed. He said that you should have the pouch searched and if the plates were found within, you should punish him in any way you wished

(Gentlemen, no one can be responsible for a thief. Neither father nor mother nor brother can control the behavior of a thief. They may be able to influence the behavior of a murderer, but not of a thief. Gentlemen if you try to help a thief, then you too are, in a way, a thief. Whether one steals a chicken or a cow, it amounts to the same thing. The punishment for stealing either a chicken or a cow is six months in jail. Now if you wish to buy a chicken, the price is only thirty liras, but if you wish to buy a cow, the price may be 40,000 liras. Why, then, should the punishment for both crimes be same? What is the reason for that? It is because of the fact that if a man steals a chicken today, he is likely to steal a cow tomorrow. Or he may go from stealing a chicken to stealing a goose to stealing a cow. Therefore, gentlemen, no one can account for the behavior of a thief; no one wants anything to do with him; no one even wants to sit near such a person. On the other hand, one may be

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willing to talk with a murderer and perhaps even find some justification for his crime. Theft is a very low and evil act. The worst crime is taking something that does not belong to you.

They searched and searched the pouch of Ömer Ümmiye, but they were unable to find anything in it. Ömer Ümmiye arose in great fury and said, "Now go ahead and search my pouch again! Can you find anything in it?" So they searched the pouch again, and again they found nothing.

The guests remained in Nuşirvan's palace for eight days and eight nights. Nuşirvan ordered his men to give gold to Hamzai Sahip Kiran and his wrestler friends. When the ninth day arrived, Nuşirvan instructed his men, "Take these wrestlers and Hamzai Sahip Kiran on a tour of the city. Show them my army with all its soldiers, and show them too my great prosperity

Hamzai Sahip Kiran and his ninety-seven wrestlers taken through the whole city. It took three days three nights to show the guests everything. [Tape No. 11 begins here.] Hamzai Sahip Kiran observed all of this, including Nuşirvan's soldiers and his great prosperity. Hamzai was all the while thinking, "What I really

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want is Nuşirvan's daughter. If he is willing to give her to me, that will be very pleasant, but if he is unwilling to give her to me, then I shall have to get her by means of my sword."

Because Hamzai Sahip Kıran and Mehli Nigâr had fallen madly in love with each other, there was a pathway between the hearts of the two. Mehli had wished to throw herself from the balcony in order to be with Hamzai Sahip Kıran, but the servants had restrained her.

Well, gentlemen, on the twelfth day, Hamzai Sahip Kıran, Ömer Ümmiye, and those ninety-seven wrestlers left the city of Nuşirvan, the city of Ani. As they were departing, Hamzai Sahip Kıran realized, "I shall never be able to capture this city by means of power of the sword." This city was built in such a way as to make it very secure. Ani was built, as I told you earlier, by Key Kubat, the grandfather of Nuşirvan. As I also told you, there is a proverb which says that if the rest of the world were destroyed, Ani could reconstruct it, but if Ani were destroyed, all the rest of the world could not rebuild it. What finally destroyed the city of Ani was a curse

Gentlemen, Nuşirvan said goodbye to Hamzai Sahip Kıran

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and wished him a safe journey home with all of the gold that had been given to him. Yes, he left Nuşirvan's country. But all of the way back to his own land of Mecca, his three hundred and sixty-six veins were aflame with love for Mehli Nigâr. It was a fire that no water could quench. No one in the world could make him forget his love of Mehli Nigâr, for that love was larger than anything else, larger than anybody else

I should like to recite for you a poem about love. This poem was written by me. I have passed the age of sixty, and now I am seventy.<sup>37</sup> I have faced many difficulties and I have overcome all troubles that I have encountered. But I in turn was overcome by love. I was young and strong, but love defeated me.

Great pain not caused by any battle wound  
 A pain no judge or şehit<sup>38</sup> understands,  
 Love's pain for beauty that the heart desires  
 know it is a thing more felt than said.

know my heart's pain, and Allah also knows it, for He  
<sup>37</sup>At the time of this narration, he was in fact sixty-eight.

<sup>38</sup>Either a person who has died defending Islam or one who has died in serving Turkey.

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created me and my Fate. But if a person has not had this experience himself, then how can he understand what I am saying?

I cannot tell what I have seen of love.  
I saw but cannot say just what I saw.  
I can't deny the love that you confessed,  
yet it is a thing more felt than said.

My hair grew white--yes, whiter than the snow,  
still my heart will boil if I think Woman,  
Whether that one is dead or still alive.  
Ah, yes, it is a thing more felt than said.

I learned love's sorrow while I was asleep,  
A vessel newly launched upon the sea.  
I was reduced to skin and bones and brain;  
A curious thing that is more felt than said.

Gentlemen, a person lost in love can soon become no more than skin and bones, a body lacking flesh. If it were not for his skin, his bones would fall apart and scatter. Only his brain is left intact

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listen well to what I have to say:  
 Your brain must function well and not in vain.  
 I gave my beauty to the cold grave stones.  
 This must be learned through feeling, not  
 through words.

How will Mahir survive upon this earth?  
 Well yesterday, today much less than well.  
 I came tonight but may not see the dawn.  
 this one knows without the use of words

There is a chance of not awakening. Love is a misery for  
 which the pharmacy has no cure, the doctor has no remedy.  
 You cannot halt love.

Why have I been talking about love? Because Hamzai  
 Sahip Kiran's heart had been set on fire by a single glance  
 at Mehli Nigâr. By the time Hamzai Sahip Kiran reached  
 his own country with his wrestlers, all three hundred and  
 sixty-six of his veins had caught fire. He thought, "I  
 have arrived here, but where is Mehli Nigâr? I could not  
 bring her here. If she is not here, I cannot be Hamzai!  
 cannot tell what I am eating or where I shall sleep.  
 But love does not permit one to sleep because of your

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longing for the missing loved one. You do not eat, nor do you wish to eat. Your condition will grow worse worse with every day that passes, and after a while will have no wish to live at all

When Hamzai Sahip Kiran reached Mecca, his three hundred and sixty-six veins were all in flames and were burning. What are they saying? They are saying, "If that whipped bird had any hope for this world, it would not be singing in the ruins. They are saying that the end of the world is ruin. If the moth were not in love with the fire, it would not circle around it, eventually throwing itself into the flames

When Hamzai Sahip Kiran went to his palace, he called his wrestlers to him and said, "I want you to know that I am going to write on my own behalf to Nuşirvan. I shall tell him that I wish to marry his daughter, Mehli Nigâr. If he decides to give her to me, everything will go satisfactorily. If he decides not to give her to me, then he should think about the consequences of his decision. I shall either marry her or die in the attempt to do so."

Mehli Nigâr had fallen just as madly in love with Hamzai Sahip Kiran as he had with her. Burning with love for him, she said to herself, "What could I ever do with

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my father's crown? What could I do with my father's wealth and his sovereignty over many people? What are such things to me? But if Hamzai Sahip Kiran's hand and mine were joined, it would mean more than the whole world to me." The Writer who wrote their Fate wrote in such a manner. This writing could not be changed or set aside. It was written by the powerful One.

Many important people in the past wished to change the Fate that was written for them, but they were unable to do so. This you should know

Once Nurettin Arabî<sup>39</sup> found a means of examining the Great Book of Affairs.<sup>40</sup> When he located his own name in the Great Book of Affairs, he discovered written alongside it a statement that he would be killed at a certain time at a certain place. He was greatly surprised to discover such a statement, and he asked himself, "Why is this written here? And why should I be killed? I am, after all, the Commander of the Faithful! It cannot be!"

<sup>39</sup>Nurettin (Nur al-Din?) Arabî is not listed in the Encyclopedia of Islam, The Cambridge History of Islam, or the Turkish Encyclopaedia.

<sup>40</sup>Even though much mythology and early religion was transmitted by the oral tradition, Moslem narrators visualize religious concepts, Fate, and the Will of the Deity as written doctrine. The writing seems not only to make the abstract graphic but also to insure its validity.

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Nurettin Arabî put his finger in his mouth to wet it with saliva. Then he used his wetted finger to erase his name from the Great Book, but when he dropped his arm to his side, his name reappeared at the same spot. He very quickly erased it again, but once more it reappeared on the page. Then when he attempted to erase it for a third time, a voice spoke from above saying, "If you erase that for a third time, I shall erase you. You must accept your Fate." In the end he was killed at the time and place that had been written. So, if even Nurettin Arabî could not change his Fate, how can we?<sup>41</sup>

Hamzai Sahip Kıran wrote a letter with his own hand to Nuşirvan. Handing it to Ömer Ummiye to deliver, he said, "O Ömer, do not give this letter to anyone else. Take it directly to Nuşirvan and place it in his own hands. Otherwise, it might be hidden by someone else and never reach Nuşirvan." What did he say in this letter?

"O Nuşirvan, after I had entered this world I grew up with your support, receiving your salary and eating

<sup>41</sup>This interpolated story is a folktale in its own right. In order to avoid losing its identity entirely in this extremely long tale, we have (for indexing and cataloguing purposes) entered it in the ATON holdings as No. 1572.

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your bread. When I reached the age of fifteen, I wanted to visit you to thank you for this support. But I want you to know that I come from the family<sup>42</sup> of the Prophet and I should not have been the one to go to you. You should have come to my country to visit me. But because you were a very just ruler, and because you had supported me during my childhood, I went to you.

"While I was there I walked about your city and discovered that you were a just person. I saw your large and well-trained army, too, but that army can do no harm to me as long as I have the aid of my countrymen

"I also saw a beauty while I was there, a girl standing on the balcony of the palace. Although no army in the world could defeat me, and no one could pin my back to the ground, the love for Mehli Nigâr overcame me. One glance at that girl caused me to fall in love with her. I wish to marry her. If you send Mehli Nigâr, accompanied by two women and provided with a dowry, all will go well. If you do not do that, however, I shall confront you with my sword, which is powerful enough to defeat not just one Nuşirvan but even two Nuşirvans. Then after that I shall have Mehli Nigâr anyway. But ask your daughter if she

<sup>42</sup>Hashimi family of Mecca, as mentioned above.

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likes me, for though I love her, our marriage would not succeed unless she loved me, too. It is said, 'Love the person who loves you, but avoid the person who does not love you, regardless of how mighty his or her station might be

If you try to arrange a personal relationship by force, the result will be unsatisfactory. But Hamzai Sahip Kiran already knew that Mehli Nigâr had some feeling for him, too, for he had observed her effort to throw herself from the balcony to him, and he had seen the servants restraining her only with great difficulty. Hamzai Sahip Kiran had observed all this, and he had concluded that his love for her was matched by hers for him.

"O Nuşirvan, ask your daughter if she cares for me. If she says, 'No,' then I shall desist. But if your daughter says, 'Yes,' and you fail to send her to me, then I shall come and take her with my sword." He then placed the letter in an envelope, handed it to Ömer Ümmiye, and said, "Take this letter and deliver it personally to Nurşirvan. Do not let any other person in his palace have it." Hamzai knew that Nuşirvan had fifty-two servants in his palace who did nothing but attend to visitors. They served the visitors, but they also examined them

Story 1700

carefully and kept them steadily under observation. These special guards were so clever that it seemed almost as if they had been taught by a devil.

we shall see some of Hamzai Sahip Kiran's fighting and Ömer Ümmiye's rescuing of Nuşirvan. Ömer Ümmiye departed and started toward the palace of Nuşirvan, and he will have arrived there tomorrow when we return here.

Although the mother gave birth to the son, I shall tell you tomorrow what kind of son that was, İnşallah.<sup>43</sup> But for now, Ömer Ümmiye is on his way to Nuşirvan's palace. Thus, our story ends here for tonight, and tomorrow night, İnşallah, I shall tell you the rest of the story, and you can listen to it

/January 10, 1977--Second evening of narration.7

Gentlemen, before we renew the telling of our story we must have some introduction to it. As you know, if you wish to enter a building, you must first open a door; now the door of the story will be opened by means of a poem. Storytellers who preceded us used this means of beginning a story, and we are following in their tradition

<sup>43</sup>If Allah is willing. It often is used after a statement of what one intends to do, a gesture of humility made to avoid hubris.

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First I shall recite four quatrains of my own, and then I shall recite a long set of quatrains by a greater poet.<sup>44</sup>

Stay on the path of truth when you walk.  
That is the route which will never betray you.  
Though sweat may pour from my limbs today,  
May not mine be the head of a virtuous man?

Patience is the brave man's greatest strength.  
Regardless of the tears his eyes may shed,  
The man endowed with patience will succeed.  
May not my empty head be patient?

What is my lot in life is quite enough.  
The pains of love begin and later end.  
Others may console or hold your hand a while.  
May not this empty brain endure though sleepless?

<sup>44</sup>As the narrator indicates at the end of the long series of quatrains, this greater poet was Summani, probably the greatest minstrel of eastern Turkey during the very early years of the twentieth century. He lived at Sami Kale village, kaza of Narman, in central Erzurum Province, and he was still alive during the narrator's childhood.

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Behçet Mahir recites his own words here  
Well has he done if he has told the truth  
The pangs of love have driven him quite mad  
May not this empty brain be virtue's voice?

If someone does not want to listen to you, even shouting will be of no avail. A word to the wise is sufficient. He who is wise will understand it.

Now I shall tell part of a long poem which probably no one now remembers in its entirety. I should like to tell all of it that I know, and then we shall renew the telling of our story. This poem is about the Prophet Abraham and about the ram which was sent down to him from the sky.

Do not rely on the wealth you may gain in this world.

Of far greater worth is a pureness of heart to your God.

Don't claim for yourself the height of sincerity.

Don't act like a bully or carry your bluster to court.

Story 1700

Don't go to extremes or seek some impossible  
goal.

Don't strive in this world for an utterly perfect  
result.

What happened to all of the power and wealth of  
Harun?<sup>45</sup>

They were seized, one by one, and passed to the  
hands of Burhan.<sup>46</sup>

If you wish to possess any realm that will  
shatter and leave,

If you wish to exist in a place that is lacking  
in air,

<sup>45</sup>The most powerful and well known of the Abbasid caliphs at Baghdad, he reigned from 786 to 809.

<sup>46</sup>The luxury and extravagance of the Abbasid caliphs became legendary. When Harun Reşit (Harun al-Rashid) died in 809, he was succeeded by his son, Amin, whose brief reign was followed by that of another son, Ma'mün. When Ma'mün married Buran (here pronounced Burhan), the eighteen-year-old daughter of his vizier, in 825, the celebration occasioned ". . . such fabulous expenditure of money that it has lived in Arabic literature as one of the unforgettable extravaganzas of the age." For details of this orgy of conspicuous consumption, see Philip Hitti's The Arabs: A Short History (Princeton University Press, 1945), pp. 91-92.

## Story 1700

If you wish to learn all of the secrets regarding  
this world,  
Go and ask Solomon,<sup>47</sup> ruler from north to the  
south.

Not even his throne could Solomon keep very long.  
Whoever comes into this world must leave again.  
Whoever once held great sovereignty in this  
world,  
Even he had to leave, step down, when his time  
had expired.

Once Abraham said, "If You give me an heir,  
I shall sacrifice even my dearest possession.  
This I shall do if only You give me a child."  
He said this while lifting his hands in respect  
to his God.

<sup>47</sup>The reference here is almost certainly to the Biblical Solomon, son of David. He has been clearly identified previously in this tale. There is, however, always the need for some caution while working on Turkish folktales which include men named Solomon or its Turkish equivalent, Süleyman. Peasant narrators frequently confuse the Biblical Solomon, whom they call Süleyman, with the great Ottoman Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent (who ruled from 1520-1566).

## Story 1700

Those who were there understood not the secret--  
Not even the scholars or wise men round Abraham.  
The pregnancy came to Hacer by the will of God  
Behold all the beauty bestowed by our God!

With the powerful aid he received in response  
to his prayer

Abraham, prophet, rewarded by Allah.

When the pregnancy ended nine months and nine  
days from its start,

A prince of great promise was born to a life in  
this world.

People from far and from near came to gaze at  
this prince,

Abraham's son who'd been granted to him by God.

And what did they name the child they'd received  
in this way?

named the child Ishmael, him who'd been  
granted by God.

## Story 1700

The pity which Allah had felt for Abraham  
Had caused good fortune to hover o'er Abraham's  
head.<sup>48</sup>

When Ishmael came to three, to five, to seven,  
His father forgot that he'd promised a sacrifice

Then the prophet one night received word from  
the world beyond,

A word to remind him of something he owed:

"You vowed once to sacrifice even your heart's  
delight.

Your Ishmael must on the altar be slaughtered."

He ordered Hacer, "Go bathe now our son, comb  
His hair, and henna both of his hands;<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup>This image may derive from the belief that when one is about to be the beneficiary of good luck, the event is heralded by the Bird of Fortune's hovering over one's head. This bird is usually considered to be invisible, but when one receives unexpected good luck, one assumes that the Bird of Fortune had flown over his or her head.

<sup>49</sup>Henna is a reddish-brown dye used to color the hands (and sometimes feet) for ceremonial occasions. It is especially common for a bride (and often her attendants, too) to have hands hennaed the evening before the wedding.

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Shade his eyelids with kohl and dress him  
attractively.

He'll be with me today when I go to the forest  
for wood."

Then the mother bathed and dried their Ishmael  
Hair combed, hands hennaed, his eyes dark with  
kohl,

He was dressed in the finest of raiment he had.  
Then, holding hands, the father and son departed.

When they started their journey hand in hand  
To keep a promise the father had made to God,  
The curséd Satan went to their home at once  
To lay great grief upon poor Hacer's heart.

When Satan told her how her son would die  
She said, "Your curséd mouth lacks honesty!  
My son, whose hair is musked and ambergrised,  
Is with his father now, our Allah's prophet."

## Story 1700

When Satan heard the words that Hacer spoke,  
 His hands and feet were tangled hopelessly.<sup>50</sup>  
 In the space of a breath he flew to Ishmael  
 And said, "Halt, civan!"<sup>51</sup> Listen to my words!

"I'll tell you something that you do not know:  
 Your father means to sacrifice your life.  
 Upon an altar he will slaughter you  
 Ah, what a pity for a handsome youth!"

out! Do other work!" said Ishmael,  
 I shall cause your eyes to flow with tears!"  
 Throwing a stone, he injured Satan's eye,  
 And powerful Satan feared this little child

But Ishmael did more than scare this demon.  
 The stone he threw had blinded Satan's eye.  
 Before they reached the mount of Arafat,<sup>52</sup>  
 The son asked, "Father, whither are we bound?"

<sup>50</sup>A figurative expression to indicate confusion.

<sup>51</sup>A word meaning a handsome youth. We kept the Turkish here because the translation would be too long to fit into the metered line.

<sup>52</sup>A mountain near Mecca, Arafat is one of the stations along the pilgrims' ritual progression during their visit to Mecca.

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Son, my bosom grieves," said Abraham.

The mountain Arafat itself should moan  
To see you slaughtered by your father's knife,  
To see my hands grow red with your life blood."

"My father, will you do this thing to me?

can a wise man act in ignorance?

can a father be his own son's foe?

Have pity, Father! Slaughter not your son!"

But Abraham replied, "What can we do?

It is our Fate, the order of our God.

I made a promise to Him in the past,

When our mysterious God sent you to me."

"Had I known this before," said Ishmael,

"I should have cleansed my erring heart of sin

And sought forgiveness for my mother's gifts.<sup>53</sup>

But now we shall not meet till Judgment Day.

<sup>53</sup>This is related to the helal/haram concept described in Footnote 16 above. All of one's indebtedness in this world must be forgiven by one's creditors or benefactors. Otherwise, one's various debts will be held against one

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let my mother shed hot tears of love.

loss of me, her liver soon will ache.<sup>54</sup>

Father, first tie my arms before you strike.

Life is so sweet, I might resist your hand.

When Abraham bound both of Ishmael's arms,

son lay on the altar with a moan

Above, the angels witnessed from the sky.

"Release my arms so I can speak to God."

The pious boy then opened his arms and said,

"I now accept whatever Fate is mine

"My father, whet your blade and flex your arm,

Then strike with force before I can rebel.

at the bar of justice on Judgment Day. It is especially important that one's mother forgive one and absolve all indebtedness for her care and the milk with which she nursed one. A mother's most powerful weapon to make her children comply with her wishes is a threat that she will not absolve indebtedness for her milk--that is to say, make her milk helal.

<sup>54</sup>Bodily organs associated with various emotional problems vary from culture to culture. In Turkish lore, sudden fright is not thought to affect the heart but the gall bladder--which, at worst, may even burst. Similarly grief does not always affect the heart but often causes liver pain.

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I was not fooled by words that Satan spoke,  
For God's compassion flowed into my heart.  
View not my face lest grief deter your hand.  
An offering foiled will gladden only Hell."

"You are the orchard of my heart, Ishmael."  
"But give that now no thought," the son replied.  
"What happened to the power of your arm?  
Here let me die, a sacrifice to God."

He loved his son upon the altar laid.  
Angels in ranks gazed on him from above.  
A message to the knife was sent by God:  
"Don't cut him! Do not harm a single hair!"

whole community of man now wept,  
And angels in the sky sang out their prayers.  
Then chanting thrice, the father struck a blow.  
useless knife had damaged not a hair.

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Amazed was Blessed Abraham by this  
 The angels contemplated in the sky  
 Then Abraham struck at a nearby stone,  
 Cleaving it cleanly with a single slash.

Great is the sin of shunning God's commands  
 What earthly being dares to disobey?  
 Then Gabriel brought a ram through Allah's will,  
 Shouting, "Our Allah is Omnipotent!"<sup>55</sup>

If there had been no miracle performed,  
 If the wise One hadn't offered this release,  
 If the ram had not been sent down from above--  
 How great a human loss by sacrifice!

Now hear the words of Beçet Mahir once again

Summani felt joy in serving God  
 My lot is sorrow in this vain attempt  
 To reproduce an epic so divine.  
 Behçet Mahir relays it to the world

<sup>55</sup>Allahüekber!

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poem was left to us by the late<sup>56</sup> elder poet Summani. My part is simply to retell the poem in order to keep it alive, to prevent its being forgotten. I want such poems to be remembered. If there is only a single green leaf on a tree, there is hope for that tree; but if all its leaves are yellow, know then that there is no hope for its survival. Even a very light wind may send it crashing to the ground. Human beings are like that, except that instead of getting yellow leaves, they get white hair. Yes, today is the day; this is our hour; and once we depart, we shall never return! That's the way it is! No one has ever come back so far. Once you are gone, you are gone!

The story that I was telling you yesterday was about Hamzai Sahip Kiran. Yesterday we had reached the place in the story where Hamzai Sahip Kiran had sent a letter to Nuşirvan, a letter which was to be delivered to that ruler by Ömer Ümmiye. Ömer Ümmiye placed the letter in his sash and raced faster than the wind to Nuşirvan's country.

<sup>56</sup>Inasmuch as Summani had been dead about sixty years by the time Behçet Mahir was narrating this tale, the word late does not seem appropriate here.

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He went all the way from Mecca to Nuşirvan's country in one night. (As you know, everything can happen very quickly in stories. Forty male babies can be born and can grow into men in their respective countries all in one night!) Ömer Ümmiye went directly to Nuşirvan's palace and placed the letter in that ruler's hands.

Nuşirvan took the letter, read it, and then said, "He wrote first the words which should have been written last."

What did Hamzai Sahip Kıran say? As I told you last night, he said, "O Nuşirvan, the padishah of all the world, I went to visit you because we had long been eating your bread. If I had not been supplied in this way by you for fifteen years, I should not have come to pay my respects to you, but the bread that you gave me brought me here. During my visit I fell in love with your daughter, Mehli Niğâr, who was looking down at me from the balcony of your palace. She saw me at the same time I saw her, and she, in turn, fell in love with me. We experienced the same feeling at the very same moment. We were wounded without the shooting of any arrows. We received deep heart wounds without having been struck by any shafts. By the will of

## Story

Allah and with the consent of the Prophet<sup>57</sup> I want to have Mehli Nigâr as my wife. If you will give your daughter to me, everything will go well; but if you should refuse to give her, then swords, pikes and shields will go into action between us, and much blood will be shed. However, I do not want your daughter unless she consents to our marriage. If she does not want me, then that will be that, but if she does desire me as I desire her, then she will be mine. If I am not wanted by her, then I shall not take her by force." These were the words written in the letter.

Hamzai Sahip Kïran had given this order to Ömer Ümmiye: "Do not steal a single thing at the palace of Nuşirvan. Had he been free to steal there, he could have found all sorts of very valuable objects to take. Nuşirvan's crown alone was worth a whole fortune. But Ömer Ümmiye took nothing because of his fear of Hamzai Sahip Kïran. He behaved himself very well.

<sup>57</sup>Until recently most Turkish marriages were arranged by matchmakers; in rural areas many are still arranged in that way. In requesting the hand of the girl X for the boy Y, the matchmaker always says that this is being done by the will of Allah and the consent of the Prophet /Mohammed/. There is no evidence about the will of Allah and the consent of the Prophet. It is almost as if the wish is father to the thought. The declaration of the matchmaker is made, as it were, in the optative subjunctive mood.

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After Nuşirvan had finished reading the letter, he handed it to the commanders-in-chief of his two armies. Regardless of what the issue was, these two military leaders influenced the decisions that Nuşirvan made. After reading the letter, they looked into Nuşirvan's face and said, "O our padishah, you fed this boy for fifteen years, and now he announces that he will take by force your daughter whom he has seen just once. He says that much blood will be shed if you refuse to give Mehli Nigâr to

He has behaved in a shameful way! Does he not know even ten Hamzai Sahip Kırans of his type could not defeat Nuşirvan's armies?"

But the grand vizier could not tolerate their aggressive comments. He said to Nuşirvan, "We should make no decision about the letter right now. It is not possible to do so. We should send the letter to Mehli Nigâr in order to discover her feeling about it. She is the one who should judge what Hamzai Sahip Kiran has written. She is the one who should have the last word about it. If the girl wants him but you say 'No' to him, then your word will be wasted. We should discover Mehli Nigâr's opinion on this matter. We should listen to her response."

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Those around the ruler asked, "By whom should this letter be taken to her?"

Ömer Ümmiye spoke up then and said, "Order me to do and I shall take the letter to Mehli Nigâr."

But the two commanders-in-chief, Zohru and Mehdi<sup>58</sup> interfered again, saying, "No, our padishah, we should not send the letter to Mehli Nigâr by Ömer Ümmiye, for he is likely to influence her response to it. We should have the letter taken to her by one of our own men." The letter was therefore given to a man named Cive for delivery to Mehli Nigâr.

Nuşirvan said to him, "Cive, take this letter to my daughter, Mehli Nigâr. Let us see what she will say about it."

Cive took the letter and went to Mehli Nigâr's palace. female servants took the letter to Mehli Nigâr and said, "O Mehli Nigâr, from your father's palace a man named Cive has brought a letter for you."

"All right," the princess answered. "Give it to me." It seem that Mehli Nigâr had been awaiting news of some

<sup>58</sup>Some time earlier in this tale (during the episode in which Ömer Ümmiye steals the golden plates) Nuşirvan seems to be referring to his grand vizier as Mehdi.

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kind from Hamzai Sahip Kiran. Her heart had been beating rapidly for a letter from him. As I told you yesterday, "Beauty resides in the one you love." Even if you were presented with the most beautiful girl in the world, she could not replace the one you love. When Mehli Nigâr saw the name of Hamzai Sahip Kōran on the letter which Cive had brought, her tears began to fall. She said to herself, "This letter was written to my father, but the writer wants me." Hamzai Sahip Kiran had written in the last sentence of his letter, "If your daughter wants me, I shall do anything to get her, but if she does not want me, I shall search for another beauty." Cive stood by, watching the tears flowing from Mehli Nigâr's eyes.

The girl first wrote her name, Nuşirvan's daughter, Mehli Nigâr, in response to the letter. /Tape 11 ends here and Tape 12 begins. Then she wrote, "I fell in love with Hamzai Sahip Kiran during my first glance at him. I am his, and he is mine. It makes no difference whether or not my father gives me to Hamzai, for I shall never give him up." Then she continued, "Everything that Hamzai said in his letter was true. I saw him from the balcony and fell in love with him at that very moment.

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Even if there were forty Nuşirvans like my father, they could not take Hamzai away from me nor take me away from Hamzai. Even if my father should have me chopped tiny bits, every piece would cry out 'Hamzai!'" Having written this, she said to Cive, "Take this letter and give it to my father."

Nuşirvan read this letter just as soon as he received it. Then his daughter's answer was circulated about the room so that everyone who was gathered there could also read it. And they were all impressed with Mehli Nigâr's final words: "Even if my father were to chop me into tiny bits, every piece would cry out 'Hamzai!'"

As Nuşirvan was watching the faces of those who were reading the letter, his two military commanders, Zohru and Mehdi, arose in one corner of the room. These two were the kind of men who sow discord among people. They said "O our padishah, your daughter's mind was stolen and influenced by our enemies. How can you even consider giving your daughter to Hamzai Sahip Kiran? Do not be deceived and do not be misled, O our padishah. Mehli Nigâr not deserve being married to someone like Hamzai Sahip Kiran! She deserves someone ten times as good as he is. He is nothing compared to our Mehli Nigâr."

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Speaking in this way they hoped to influence Nuşirvan's decision on how he would handle this problem, and it became obvious almost at once that their hope was realized. Nuşirvan wrote his response on the back of Hamzai Sahip Kiran's letter

"Oh, Hamzai Sahip Kiran, I fed you and supported you for fifteen years, during which time I never mentioned swords and shields. I do not have a daughter to give you. Don't you even know that there are hundreds of thousands of Hamzai Sahip Kirans like you who cannot challenge me or defy me?"

After Nuşirvan had finished writing, he gave the letter to Ömer Ümmiye. Ömer Ümmiye took it and left the palace, but he was followed by soldiers. Nuşirvan had ordered these men to follow Ömer Ümmiye to show him the way to the city limits. After going for a way along the city streets, Ömer Ümmiye turned to the troops behind him and said, "Gentlemen,<sup>59</sup> you do not know how to carry out your assignment. Inasmuch as I am a stranger to your city, I should be following you, and you should be leading me." And so thereafter Nuşirvan's men led the way. When they reached the fountain just beyond the city limits, the leader

<sup>59</sup>The Turkish term here is efendiler.

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of the soldiers said, "Ömer Ümmiye, we have brought you this far, but from now on you must continue on your way by yourself. Our work has been completed."<sup>60</sup>

"Thank you very much for your help," answered Ömer Ümmiye. "To show my appreciation, I should like to give you a small present--only a shepherd's present."<sup>61</sup> Saying this, he reached into his magic pouch and withdrew a tray of helva. He handed this to Nuşirvan's soldiers, saying, "Take this and eat it. It is very tasty." The soldiers accepted this helva and ate it, but then they collapsed upon the ground and lay there as if they were dead men. Then Ömer Ümmiye undressed one of the soldiers and put his uniform on himself. He then turned back toward the palace.

At the palace Nuşirvan, thinking he was one of his own soldiers, asked the disguised Ömer Ümmiye, "Did you lead Ömer Ümmiye to the edge of the city?"

The disguised Ömer Ümmiye answered, "Yes, my padishah,

<sup>60</sup>This little episode of the troops' guiding Ömer Ümmiye to the city limits is rather pointless, except for the fact that Ömer wishes to purloin a military uniform for his own purposes. This is the second time he has come to and departed from the palace, and this time he got there alone without any assistance. Surely he knows the way quite well.

<sup>61</sup>Çoban armağanı çam sakızı (a shepherd's present of pine pitch) is an expression of modesty used when presenting someone with a gift.

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we took him to the edge of the city, and then he continued on his way to Mecca alone." Now we shall see what Ömer Ümmiye will do after this point. By walking very slowly and stealthily, he was able to get very close to Mehli Niğâr. Because no one noticed him there, he took the opportunity to bite the girl's ear viciously. Mehli fell to the floor in great pain. By this time everyone realized that the man in the military uniform was not one of Nuşirvan's soldiers but Ömer Ümmiye instead.

The palace people shouted, "Catch him! Kill him!" but it was too late for that. Ömer Ümmiye had by then fled like a bird

When Nuşirvan heard of this, he asked, "Oh, my grand vizier, can you catch Ömer Ümmiye?"

The vizier answered, "My padishah, if he was able to come back here and tear Mehli Niğâr's ear, he must first have done something to the soldiers too." When they rushed to the fountain, they saw the three soldiers lying on the ground there as if they were dead.

In the meantime, Ömer Ümmiye returned to the palace still dressed as one of Nuşirvan's soldiers. He said to himself, "I cannot return to Hamzai without having seen his Mehli Niğâr. If he should ask me whether I had seen

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her, I simply could not afford to say, 'No.' I must, therefore, find Mehli Nigâr and talk with her."

When the girl's servants saw Ömer Ümmiye approaching, they said to Mehli Nigâr, "One of your father's men has come."

After he had been admitted into her room, Ömer Ümmiye greeted the princess and then he said, "O Mehli Nigâr, can you recognize me? Who am I?"

The girl answered, "You must be the best friend of Hamzai Sahip Kıran. You must be Ömer Ümmiye."

"Oh, delicate beauty, how did you know that I am Ömer Ümmiye?"

I recognized you in your greeting," she said. "My heart told me that you were Ömer Ümmiye

(Yes, gentlemen, when Padishah Hâtemi Tey arrived in the court of the Padishah of Winter Lands clothed as a dervish, his host saw through his disguise at once. He said, "Efendi,<sup>62</sup> you look like a dervish because you are

<sup>62</sup>A mild honorific, comparable to Sir, it usually follows a first name: Hasan Efendi. At one time it was used to show respect to distinguished people, but it has become so devaluated in the twentieth century that it now is used only for servants and children.

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wearing dervish clothes, but your demeanor indicates that you are of much higher status than that of a dervish. What was the reason for your leaving your own country and traveling to this distant land?"

Hâtemi Tey answered with these words:

No one would choose to travel to distant lands.  
Some greater force must determine the rigors of  
travel

The order to come here was given by God, not by  
me

Our life and death and Fate are in His hands.  
His was the power that caused me to wander this  
way.

It was not I but God who caused this trip.<sup>63)</sup>

Now I recall the part of the story we interrupted to speak of Hâtemi Tey. Ömer Ümmiye had asked Mehli Nigâr, "How did you know that I was Ömer Ümmiye?"

<sup>63</sup>"The Adventures of Hâtemi Tey" is one of Behçet Mahir's greatest performances. It is Tale No. 559 in the Archive of Turkish Oral Narrative. See the printed form in Walker, Warren S., and Ahmet E. Uysal, eds. More Tales Alive in Turkey (Lubbock: Texas Tech University Press, 1992), pp. 94-138.

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And Mehli Nigâr had answered, "My heart told me who you were when I heard your greeting."<sup>64</sup>

And Ömer Ümmiye had then said to her, "Oh, delicate beauty,<sup>65</sup> when your father read the letter from Hamzai Sahip Kıran, he became very angry. He said, 'He wrote the first words which should have been written last, and he wrote last the words which should have been first. He will not consent to your becoming the wife of Hamzai Sahip Kıran.'"

Mehli Nigâr asked, "Did my father really utter those words?" She became very sad and began to cry.

Ömer Ümmiye knelt before her and said, "O beauty, do not cry. I am willing to sacrifice my life for you and Hamzai Sahip Kıran. Tell me everything that is in your heart."

Mehli Nigâr said to him, "Oh, Ömer Ümmiye, inasmuch

<sup>64</sup>It may have been this expression that reminded Behçet Mahir of the passage in ". . . Hâtemi Tey," for in this episode, ". . . the Winter Emperor bowed his head and thought with his heart," as Mehli Nigâr has just done. See More Tales Alive in Turkey, pp. 96-97.

<sup>65</sup>In this recapitulation the narrator does not repeat everything in its exact original order. Originally Ömer had referred to the girl as "delicate beauty" in a slightly different context.