

Story 956 (1977 Tape 5)

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The Three [?]Guessing Friends

Önemli delil

While three friends were on their way to work, they noticed a mark alongside the road that looked like the impression in the sand made by a kneeling camel.^{59-60, 64-65} One of the friends said, "If the camel's right eye had not been blind, he might have been a very good camel

The second said, "Yes, that is true, and the camel would also have been a better animal if its front center teeth had not been missing."

The third friend then said, "It would also have been a better camel if it were not tailless

As they were talking in this way, the three friends were approached by a man who turned out to be the camel's owner. This man greeted them, "Selâmünaleyküm."

"Aleykümselâm,"¹ they answered

The man then asked them, "Have you seen a camel along the way anywhere? I have lost mine

¹ This is the traditional exchange between Moslems who are unacquainted with each other: "Peace be unto you. / And may peace be unto you too."

Story

The first friend asked the man, "Is your camel blind in its right eye?"

The camel's owner said, "Oh, yes, my camel's right eye is blind.

The second friend then asked the man, "Are the middle front teeth of your camel missing or broken off?"

"Yes, they are missing.

The third friend then asked the man, "Is the tail of your camel also missing?"

"Yes, it is. You seem to know everything about my camel, and so you must have seen it. Tell me where my camel is.

The three friends then said, "No, we did not see your camel, and so we cannot very well tell you where it is. And we did not steal it either, for we are not camel thieves."

But they were unable to convince this man that they really had not seen his camel. He said to them, "I do not believe you. We shall have to take this matter to court."

The three friends had no objection to this, and so the four men went to the courthouse in the next town to consult the judge⁶⁸⁻⁶⁵ there.

As it happened, that particular judge had had a dream the night before in which he had received an instruction. In that dream he had seen his father, who had said to him

Story 956

"Invite to lunch tomorrow whoever comes first to the courthouse in the morning. Cook for that person a whole lamb, and give him a feast."

By chance the three friends were the first to enter the courthouse, and so the judge invited these three men to lunch at his home. He had a servant cook a whole lamb and prepare a good meal. When they arrived at his house at noon, the judge said to the three friends, "Please be seated and help yourselves to all you want." He then left the room, but he stood just outside the door so that he could hear whatever they might talk about.

The first friend said, "The judge seems to be a good man, but unfortunately he is a bastard." 61-62

The second friend said, "This bread we have been served would have been very tasty if the woman who baked it had not been menstruating at the time."

The third friend then said, "Yes, and this lamb would have made excellent meat if it had not been nursed with dog's milk

The judge, standing outside the door, heard all of their conversation. Bothered especially by the comment made about himself, he went immediately to his mother and said, "Mother, I am going to ask you an important question, and I want you

Story 956

to tell me the truth about it. Is there some question about my legitimacy? Who was it that was really my father?"

Frightened by the look on her son's face, the judge's mother did tell him the truth. Se said, "Son, you have guessed correctly. The man who has always been considered your father was not really your father. Your real father was another man.

After that, the judge went to the woman who had baked the bread. He said to her, "Tell me something. Were you menstruating at the time that you were kneading the dough of the bread you baked for me today?"

The woman said, "Yes."

Then he called to him the shepherd from whom his servant had bought the lamb. He said to the shepherd, "I want to ask you something about that lamb which you sold to my servant today. Did you at any time give that lamb dog's milk to drink?"

The shepherd answered, "Yes, I did. The lamb's mother had died in giving birth to it. One of my sheep dogs had had puppies at that time, and the only thing I could do to save the lamb's life was to let it suckle with the puppies."

By the time that the judge returned and reentered the dining room, the three friends had finished their meal. The

Story 956

judge asked the first friend, "How did you know that I was a bastard?"

The man said to the judge, "If your father had been a nobleman, you would not have left us to eat our lunch alone. You gave us the meal, but then you left the room. You should have sat down with us and eaten with us. Judging from that, I was able to guess quite easily that you were a bastard."

The judge then turned to the second friend and asked, "How did you know that the woman who baked the bread was menstruating at the time?"

The second friend answered, "I was able to guess it because the bread had a very thick crust."²

After that, the judge asked the third friend, "How could you tell that the lamb had been nursed with dog's milk?"

"Judge, Sir, that was very easy. The flesh simply smelled like dog flesh."

Greatly impressed by these responses, the judge then turned to the first friend and said, "Very well. Now tell me something else. How did you know that the camel's right eye was blind?"

² This seems to be a less rational answer than the others given.

Story

The man answered, "Judge Bey,³ I knew that the camel's right eye was blind because the camel always knelt down on the left side of the road. If the camel's right eye had not been blind, it would probably have lain down at different times on both sides of the road."

The judge then asked the second friend, "How did you know that the camel's front middle teeth were missing?"

"I knew this," answered the man, "because every place where the camel had cropped a bite of grass or leaves, the central part of the mouthful had not been bitten through very well. From that I knew that the front teeth were broken off or missing."

By now quite amazed at the answers given by the three friends, the judge asked the third friend, "How did you know that the camel was tailless?"

"I knew that, Judge Bey, by the way in which the camel's droppings lay on the ground. Camels switch their tails continuously to keep flies away, and this switching scatters their dung as it falls. But this camel's droppings were not

³ Bey was originally a term to designate a nobleman among the Turks. It was then equivalent to the English word lord or baron. This is the way in which the word is used in the tenth-century Turkish epic The Book of Dede Korkut. In modern times there is no such title, but Bey or Bay, whether before or after a man's name, is a very definite token of respect.

Story 956

a bit scattered, and so I felt certain that the camel could not have had a tail."

After that, the judge called in the owner of the camel and said to him, "These three men do not have your camel. They did not even see your camel anywhere. Since they neither stole it nor saw it, you will have to look elsewhere for your camel."

These three friends then left the judge's house and went to their place of work. A short time later they agreed among themselves that they might improve their fortunes by finding employment in İstanbul. They therefore left their village and went to İstanbul, where they began to seek jobs

Shortly after their arrival in that city, there was a theft from the palace of the padişah. One night Kadık Ahmet, the eunuch in charge of the harem,⁴ disappeared, and with him disappeared 100 pieces of gold jewelry belonging to the padişah's wife. The city was searched, house by house, for Kadık Ahmet, but he was nowhere to be found. Someone reported to the padişah that three very shrewd friends had recently come to İstanbul, and this same person suggested to the ruler that these three friends might be able to recover the stolen jewelry.

⁴ The eunuch in charge of the harem section of the imperial palace was known as Harem Ağası, Ağa of the Harem. He is referred to by that title several times in this tale.

Story 956

The padişah called these three friends to his presence and said to them,⁵ "You must find the Ağa of the Harem, ^{66, 67, 71, 72-74, 75-} Kadık Ahmet, and recover from him my wife's jewelry."

The three friends answered, "But, our Padişah, how can we find your wife's jewelry? We do not know the thief Where is he now? What does he look like? We do not know any of these things. How can we possibly find your wife's jewelry?"

But the padişah would not accept any of their excuses He said to them, "You must find that jewelry! If you do not, I shall have you beheaded!"

The three friends left the palace and tried to arrive at some plan for finding the thief and recovering the jewelry, but they did not know where to begin their search. They decided to return to the palace and ask the Sultan Hanım^{66, 67, 69, 72} some questions about Kadık Ahmet. After receiving permission

⁵ For a short space beginning with this sentence the storyteller slips from third- to first-person narration: "The padişah called us and said to us," and then "we did this and we did that." The subject soon returns from we to they. --The editor (Warren Walker) decided to keep the entire tale in third-person narrative.

⁶ Hanım means Lady. Sultan Hanım could mean Lady Sultan, but that is not literally so here. Here it means Sultana or the Sultan's Lady. The wife of a hoca (priest) may be called Hoca Hanım, which cannot be interpreted Lady Hoca, for there are no female priests in Islam; it means, rather, the Hoca's Lady.

Story 956

to enter the harem section, they went to the padişah's wife and said, "Sultan Hanım, please tell us what the Agâ of the Harem, Kadık Ahmet, looked like. Was he tall or short? What was the color of his skin? What was the color of his hair?"

She answered,

Kadık Ahmet stands so tall,
His face is dark as any pall,
His hair is brown--and that is all!⁷

The three friends said, "Thank you," and left the palace again. After a while they asked each other several times, "Where could this man have gone?" but they had no information about this. They thought about this separately, and then after a while they came together again and asked each other, "What did the Sultan Hanım tell us?" Then they all said in unison,

Kadık Ahmet stands so tall,
His face is dark as any pall,
His hair is brown--and that is all

⁷ In these descriptions plus those that will be added, the lines rhyme. This is easier to achieve in Turkish (with its inflected endings and suffixes) than it is in English. To the extent possible, we have attempted to maintain rhymes or near-rhymes.

Story

Then one of them added,

He hid behind a hotel wall.⁸

Accordingly, the three friends went to the İstanbul inns, one by one, and described Kadık Ahmet to each innkeeper. They then asked, "Do you know where this man is now? Do you know what direction he took?"

Some innkeepers claimed that they had never seen a man of this description. Others said, "We have seen many men who looked like that, but how can we tell where they are now? They came and they went

After visiting all the inns, the three friends still had not found the thief. After giving further thought to

⁸ In the first half of this tale the three friends develop their information by means of close observation and deductive reasoning. This is usually a separate tale known as "The Guessing Children," "The Guessers," or "The Detectives, II."

In the second half of the tale the three friends seem to pull information out of thin air in some miraculous fashion. This impression is caused by a failure on the part of the narrator. In another form of "The Guessers," known as "The Detectives, I," the protagonists pick up information, scrap by scrap, by consulting some supernatural agency or system. In Turkish tales they usually use a form of numerology known as remil (remel). In this tale there are several pieces of information added to what the Sultan Hanım has provided, and each piece is derived from a new numerological reading, but the narrator never mentions their source. This remil or numerology is also known in studies of the occult as Geomancy.

The narrator here has merged two related but different tale types, the first based on natural or rational knowledge and the other based on supernatural knowledge.

Story 956

their problem separately, they met again and asked each other, "What did the Sultan Hanım tell us?" Then all three said in unison,

Kadık Ahmet stands so tall,
His face is dark as any pall,
His hair is brown--and that is all!

Together they added,

He hid behind a hotel wall

Then one of them said,

Our harbor was his port of call.

They then went to the İstanbul waterfront to see if they could find him on any of the ships about to sail away or if any of the ship owners could tell them of a ship that he had already sailed away in. But there were so many ships there, and there were so many directions in which ships had recently sailed that there was no certain way of tracing Kadık Ahmet's route.

They left the waterfront and gave further thought to the matter. They met again the following day and asked each other, "What did the Sultan Hanım tell us about Kadık Ahmet?" Together they repeated the answer to this question:

Kadık Ahmet stands so tall,
His face is dark as any pall,
His hair is brown--and that is all!

Story

They then added,

He hid behind a hotel wall.

Our harbor was his port of call.

One of them continued,

His native land is Horasan.⁹

next boarded a ship which was destined for a port near Horasan. When, much later, they arrived at Horasan, they did not know which section of the city¹⁰ Kadık Ahmet lived in. What was the name of his street? What was the number of his house? They did not know any of these things. Putting their heads together, they then repeated,

Kadık Ahmet stands so tall,

His face is dark as any pall,

His hair is brown--and that is all!

He hid behind a hotel wall;

Our harbor was his port of call.

His native land is Horasan.

Then one of them added

His quarter is Hacı Hasan.

And another went on, ~~7187~~

Behind his house stands a hamam.¹¹

⁹ Horasan is a province in northeastern Iran, usually known there as either Khorasan or Khurasan.

¹⁰ The narrator speaks here of Horasan as a city. It was a province. Its capital and chief city was Mashhad, and that may be the reference here.

¹¹ A hamam is a Turkish bathhouse.

Story 956

house which was in front of the hamam belonged to Kadık Ahmet. They found this house and went to the front door, but they did not know the man's real name or his title here in his own country. And, furthermore, they did not know his wife's name either. How could they call to him? Putting their heads together again, they repeated their information beginning with what the Sultan Hanım had told them:

Kadık Ahmet stands so tall,
His face is dark as any pall,
His hair is brown--and that is all!
He hid behind a hotel wall;
Our harbor was his port of call.
His native land was Horasan,
His quarter is Hacı Hasan.
Behind his house stands a hamam.

One then added,

Mustafa's son, he's Ramazan.

Now that they knew that his name was Ramazan, they called, "Ramazan Ağa, Ramazan Ağa, come out!" Naturally he did not answer their call, for he was hiding. "Let us call his wife," they said, but then they remembered that they did not know her name. Repeating all of their information again, they added her name to the end:

Kadık Ahmet stands so tall,
His face is dark as any pall,
His hair is brown--and that is all!

Story

He hid behind a hotel wall;
Our harbor was his port of call.
His native land was Horasan,
His quarter is Hacı Hasan.
Behind his house stands a hamam.
Mustafa's son, he's Ramazan;
The people call his wife Kezban.

They now began calling to his wife: "Kezban Hanım!
Kezban Hanım, open the door for us!"

Kezban Hanım said to her husband, "Ramazan Ağa, they
know our names. If they were strangers, they would not know
our names. We should open the door to them."

Ramazan Ağa answered, "No, Wife, not yet! First I
shall hide in the basement. After I am safely hidden there,
you will close the basement door. When you then open the
front door and admit them to the house, tell them that your
husband has gone somewhere on a trip. When they discover
that I am not here, they will probably go away.

After Ramazan had hidden in the basement, his wife
opened the door to the three friends. They immediately
asked, "Where is Ramazan Ağa?"

Kezban, Ramazan's wife, said, "He is not here. He went
on a trip, and he has not yet returned."

The three friends put their heads together again and
repeated their information:

Story 956

Kadık Ahmet stands so tall,
His face is dark as any pall,
His hair is brown--and that is all!
He hid behind a hotel wall;
Our harbor was his port of call.
His native land was Horasan,
His quarter is Hacı Hasan.
Behind his house stands a hamam.
Mustafa's son, he's Ramazan;
The people call his wife Kezban.

Then one of them added,

That door leads to the basement stair;
Go down, for Ramazan is there.

Opening the door, they went down into the basement
where they found Ramazan sitting like an owl. They said to
"Hey, fellow! You stole the golden jewelry of the
padişah's wife. Now give it all back to us."

Ramazan denied that he was the thief. He said, "I did
steal her golden jewelry. No, it was not I."

Putting their heads together, they said, "Let us repeat
our information, beginning with what the Sultan Hanım told
us:

Kadık Ahmet stands so tall,
His face is dark as any pall,
His hair is brown--and that is all!
He hid behind a hotel wall;
Our harbor was his port of call.

Story 956

His native land was Horasan,
His quarter is Hacı Hasan.
Behind his house stands a hamam.
Mustafa's son, he's Ramazan;
The people call his wife Kezban.
That door leads to the basement stair;
Go down, for Ramazan is there.

Then one of them said,

In a cupboard, all so rare,
Gold is lying, layer on layer.

The three friends then said, "Ramazan Ağa, get the pieces of golden jewelry from the cupboard and give them to us."

Very surprised that the friends were able to locate the golden jewelry, Ramazan went to the cupboard and got the bag of gold. There were 100 pieces of gold jewelry in the bag. Ramazan removed one of them and placed it beneath his tongue. Then he took the bag and handed it to the three friends.

The friends examined the gold in the bag and counted it. Then they said, "But, Ramazan Ağa, there must be 100 pieces. There are only ninety-nine in the bag. There is still one piece of jewelry that you have not yet given to us."

Ramazan Ağa said, "I stole only ninety-nine pieces. If I had stolen 100, I'd have given you back 100."

When the three friends heard this, they put their heads together again and said to each other, "What did the Sultan

Story 956

Hanım tell us, and what have we ourselves added to that information?" Chanting in unison, they then said,

Kadık Ahmet stands so tall,
His face is dark as any pall,
His hair is brown--and that is all!
He hid behind a hotel wall;
Our harbor was his port of call.
His native land was Horasan,
His quarter is Hacı Hasan.
Behind his house stands a hamam.
Mustafa's son, he's Ramazan;
The people call his wife Kezban.
That door leads to the basement stair;
Go down, for Ramazan is there.
In a cupboard, all so rare,
Gold is lying, layer on layer.

Then one of them added,

Where's the last piece? Say, now, where!
Beneath his tongue it lies--that's where.

They then slapped Ramazan Ağa on the back very hard.
When he exhaled suddenly and said, "Ah-h-h!" the piece of jewelry popped out of his mouth and fell to the floor

The three friends now had all of the pieces of jewelry.
Saying farewell to Ramazan Ağa, they left Horasan and returned to İstanbul. There they went directly to the palace and delivered the gold jewelry to the wife of the padişah.