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Nasreddin Hoca and What Comes out before Morning

As the bayram¹ was approaching, Nasreddin Hoca needed some new clothes,² and so he went to a tailor shop and ordered that a set be made for him. The day before Sweetmeat Bayram was to begin, Nasreddin went to the tailor shop and said, "I have no money to pay you today for them, but are my clothes ready?"

Sitting in the doorway of his shop and sewing, the tailor answered, "Your clothes have not been cut yet, much less stitched."

Looking past the tailor into the shop, however, the hoca saw his finished suit of clothes hanging up. "What

¹There are two religious holidays, each of several days' length, that follow the sacred month of Ramazan: Sweetmeat Holiday (literally, Sugar Holiday) and Kurban (Sacrifice) Holiday. The first follows right after the end of Ramazan. It is largely social in nature, for each person visits all his kin and friends briefly, and at each stop he/she is given some kind of confection. The longer Kurban Bayram, which begins forty days after Ramazan, calls for the sacrifice of a sheep by each one who can afford it. Half the meat of each sheep is distributed to the poor and the rest is eaten by the family that made the sacrifice.

²It is traditional to have new clothes to display during Şeker Bayram. Inasmuch as everyone is in the streets coming from or going to one or another of his sweetmeat visits, the occasion is similar to the Easter Parade in America.

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can I do now?" he wondered. "I have no money with which to buy clothes here or elsewhere."

Desperate to have suitable new clothes for the bayram, Nasreddin Hoca returned to the tailor shop that night after it had been closed and locked. He took along with him a hacksaw and with this tool, he began to cut the padlock on the shop door. When the night ⁸⁴⁻⁸⁵ watchman was making his rounds, he heard the scraping noise of the saw. Coming to the tailor shop, he asked, "Nasreddin Hoca, what are you doing?"

"I am playing the kemençi,"³ said the hoca.

"But that sound! That is not what is supposed to come out of a kemençi!"

"What is supposed to come out will come out before morning," said Nasreddin Hoca. The watchman left, and the hoca finished sawing through the padlock, took his clothes from the tailor shop, and went home with them

When the tailor arrived at his shop in the morning, he saw at once that Nasreddin Hoca's clothes were missing. He also saw that the lock on the door had been cut. He called out, "Night watchman! Night watchman Come here.

³The kemençi is a small, wire-stringed instrument that is said to be an ancestor of the violin.

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"What is the matter?" asked the watchman.

"The clothes I made for Nasreddin Hoca are missing, and the lock on the door is cut."

"It must have been the hoca himself who cut it, then." Saying this, the watchman took the hoca to the guard station and questioned him.

Nasreddin Hoca said, "Why, Watchman, my kemençi playing was very successful! I told you that what was supposed to come out of it would do so before morning, and that was exactly what happened."⁴

⁴Translator's note: "This loses something in the translation."