

Story 872 1964 Tape 2)

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The Bektāṣī<sup>1</sup> and the Cockroach

Once there was a Bektāṣī who went to a public bath. While he was washing himself he saw a cockroach there in the bath. Angry, he said, "What business does a cockroach have here? Why should God ever have made such a creature? This God of ours does not always seem to know what he is doing. After finishing his bath, the Bektāṣī left the bath and went home

A few days later the Bektāṣī became ill. He tried many different remedies in an effort to cure this illness, but none of them helped him any. He finally went to a healer who was a seer. This man knew many things that ordinary doctors did not. He said to the Bektāṣī, "You should catch a number of cockroaches, crush them, and then eat them as a meat dish. This is the only remedy that will cure<sup>45</sup> your illness."

The Bektāṣī agreed to do this. The people who were taking care of him caught many cockroaches, crushed them,

<sup>1</sup> A Bektāṣī is a dervish of an order of the same name. The Bektāṣī order was a powerful religious and political organization before all dervish orders were outlawed by the Kemalist Reforms of the 1920's. Bektāṣīs were not very orthodox Moslems, and they often outraged the orthodox by their disregard of Moslem laws and customs.

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then mixed them with a spoon into some of the patient's food. With great disgust the Bektaşî managed to eat the cockroach dish, and as a result he somehow recovered.

A few months later this same Bektaşî took a sea voyage. After they had been at sea for a while, a storm arose. It grew worse and worse until the waves reached up toward the skies. Some of the passengers chanted the ezan,<sup>2</sup> and many of them began to pray: "Please, O God, lower the waves and calm the sea!"

The Bektaşî ignored all of this praying. He sat quietly with his back against a mast and said nothing. One of the other passengers became greatly annoyed at the Bektaşî's behavior. Going to where the Bektaşî was sitting, he said, "O you evil fellow! Aren't you ashamed of yourself? Don't you see that we are about to sink into the sea? Can't you hear the ezan being chanted and the people praying? Why don't you do something?"

The Bektaşî answered, "Oh, no! I interfered in God's affairs once, and he made me eat a dish of cockroaches. I'll never commit that mistake again!"

<sup>2</sup> The ezan is the call to prayer that precedes each of the five daily prayer services. Ordinarily it is chanted from the minaret of a mosque by a professional singer known as a muezzin.