

Story 2110 (1999 Tape 2)

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There are many different kinds of tales about jinns in Turkey, but not everyone believes all these tales. The account of jinns that I am going to tell you is a true story. It really happened. It was an experience of a neighbor of ours, a man whom everyone here called Brother Orhan. He has worked much of his life as the director of a state bank, but I knew him only after he had retired and was about 55 or 56 years old.

Brother Orhan was a cheerful man, and seldom did anyone see him without a smile upon his face. He was a great talker, and he especially liked to tell stories about pleasant experiences he had had in his earlier years. Sometimes these events were filled with meaning

¹The word jinn suggests two very different kinds of otherworldly creatures. The first is the huge supernatural being who comes forth from urns or appears in response to some signal, such as the rubbing of a magic lamp or ring. This creature then proceeds to give the caller supernatural or magic aid to attain or achieve what he wishes. The other kind of jinn is rarely seen. It is a spiritual force referred to in some Sufi beliefs and in other mystical systems. It is this second kind of jinn that is referred to in this tale.

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and taught good lessons to boys of my age. Here is one of his stories of that kind

Brother Orhan was born, reared, and educated in İzmir. Probably no one knew more about İzmir than he did. He was a religious man, but he was not a fanatic about his faith. I remember well the stories he used to tell. May Allah have mercy upon him wherever he is now, several years after his death. Here is one of the wonderful stories he used to tell us.

Brother Orhan's father operated one of several repair shops in İzmir. His shop was in the Basmahane section of the city. It was a very successful business which employed several apprentices. Brother Orhan began working in that shop a few hours a week even while he was still attending school. The work in the shop caused him no difficulty, but sometimes people living in the immediate neighborhood created unpleasant incidents. Most of the time Brother Orhan ignored such uncomfortable situations, but occasionally he was called upon to help solve such problems.

One day a purse of gold coins disappeared from the repair shop. What had become of that purse? A search for it was begun, and many people at the shop and in the neighborhood were questioned about that money. They were

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unable to discover even one scrap of evidence to explain who had taken the purse. When everything else had failed, and the workers at the shop felt quite helpless, someone suggested that they should find a person who had contact with jinns, creatures who had access to information unknown to ordinary mortals. A cinci² hoca³ was located and hired to identify the thief

The cinci hoca appeared at the repair shop the next day with a copper kettle in his hand and a muşaf⁴ in his pocket. He filled the kettle halfway with water and seated an apprentice before it. He said, "Son, sit here and look steadily into this kettle. Then tell me what you have seen in it."

²The Turkish word for jinn is cin. The -ci suffix means working with or connected with. Only a very few Muslims, usually clergymen, claim to have contact with jinns and their mystical existence, and even fewer actually demonstrate such contact.

³A hoca is the preacher and religious leader of a Muslim community. In pre-Republican times a hoca was also a teacher, for then education was the responsibility of the clergy. In the Republic teachers are required to have a secular rather than a religious training. For sentimental reasons only, a teacher or professor is still sometimes called hoca.

⁴A small, readily portable edition of the Koran

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The apprentice sat on a chair and began staring at the water in the kettle. The cinci hoca murmured some inaudible words and then prayed at length. After some time, he asked the apprentice, "Son, what do you see in the kettle?"

"Nothing," answered the apprentice.

The hoca murmured some more remarks that the apprentice did not understand, and then he prayed at length again. After this had continued for several minutes, he inquired, "Have you seen anything yet, son?"

Having stared and stared and stared into the kettle, the apprentice said, "It is useless! I cannot see a single thing except water."

The cinci hoca began to be annoyed. He prayed some more, and then drawing from his pocket the muşaf, he read well-known lines from several chapters. His efforts this time lasted longer than his first two attempts. "What do you see now?" the hoca demanded

Studying the surface of the water in some fear now the apprentice said, "Hoca, there is nothing to see but the water."

The hoca was now angered by his repeated failures

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to explain the disappearance of the purse of gold. He was there to expose the thief, but he still had no idea about the culprit's identity. He concluded that the apprentice was to blame. He was, thought the hoca, too old to serve as a medium between himself and the jinns. Brother Orhan, who was standing nearby, was just 12 or 13 years old at that time, and he was the one selected to serve as the cinci hoca's assistant. The hoca said to him, "Boy, you sit here and keep your eyes focused on the water in this kettle."

"Very well," answered Brother Orhan

The hoca said, "When I ask you about what you have seen in this kettle, you are to tell me even very small things that you have noticed."

"All right."

Just as he had already done three times, the hoca spoke some inaudible words, prayed at length, and then read selections from the muşaf. The result was different this time, however. When the hoca asked what Brother Orhan had seen, the boy responded, "By Allah, I see the image of a man, but I cannot determine whether he has light-colored or very dark-colored hair."

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"That is all right, son. Continue to observe him. After praying and reading aloud at much greater length than he had at any time before, the hoca asked, "Orhan, son, can you now see the man's face?"

"By Allah, I do not know what to say about him except that he has a pointed face and a protruding jaw."

Step by step in this way they began to develop a picture of a man. When the hoca finally said, "Here is a close description of the thief," the workers at the shop secretly summoned the police. No one outside of the shop was aware of that. Searching for a man with a pointed face, a protruding jaw, and other specified features, the police found a man of that appearance in the house closest to the repair shop. They searched every square meter of the house, and they found not only the purse of gold but also other things that had been reported as missing.

Brother Orhan used to say, "By Allah, I really don't believe in jinns, but I was involved in the events about which I have been telling you. I do not know for sure whether I really saw anything in that copper kettle, or whether I was frightened into saying what I did. But, anyway, that was how we did, in the end, have the man who had stolen the purse of gold from my father's shop convicted.