

Story #22 (Tape 25)

1961-1962

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tion: Karahamzah, Balâ kaza, Province of Ankara

#22 Lazy men

#22 Padişah -- daughter of

Lazy Ahmet and the Padişah's Daughter

Daughter -- of padişah
#22

There was once a padişah who was in the habit of looking out of his window every morning to enjoy the view. The only thing that spoiled the view for him were the many poor people, -- companion of padişah for shabbily dressed or wearing tatters, who used to sleep on the pavements of the town. "Oh, God's poor people! I am sorry for you," he would say. But the padişah's daughter, looking out of her bedroom window, used to say "Oh, wives' poor men!"

This went on for several days, the padişah saying, "Oh, God's poor people!" and his daughter saying, "Oh, wives' poor men!" until at last he overheard her and asked her the meaning of her remark. "Oh, Father," she said, "those people are not turned poor by God. They are made poor by their own wives."

The padişah thought about this explanation for a while, and then he decided to test the truth of his daughter's observation. He called his chief town criers crier to him and said, "Go and make known to my people that I will give my daughter to the laziest man that can be found in my realm."

The chief crier called out all the assistant criers, and they set out in all directions shouting, "The padişah seeks the laziest man in the realm to marry his daughter!" In a village, they found sleeping in a small hut a man who was reported by all the people of that area to be the laziest man in the realm. His name was Lazy Ahmet. He slept for forty days on one side, and then he rolled over and slept for forty days on the other side. The criers who found him reported to the padişah that his laziest subject had been found.

Lazy men -- sleep for forty days lying on one side -- and then another forty days on other side

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Padişah -- has laziest man in realm married to
his daughter -- who claims poverty attributable to wife
of poor man

The padişah was pleased with the news, and he announced that his daughter would be given in marriage to Lazy Ahmet. But Lazy Ahmet was not even aware of this for some days. He just kept on sleeping until his friends awakened him to tell him the news. Even then, he did not rouse himself very much but took the news quite casually

At the appointed day, the padişah's daughter was brought to the hut of Lazy Ahmet and presented to him as his wife. He was not even awake when she arrived, and she was greeted by Lazy Ahmet's old mother who lived in the hut with him. When the padişah's daughter entered her new home, she saw that the fireplace was so filled with ashes that it was heaped right up to the chimney. She took out the ashes, and then asked her mother-in-law to go out and buy some reed canes. While the old woman was away, she got ready a pail of water, and when the canes arrived, she soaked the canes in water to make them more flexible, and then she poured water on Lazy Ahmet and beat him. She did this several times, first pouring on water and then beating him. She beat as hard and as fast as she could, but at first, Lazy Ahmet didn't even feel the blows striking his body. But after she had broken four or five canes on him, he finally stood up and said to the girl, "Yes, master. What can I do for you?"

"From now on," said the girl, "you are under my command." *Lazy man -- roused from sleep -- by wife who*

"Yes, master," said Lazy Ahmet, "it shall be so." *first soaks him with water and end then beats him with reed*

"Well, now get out of the house," said the girl. "Go down to the market- *Canes* place and walk about there and observe what happens there."

When Lazy Ahmet went out to fulfill this order, she cleaned the house and put it in order. Then she cooked a good meal and fed Lazy Ahmet when he came home that night.

After Lazy Ahmet had walked around the town for several days, coming home only in the evenings, he began to change, and after a while he was completely changed. He could not even enjoy lying down during the day now but became a very active person. One day as he was walking down the main street of the town, he met two porters who were discussing how much they had earned that day. When Lazy Ahmet heard them telling about their earnings, he said to himself, "Why don't I work? I can earn a few liras a day, but before I decide on this, let me first go and consult my master."

He went home and said to his wife, "Master, with your permission I'll go to work. I shall become a porter."

"All right," said his wife, "I give you my consent. Take this money and buy a rope for yourself with it so that you will not be ropeless." [The hamal or porter is a human beast of burden in Turkey. His work is about the lowest form of manual labor. He may carry loads of two or three hundred pounds on his back, holding a sofa, a refrigerator, or a washing machine on his back with a rope; often he will wear a saddle of a kind made especially for hamals, eight or ten inches thick and designed to distribute the weight evenly. The best-equipped hamals have saddle and ropes; one less fortunate will have only a rope; the complete down-and-outer will not have even a rope. He will be ipsiz, ropeless. The term ipsiz has been carried over to apply to anyone who is down and out, whether or not he is a hamal. Lazy Ahmet bought a rope and began to work as a porter, carrying wood from the forest to the town. He earned two or three liras a day, enough to buy food for his household

One day Lazy Ahmet became acquainted with another porter. He said to this new friend, "We get our backs sore by carrying such heavy loads of wood.

ropeless (ipsiz) -- epithet for porter so poor that he has not even the basic tool for carrying: a rope; also used as generic epithet for all extremely poor people.

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Why don't we buy a donkey to help us carry our loads of wood?"

His companion said, "It is a good idea." And they went to consult with Lazy Ahmet's wife about this plan. She gave her consent, and a donkey and all necessary harnesses were purchased.

After working three or four months with the help of their donkey, his friend suggested to Lazy Ahmet that they let the donkey rest for a day while they each cut enough wood to make four trips in one day instead of the usual two. After consulting his wife, Lazy Ahmet accepted this proposal, and the two porters went to the forest to cut wood. Lazy Ahmet had now become a very good wood cutter, and he cut so much wood that day that his companion

became jealous of his ability. He decided to play a trick on Lazy Ahmet. As they were going home, he sent Lazy Ahmet on an errand, and then he went back and set fire to Ahmet's pile of wood.

Jealousy -- Cause woodcutter to burn wood cut by his friend

When Lazy Ahmet arrived home, his wife said to him, "Well, what did you do today?"

"Oh, I cut four donkey loads of wood today, and tomorrow I shall bring it all to town and sell it."

But next day when Lazy Ahmet went to the forest with the donkey, he found that all the wood he had cut had been burned to ashes. As he was walking around the spot where his wood had been burned, he noticed several pieces of flint lying on the ground. He picked these up to take them home as backgammon counters for his master. When he got home he reported to his master that all his wood had been burned.

"It doesn't matter," she said. "It must have become charcoal. You can load the charcoal on the donkey and bring that to the town market to sell."

"Yes, master," he said, and then he remembered the flints which he had found. "Here are some pieces of flint which I have brought for you for backgammon counters. I found them by the pile of ashes."

These pieces were in fact made of gold and not flint, and since his wife was a padişah's daughter, she was quick to recognize this. She asked her husband, "Is there more of this where your wood pile was?"

"Oh, yes, any amount of it," he replied. Apparently a treasure of gold had been buried once on the spot where he had piled his wood. When the wood was burnt it melted some of the gold, and pieces were scattered about. Lazy Ahmet went back to the forest and brought back a load of what he thought was flint.

His wife took pieces of this gold to a goldsmith and exchanged them for money. She bought furniture for their house, and she also bought quantities of grain and sold them for higher prices. One day she hired a fourmçier crier and said to him, "Go and announce that I want pack mules to carry rice to the city of Sivas." Lazy Ahmet no longer had to work, but when he heard the crier making this announcement, he went to his wife and said, "Master, let me join the caravan too."

The request was approved, but before he left he was given all kinds of useful advice by his wife. Among other things, she said to him, "Whenever the group camps for the night, they will try to find level ground for sleeping, but you be sure to sleep on high ground."

The next day the caravan set out, and the drivers stopped that night to rest by a stream, but Lazy Ahmet climbed up on a rock to rest. The others laughed at him for staying in such a strange place. But during the night it rained and the stream overflowed, soaking the other drivers and spoiling their beds. In the morning Lazy Ahmet said, "Hey, you drivers. You thought that I

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was a fool, but you were the fools."

Apartment house -- as peasant conception

of suitable residence for

king or padişah

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Palace -- exactly like that of
padişah -- built by padişah's
outcast daughter

Now we go back to Lazy Ahmet's wife. As soon as the caravan left, she hired workers to build a large palace. She had a palace built which was exactly like that of her father. [The narrator used here the word apartment, meaning a block of flats or an apartment house, rather than saray, the word for palace. This is a clue to the tremendous gulf that separates the peasant living in a medieval village and the modern, stream-lined world of the apartment dwellers of Ankara and Istanbul. The peasant's grandest vision of a home suitable for a sultan is an apartment!]

The caravan had now reached a wide plain where they traveled for a long time without finding any water. The animals were thirsty, and the men were tired. At last they came to a well, but they were warned away from it by a shepherd who said that no one who descended it ever came out again. the drivers asked, "Who will go down the well and get water for us?" Ahmet was not very smart, and so he said at once, "I will!"

Lazy Ahmet was lowered down the well on a rope. bottom, he saw a giant lying there asleep. boy who said to Lazy Ahmet, of the forty-day sleeping periods of this giant."

"Who are you?" asked Lazy Ahmet. Imprisonment -- in underworld -- of son of Sultan of Sivas -- by giant

"I am the son of the Sultan of Sivas," said the boy. [There was no sultan located at Sivas, of course; the peasant mind imagined a sultan or king in every city; invariably they use the word padişah. "What are doing here?"

"Well, I was sent here to get some water," said Lazy Ahmet, and he filled all his buckets and skins with water. These were pulled up by his companions,

and when enough water was raised, Lazy Ahmet was also pulled up out of well. The caravan then moved on towards Sivas

When they reached the city, they delivered their load of rice. When the Sultan of Sivas heard of the arrival of a caravan, he had criers announce among the drivers that he was seeking news of his lost son. "The Sultan will give farms and cattle and many other things to anyone who can bring him news of the whereabouts of his lost son," the criers announced.

As soon as he heard this announcement by the criers, Lazy Ahmet came forth and said, "Tell his majesty that I have news of his son."

His fellow drivers all tried to quiet him: "Be silent, you fool! could you have seen the sultan's son? You have been with us all the time."

Lazy Ahmet spoke with great assurance and insisted that he had seen the sultan's son. When he appeared before the sultan, he said, "Your majesty, if you will provide me with men and enough rope, I can pull your son from the well in which he is imprisoned." He was given the rope he requested and a number of men to help him.

He and the men left Sivas, and he led them to the well where the sultan's son was imprisoned. Lazy Ahmet was lowered into the well, where the giant was still sleeping and where the boy was still a captive. The boy said to Lazy Ahmet, "There is a ^{Sword -- magic} magic sword on that wall. It belongs to the giant. If you say the Kulhuvallahi prayer to God, you will be able to draw that sword from its sheath, and with that magic sword you will be able to kill the giant." Lazy Ahmet did as he was directed. He said the Kulhuvallahi prayer to God, drew the magic sword, and killed the giant. He then freed the sultan's son, and they were both pulled from the well.

When they return to Sivas, there was great rejoicing. - The sultan called Lazy Ahmet to him and said this to him: "Ask for anything that you would like from me."

But Lazy Ahmet answered, "I cannot say anything without consulting my master first."

"Where is your master?" asked the sultan.

"Oh, she is very far from here," said Lazy Ahmet. But finally he said, "I don't really want anything from you."

Hearing this, the sultan's son said, "Father, he does not want anything, but please load his mules with pearls and jewels and precious stones and let him go wherever he wishes."

The sultan loaded mules with pearls and precious stones, and then Lazy Ahmet left Sivas. After traveling for several days, he reached his own town, but he went around and around in the streets and could not find his own home. Finally, after several days, he was observed by his wife who saw him one morning as she looked out of her apartment window. She asked him, "What is all this?" pointing to the heavy loads on the mules.

"I don't know what it is," answered Lazy Ahmet. "It just followed me."

His wife opened up the saddle bags and found the pearls and precious stones, and she took these out and sold them for a great amount of money. She then sent a message to the owner of the local ^{hamam (Furnish bath)} hamam [Turkish bath]:

"Wash my husband well and shave his beard. Burn his old clothes and dress him in new ones." Lazy Ahmet was taken to the bath and washed and shaved. When this was completed, he looked for his clothes. "Where are my clothes?" he asked.

"They are gone," said the owner of the hamam. "But you are to wear these new clothes."

Upon reaching home, Lazy Ahmet had his pockets filled with money by his wife. "Go about the town," she said, "and spend this money carelessly."

"Yes, master," he said. He went to the market place and bought various things, but always he neglected to wait for his change. He gave a lira for something worth only fifty kuruş. His wife had ordered him to behave this way in order to attract the attention of the padişah, and in time just this did happen. The secret agents of the padişah noticed this lavish spending and reported it to the padişah. "A strange man has come to your town," said, "and this man spends great quantities of money very carelessly." The sultan ordered them to have this stranger brought into his presence

Spending -- to draw attention
lavish -- to
Money -- spent lavishly -- to attract public attention

The next day the agents found Lazy Ahmet again spending his money in the market place, and they said to him, "You are invited to the palace by the sultan."

"I cannot accept any invitation until I have consulted my master," he said.

Lazy Ahmet went and told his wife that he had been invited to the palace of the padişah. He asked her for permission to make the visit. She consented, but she told him many things to do and many things not to do. "See that you don't behave foolishly. Watch your talk. Use polite language. Don't speak before you are spoken to. Eat and drink whatever you wish. When you leave the palace, say to the sultan, 'I hope that your majesty will soon honor our humble dwelling with your presence.' If he asks where you live, just give him the number of our house." [In Turkish villages great importance is attached to the numbering of houses. Numbers are almost a status symbol; to have a number is to be on the map, so to speak. Houses are not built along planned streets; they are built wherever the owner's fancy dictates. There can, therefore, be no regularized numbering. Furthermore, in most villages there is no need for numbering: peasants do not receive mail; visitors who seek

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anyone in town go first to the muhtar and are directed to the appropriate house by him. Nevertheless, there is the ritual of numbering, directed by the muhtar; it is a solemn business which gives the muhtar even greater consequence.]

Lazy Ahmet went to visit the padişah, and he got along well with him. As he left the padişah's palace, he extended the invitation for the sultan to return the visit. "I hope that your majesty will soon honor our humble dwelling with your presence," he said, just as his wife had directed him.

The padişah accepted this invitation, and he visited Lazy Ahmet's house the very next day. He was amazed to find that Lazy Ahmet lived in a house exactly like his own. For a moment he wondered if he had come to the right place, but he was soon greeted by his host, who led him to the dining room. Three servings of food were brought in, one placed before the padişah, one placed before the host, and one placed before an empty seat. The sultan said, "Let the person for whom this dish is set come forth." At that moment, Lazy Ahmet's wife entered the room.

When she sat down, she pulled back her veil and asked, "Do you recognize me, father?" The padişah immediately recognized his daughter. "Well, father," she continued, "you can now see that those men who came before your palace were poor because of their wives. If their wives had been frugal and industrious, they would not have been so poor. A husband is like a bird. He gathers and brings what he has gathered to his nest, and if the wife doesn't use what he has brought her wisely, that home cannot prosper."

In the end, Lazy Ahmet said, "Well done, my master. You will be my mate, and I shall be your lady, and, by the permission of God, let us get married." And they were now married with a regular wedding, in the palace of the padişah, and they lived happily ever after.