

Story 2078 (1967 Tapes 2 and 3)

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67

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### The Story of Necip and Telli

Now, my ağas<sup>2</sup>. What are you going to order from me? While we were chatting, you asked me what I was going to tell you, and I told you that, since you asked for the story yesterday, I might tell you that story. What story? I would tell about Necip Bey<sup>3</sup>, Gara Bey, and Telli Hanım<sup>4</sup>. Did you not ask for this story? Well, it is all right with me. If you want to listen to it, I would be glad to tell it to you. Now, let our story begin.

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<sup>1</sup> Aşık is a term used for singing poets, the minstrels or bards of medieval time and of Turkey today. The word is also used for a person who is in love with somebody.

<sup>2</sup> An ağa is a rural landowner, sometimes wealthy, often powerful. The word does not indicate an official title but describes an economic status. They are often the principal employers of farm workers, and they are often viewed by their employees as harsh, driving, and abusive. The term ağa is also used in a complimentary way, as an honorific, for a distinguished or just older person than the one using the term. Thus an older brother is called ağa bey by his younger siblings. Ağa bey may be used as a deferential term to one older or more prestigious than the speaker. A taxi driver may refer to his passenger as ağa bey; a salesman speaking to a male customer may call him ağa bey.

<sup>3</sup> In Republican Turkey there are no beys. The term refers to a Turkish aristocrat of Ottoman, Seljuk, and pre-Seljuk times, and goes back to the 8th- or 9th- century--and perhaps earlier. The bey was a landed nobleman, sometimes wealthy and often politically powerful. In the 10th-century Book of Dede Korkut he was a tribal chief or one of his close associates. The Turkish bey was roughly equivalent to a British lord or baron.

<sup>4</sup> Hanım is a term of respect for females. It is equivalent to the English term lady.

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In olden times, the heroes and heroines of this story lived in the village of Selim (now it is a kaza<sup>5</sup>) in the county of Sarıkamış. (You can still see a ruin of a building in the county of Selim today. That ruin is named Heleşkirt<sup>6</sup>. There is also another ruin named Tepecik<sup>7</sup> just across from the county of Selim.)

Necip Bey was living at Heleşkirt, and Gara Bey lived at Tepecik. Let me inform you also about Telli Hanım, who was living in the village of Garmagız. (That village is still there. This story is pretty old; the events that will be told took place in the time of emperors and empires.)

Well, in the village of Garmagız lived Telli Hanım, the daughter of Garaca Bey. She was a very exceptional and beautiful girl who had no match in this world. Necip Bey, too, was a very clever, brave, respectable and rich man of that area.

Although Necip Bey was very rich, he used to go up to the summer pasture. One day while he was at the pasture, he left his horse to graze; he himself lay on the grass by a fountain. Shortly he fell asleep. While he was sleeping, The Threes, The Sevens, and The Forties<sup>8</sup> stopped there, and upon seeing a young fellow sleeping by the

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<sup>5</sup> Kaza means simply a county with a number of villages in a province. There are a number of kazas within a single province.

<sup>6</sup> In the regional dialects of Turkish, Heleşkirt means ruin, ancient site.

<sup>7</sup> Tepecik means a little hill.

<sup>8</sup> In Islamic mysticism in Turkey, largely the product of the Bektashi dervishes, there is a pyramidal hierarchy of saints and angels known as The Three Hundred, The Forty, The Seven, The Four, and The Three. At all times there is one person or being in the world who is aware of the primary quality of Allah, self-knowledge. This person is called Kutup, that is, "The Pole." The universe is likened to a mold or pattern, and its soul is humankind collectively. In terms of individual units, the Kutup is the pattern for the human being, and the Kutup is subject only to what comes from within. There are two persons near the Kutup, and together they constitute The Three. The two persons near the Kutup are called the imaman, that is, persons to follow, to imitate, to agree with. The one on the right of the Kutup is called imam-i yemin, and the one at the left is called the imam-i yesar. Because the human heart is on the left side of the body, it is the imam-i yesar who replaces the Kutup when he dies. The imam-i yemin then becomes the imam-i yesar, and his place, in turn, is filled by the extreme left member of The Four, on the level just below the level of The Three. Everyone in the hierarchy moves up one position. The universe is ruled by these beings, who have greater knowledge of things than do ordinary mortals. For further information about this element of Islamic mysticism, see Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, Alevi-Bektaşî Nefesleri, pp. 331 ff., and his

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fountain, they asked each other about the identity of Necip Bey. They, of course, knew the answer to that question, so they said, "He is Necip Bey." The Threes stayed there for awhile. They were the three people among The Forties, and one of them was Hızır<sup>9</sup>.

One of them said, "Let us wake him up, and offer him a cup of passion of love. Thus, we will see what kinds of adventures he might have."

They awakened Necip Bey. "Wake up, our son, Necip," they said. Necip Bey woke up, and upon opening his eyes he saw three white bearded men sitting around him.

"Yes, my fathers?" he asked them.

One of them said, "My son, look at my face." As Necip Bey was watching him, the old man took a bottle out of his pocket, and then he reached into the other pocket, from which he took out a cup. He opened the bottle, and poured out some liquid into the cup, from which each of the old men sipped a drop, and then offered the cup to Necip Bey. Necip Bey took the cup and intended to drink the rest of the liquid, but they stopped him.

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Vilayetname Manaib-i Hünkar Hacı Bektaşî, p. 139; see also John Kingsley Birge, The Bektashi Order of Dervishes, pp. 251, 266.

<sup>9</sup> Hızır: once a water deity and fertility god--and still both those figures to most farmers in southern Turkey. Hızır is more widely known now as a granter of wishes, a last-minute rescuer from disaster, and a special messenger and agent of God. In these latter three functions he appears fairly frequently in Turkish folktales. Not mentioned by name in the Koran, a chapter of that work was later named after him. He is assumed to be the person instructing Moses in Chapter XVIII of the Koran, where he is referred to by God simply as "our servant."



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"Wait, our son," they said to Necip Bey, and continued, "You will drink it, but before you drink, you must tell us for what and for whose love you drink it."

"The pir<sup>10</sup> who offered the cup knows better than I do," said Necip Bey.

"Well, if the pir knows better, then you must drink it for the love of God, Who created you, us, and everything else in the universe."

"I believe in God Who created everything, and He is the creator," said Necip Bey, and then drank all the liquid in the cup. As soon as the passion of love passed through his throat, Necip Bey began feeling very high fever in his body. It was an unusual beverage and had a sweet taste which made him think, "I wish they would offer me a second cup of it."

His wish came true as they offered him a second cup of the liquid and said, "Take it, our son; take this one, too." With joy Necip Bey took the cup, and instead of letting them ask him, he asked the question, "For whose love must I drink it?"

"Now you have learned your lesson," they said, and then answered, "You must drink it for the love of Hızır, who will help you when you are in great difficulty."

When Necip Bey drank the second cup, they refilled the cup and said, "Take it, our son; take it, and tell us for whose love you drink it."

"The pir who offered it knows better than I do," replied Necip Bey again.

"Clean your eyelashes; try to get rid of the smoke that has covered your sight, and make sure your eyes see much better," they ordered Necip Bey, and continued, "Now, look at us not with your eyes, but with your soul."

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<sup>10</sup> Pir is the term indicating the founder of a sect. In the Sufi system he is the mursid, the "spiritual director." He claims to be in the direct line of the interpreters of the esoteric teaching of the Prophet and hence holds his authority to guide the aspirant (murid) on the path. But he must himself be worthy of imitation. "He should have a perfect knowledge, both theoretical and practical, of the three stages of the mystical life and be free of fleshly attributes." When a pir has proved--either by his own direct knowledge or by the spiritual power (vilayat) inherent in him--the fitness of a murid to associate with other Sufis, he lays his hand on the aspirant's head and invests him with the hirka. The murid need not necessarily receive his investiture from that pir who gave him instruction, who is called the pir-i suhbat. For further reading see R. A. Nicholson, Studies in Islamic Mysticism (Cambridge, 1921) and J. P. Brown, The Darwishes (Oxford, 1927).



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Necip Bey followed the orders of the old men, rubbed his eyes, and then looked at them. He saw no men, no pırs or anything else, but the cup in the hand of a beauty. (May her house be ruined.) What Necip Bey saw was a beauty who had to be either an angel or a fairy. She had to be a remedy for any illness. Her stature was like the pillar of Süleyman's palace. Her doubled chin was five hand spans. Her face was very bright. She had a whiteness better than white, and she had a redness better than red. Her degree of redness was equal to one thousand red colors. If you had tried to flick her face with your fingers, her face could have shivered for forty days like the essence of honey<sup>11</sup>. If you had seen her, you could have died for her love.

"Who is she?" Necip Bey asked.

"She is Telli Hanım, the daughter of Garaca Bey of Garnıağız village. You must drink your last cup of passion of love for her love," The Threes replied. Necip Bey drank the last cup.

The Three made her appear in a mirror, and then showed her appearance to Necip Bey. Astonished with the appearance of the beauty in the mirror, Necip Bey said, "Oh! Let me be sacrificed for her name." He wanted to walk toward her and hug her. As soon as he moved, he fell down and awoke.

Actually, Necip Bey had neither a girl nor anyone else there; it was all in his dream. He awoke when he tried to get closer to her and hug her. What he tried to hug instead was his saddlebag that he put under his head as a pillow.

Let me inform you about further deeds of The Three. When they were finished with Necip Bey, they went over to Telli Hanım's place and offered the passion of love with the same cup to her as well. They put Telli Hanım into a situation similar to the one with Necip Bey. So Necip Bey and Telli Hanım at the same time fell in love with each other.

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<sup>11</sup> The beauty of a girl is described thus in medieval and classical Turkish literature, especially in classical poetry. These descriptions have also passed into the oral tradition, and with minor changes asıks are still using them. The beauty, of course, as described here does not mean much, but when the internal rhyming is considered, it does make sense in Turkish.

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Having drunk the passion of love caused Necip Bey to play the saz<sup>12</sup> and compose songs about his love, his passion, and Telli Hanım. He began talking only about Telli Hanım, nothing else.

May the bad one's house be destroyed and his fireplace be demolished! There are always evil people and villains in every place. A villainous person does evil things which break good relations.

My dear audience, Telli Hanım had seven brothers. The news about Necip Bey's feelings toward Telli Hanım spread from place to place, and finally an evil man went to Telli Hanım's brothers and said, "Look, my friends, Necip has been denigrating your family honor. He has been singing about your sister and talking about her beauty wherever he goes. Necip Bey's songs and talks have damaged your family honor; soon you will not be able to find any person around you. No one will be willing to talk to you or do any kind of business with you. You will be left alone in this world unless you take action against Necip Bey. He has made your sister's name everybody's business. What are you still waiting for? Have you not heard what he has been telling about her?"

There began much discussion on this, and everybody was suggesting something different or interpreting things this way or that way. As discussions went on and on, the ideas became more complicated and confusing. Hearing all the gossip about Telli Hanım, her relatives could not stand it any more and decided to have a fight with Necip Bey and his relatives. The same was true for Necip Bey's relatives as well. Eventually the gossip and the arguments among members of the two families caused a terrible fight which lasted seven years. Within those seven years, both families lost a number of their relatives, including three brothers of Telli Hanım. Finally, the peacemakers, the rulers of the region, whoever they were, intervened in the debate and took the guilty persons to court, where they were judged.

Meanwhile, Necip Bey could not wait any more to have his beloved one. Therefore, one day he mounted his horse and rode to Garnıağız village. Necip Bey went directly to Telli Hanım's house, where he dismounted from his horse, tied the horse to a tree, and

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<sup>12</sup> A saz is the stringed musical instrument used by folk singers and asiks.

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then entered the court of Telli Hanım's father. There Necip Bey took his sword off and put it on the ground before Garaca Bey, the father of Telli Hanım.

"Here is the sword, and here is my neck, father," he said to Garaca Bey. Then he added, "I am here. You may behead me if you wish, or accept me as your child. Forgive me for the things that have happened over the years."

Oh, my friends! Who must show generosity? The experienced person, of course. Who must forgive? The experienced one.

Garaca Bey kept quiet for awhile and thought, "Well, what should I do now? My God, help me with this. Because of him I have lost three sons. The rest of my sons are here. What would I say, and what would I do when they come in and see Necip Bey at my court?" Finally, as if he had made up his mind, he said, "Sit down, my son." He let Necip Bey sit down there.

While Necip Bey was talking to Garaca Bey, Garaca Bey's sons were informed about Necip Bey's visit which made Garaca Bey's sons rush into their father's court with their swords in their hands. Upon seeing his sons with swords in their hands, Garaca Bey shouted at them, "No, my sons, no. Calm down and listen to me. Do not harm anybody here. He came here as a man, as a guest. He is our guest. If you kill him here, it would not be fair to him. It would not be the heroic deed of a brave man. It would not be manly action."

"So?" the boys asked their father.

"We must handle this problem of ours not in a way that you think, my sons. This must be their Fate. It must be the will of God that mortals cannot do anything against. This has to do with God's will. So we have to handle this in accordance with the will of God. God's will must take place. I am announcing before you that Necip is one of your brothers. There is nothing else to be done against Fate." Following these words Garaca Bey ordered his wife, "Prepare Telli's bridal gifts and a horse. Put henna on Telli's hands, as well<sup>13</sup>. I will give Telli's hand in marriage to Necip Bey. I will send Telli with Necip tomorrow morning."

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<sup>13</sup> According to Turkish tradition, especially in the rural areas, girls who are getting married put henna on their hands. Henna is especially put on the hollow of the hands and on the fingers. There is also a traditional ceremony for putting henna on the bride's hands. This ceremony usually takes place on Saturday night or on the night before the new couple go to their own home. During that night the female relatives and friends of



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Garaca Bey hurried in marrying his daughter to Necip Bey because he had already lost three sons and did not want to lose any more. As is suggested by a proverb, "If you find yourself in a situation where you cannot seem to get ahead no matter what you do, the only profitable step you can take is to extricate yourself from the whole thing as soon as possible." So Garaca Bey did not want things to become any worse than they had already been.

The next morning Garaca Bey's family finished all the necessary preparations for the marriage of Necip and Telli. They dressed Telli very elegantly with a bridal costume, and loaded her bridal gifts on a horse, and helped Telli to mount the horse. When everything was ready to go, Garaca Bey gave the halter of the horse to Necip. Telli and Necip said, "Good-bye" and rode to Necip's village.

It was Fate, my friends. No one can do anything against Fate. Let them ride to Necip's place. About whom should I tell you now? Well, I will tell you about Gara Bey in the village of Tepecik.

Necip Bey and Gara Bey had sworn an oath to be blood brothers to one another. They liked each other very much, so that they did not want to stay apart. As they were very close friends, one day Gara Bey told Necip Bey, "Necip, my brother. Why do you not move your household to my village where we can built a better house for you, and we can live very close to each other? Bring everything of yours to my village where I have got half of the land, which is more than enough for both of us. I would like to share my land with you. You may use half of my field. You might also have realized that my field is not really far away from your own village, so that if you would like to continue cultivating your own field in your village you may easily do so."

Necip Bey liked his friend's idea very much and decided to move. Soon they moved Necip Bey's household belongings to Gara Bey's village, where they built a new and

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the bride gather at the bride's house and enjoy themselves with singing, dancing, and putting henna on the bride's hands and their hands as well. This night is called "Kına Gececi," which means "Henna Night of the Bride."

It is also rural people's tradition to henna three things: the girl who is getting married, the boy who is going into mandatory army service, and the sheep which is going to be sacrificed by the will of God.

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larger house for Necip Bey. Necip Bey's house looked much better than the current governor's house.

At that time Gara Bey was about thirty or thirty-five years old, and Necip Bey was so much younger than Gara Bey that he had not yet served in the army.

My friends, time passed, and a war broke out between our empire and the Russians. As I said, it was the time of empires and emperors; the war broke out at that time. The government drafted all the young men to serve in the army. Necip Bey, too, had a call for army service. By the time Necip Bey received the call, one of the main branches of the Ottoman army had already reached the plains of Selim County, and they were making final preparations to attack the Russians. While the army was camping in the plains of Selim, which was very close to Necip Bey's village, Necip Bey and Gara Bey invited the pasha of the army, the chief commander, to their village. The pasha accepted the invitation, and went to their village. Necip Bey and Gara Bey served the pasha very well, and the pasha enjoyed the service and the compliments. While they were chatting, the pasha was informed that Necip Bey had not served in the army, but had had a call just a few days ago.

"My son Necip, you are at the age of a man to serve in the army. Soon you will become a soldier, my child. Let me take you to my branch, so you can serve under my command. What do you think about my offer?" the pasha asked Necip Bey.

"All right, my pasha," answered Necip Bey. He walked toward Gara Bey, who was standing at the door, and told him about the offer the pasha had just made.

"Gara, sooner or later I will become a soldier. Since I met him, I think it will be much easier for me to serve under this pasha's command. What do you think, my brother?" he asked. Gara Bey thought for a second and then told him that this idea was reasonable. Upon getting his blood brother's approval on the idea, Necip Bey went back to the pasha's table and told him that he accepted the offer.

Having decided to join the pasha's branch, Necip Bey prepared all the things that he needed in the army, and also filled his sash with liras. When Necip Bey was ready to depart, he called Gara Bey and said, "My brother Gara Bey, my sister Sırma Hanım<sup>14</sup>," (Narrator: My dear audience! Forgive me that I forgot to tell you that Necip Bey had a

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<sup>14</sup> The narrator interrupts his narration to supply the overlooked information shown within parentheses.

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sister, Sirma Hanım.) "and my wife Telli Hanım are both first in God's protection and then yours." Then Necip Bey set off for the army.

The war did not take long; the Ottoman army had a big victory over the Russians. When a peace treaty was signed between the Ottomans and the Russians, Necip Bey's branch had to go to İstanbul, the capital city of the Ottoman Empire. From there Necip Bey sent this letter to his blood brother, Gara Bey.

"My dear brother: We won the war and came to İstanbul. Now, I am in İstanbul. I became a sergeant. I am still under the command of the pasha, and doing very well. The pasha has been promoted and has become the sadrizam<sup>15</sup> of the padishah<sup>16</sup>. Since I am a sergeant of the sadrizam, I am considered such a very important sergeant within the army that they have treated me like a commander of a regiment. The sadrizam pasha likes me very much; that is known by all soldiers over here."

Following the first letter of Necip Bey, they kept sending letters to each other. Each letter included similar information. And do you know how long it was taking to receive a letter? It was taking three months, my masters. As you know, it was the time of horse power, caravans, and foot soldiers.

Let us leave Necip Bey serving in the army, in İstanbul, and then about whom should I give you some news? I should tell you about Gara Bey. The events will take place in his village, Tepecik. [Note: Tape 2 ends here. "The Story of Necip and Telli" continues on tape 3, side A.]

One evening the men of Gara Bey's village gathered somewhere in the village and began chatting. Eventually they began talking about the women and the girls in their village. Each of them kept saying, "This or that girl is better" or "Somebody else's wife or girl does not have a match." The crowd of men was not agreed on any girl or woman. Finally, one of them said, " My friends, do not boast of yourself or your wives or your girls. If you would like to talk about the real beauty and be proud of something really beautiful, that must be Necip Bey's wife, Telli Hanım. She is very special and so

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<sup>15</sup> Sadrizam was the first commander and advisor of the padishah of the Ottomans. The sadrizam served as the chief of staff or the prime minister of the empire. The sadrizam is also called the grand vizier.

<sup>16</sup> The rulers of the Ottoman Empire had the title of Padishah or Sultan.



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perfect that she does not have a match in the whole world. That is my opinion, after all." Upon hearing this, the crowd kept silent.

Well, my dear listeners, I have already told you about the beauty of Telli Hanım, whose beauty was widely recognized. May her house be demolished.

Having listened to the discussion and various opinions, and having learned about everybody's agreement on the beauty of Telli Hanım, Gara Bey felt something toward her in his heart. He desired very much to have her and began thinking about having her. He thought about reaching her and taking her to his house. The ideas he was having in his mind were all evil things suitable to unbelievers.

He thought, "Is Telli Hanım that beautiful? What they said about her was that she does not have a match at all. That she is so beautiful I had not heard." Since he was thinking about Telli Hanım and her beauty, Gara Bey could not sleep that night. He eagerly waited for the sunrise.

In the morning, Gara Bey rushed into his stable and got a sheep. He immediately slaughtered the sheep and divided it into two pieces. He left one half at his home, and took the other half to Telli's house, where he knocked at the door, tak, tak, tak.

"Who is it?" asked a female voice from inside. It was Telli, who used to talk to people from inside. She had not gone out since Necip Bey had departed. It had been seven years that Telli kept herself inside her house. She did not go out because it was the time when people cared much about dignity and honor. So Telli stood behind the door and asked, "Who is it?"

"It is I, Gara. I have happened to slaughter a sheep, and brought some meat for you. Open the door and take it, Telli."

Gara used to send some food, meat, fruit, and vegetables to Telli's house from time to time. He used to leave the things in front of the door, and let either Telli or Sırma take them in. So Telli did not think anything bad about Gara, and opened the door very slightly, and then put her hand forward to take the meat inside. But Gara did not lose any time, and by forcing the door he entered inside and tried to hug Telli.

Upon this unexpected action by Gara, Telli said, " You must be an unbeliever. Is that why you have become a blood brother of Necip? You are a villain." She was screaming, cursing, and also pushing Gara away from herself. She pushed him very hard, which made Gara fall down.

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Having been released from Gara's hands, she continued to curse him. "You are the son of a betrayer. I do not want your meat or anything else you have. Take it back. I have enough money, enough food, and enough of everything else I need. I do not need anything of yours. Get out! Get out of my house and never come back. If you ever try to come here, I will kill you with this sword. I will behead you if you ever get in my house."

As is said in a proverb, "The arrow left the bow"<sup>17</sup>; Gara Bey had made a big mistake.

Well, he returned to his house without satisfying his desire, and there he wrote a letter to Necip Bey. "Dear Necip, I must inform you that Telli has begun to live immorally. As soon as you had left, she began having an affair. I have intended to write to you about it, but I could not. But I cannot stand it any more. When you receive this letter, write to me your instructions. I cannot stand seeing her in such a situation." Upon completing his letter, Gara mailed it to Necip Bey.

As I said, the postal deliveries were made by horsemen and caravans at that time.

If you ask about time, it flies on the wind.

If you ask about our story, it is carried in words<sup>18</sup>.

It is not known exactly how long it took. God knows how long it took. One day Necip Bey received the letter in İstanbul.

Let me remind you that Necip Bey's commander, the pasha, had become the sadrâzam to the padishah of the Ottoman Empire. Thus Necip Bey had become a favorite sergeant of the pasha and other commanders in the army as well.

As soon as Necip Bey read the letter, he said, "Eyvah, eyvah, eyvah."<sup>19</sup> I have trusted her for a long time. Telli, you are a villain. You lied to me. My God, what she has done in my absence!"

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<sup>17</sup> This proverb indicates one's regrets about the actions he or she might just have done. It would be translated into English as "What's done is done; there is no turning back."

<sup>18</sup> These two lines are employed by the asık here to express the transition of time and events in the story. These kinds of expressions are commonly used by the asık in the storytelling tradition in Turkey.

<sup>19</sup> Eyvah is an indication of grief and sorrow.

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Necip Bey thought about his memories, and then decided to write a letter to Gara, and then another letter to Telli. He began his first letter, "My brother Gara, when you read this letter, you must immediately expel Telli from my house. Since she has committed such sins, I do not need her any more. Tell her that I have divorced her from now on."

He wrote to Telli, " Telli, as it is stated in this letter, I divorce you. You and I will have no relations whatsoever from now on. I am swearing an oath that I am divorced from you<sup>20</sup>. You must leave my house as soon as you receive this letter."

Necip Bey mailed the letters, and in time they were received by Gara and Telli Hanım on the same day. Upon receiving a letter from Necip Bey, Telli Hanım became very happy. Before opening and reading it, she called Sırma Hanım, Necip Bey's sister, so they could read it together. " Sırma, come here. Hurry up; come here, Sırma. Look, your brother sent a letter to us. Thank God that I finally received a letter from Necip. This is the first letter within seven years. Let us read it sweetly."

She opened the envelope very gently and began reading. She read, read, and read. She could not believe her eyes at what she was reading. She read and wept. There was a three-stanza poem at the very end of the letter . My friends, let us hear what Necip Bey wrote in his poem. It looks as if Necip Bey wrote it with tears and grief.

The poem written by Necip Bey and read by Telli Hanım was this:

Even if you were more shiny than yellow gold;  
 Even if you were more shiny than yellow gold;  
 Even if you were brighter than pure silver;  
 Even if you were brighter than pure silver;  
 Even if you were an angel in heaven;  
 Even if you were an angel in heaven;

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<sup>20</sup> This oath is indicating the divorce understanding of Islam. According to Islam, as a couple can marry with an oath, they can also divorce with an oath. It must also be stated that since the establishment of the Turkish Republic, even though it is an Islamic country, marriage and divorce have been acceptable only if they have taken place in accordance with the constitution.



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I won't take you as my beloved from now on.  
I won't take you as my beloved from now on<sup>21</sup>

He wrote another stanza in grief. Let us hear what he wrote:

If you have become a spring on my road;  
If you have become a spring on my road;  
If you have run like flood water, and then become clear;  
If you have run like flood water, and then become clear;  
And if I have become very thirsty on that road;  
And if I have become very thirsty on that road;  
I would not drink it from now on.  
I would not drink it from now on.

Necip Bey's sorrow had not gone away, and thus he wrote one more stanza:

Necip Bey says, "Where are your promises?"  
Necip Bey says, "Where are your promises?"  
You have made me suffer like a person on his deathbed.  
You have made me suffer like a person on his deathbed.  
You did not keep the promises you had made.  
You did not keep the promises you had made.  
I won't take you as my beloved from now on.  
I won't take you as my beloved from now on.

Necip Bey's letter was finished with those words.

As Telli Hanım and Sırma Hanım were reading the letter from Necip Bey, Gara Bey, too, read the letter Necip Bey had sent to him. When the letter was over, with no delay, as was told to him in the letter, Gara Bey went to Telli's house and knocked at the door

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<sup>21</sup> The poem written by Necip Bey is not told or read by the narrator, but it is sung by him with the accompaniment of the saz, the stringed musical instrument.

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and said, "Telli, you must get out of my brother's house. I have received a letter from Necip Bey. He says that he does not want you any more. You must get out of the house. A dishonored woman like you does not fit in this family. We do not want you among us."

He was a villain. He blamed an innocent woman. Also, he sent someone with a message to Telli's brothers: "Come and take your dishonored sister from our village." Having no information about what had happened, Telli's brothers went to Telli's house, where they found Telli in tears. They packed up her belongings and took her to Garaca Bey's house.

Look at him, my dear audience. Look at this carefully, and see how a blood brother is taking care of his so-called brother's family, and how he is treating his brother's wife. What kind of betrayal worse than this could he have exhibited? Yes, they call it "blood brother," but I do not understand what kind of brotherhood this is. If your brother acts like him, what value might blood brotherhood have? If the person is not your birth sibling, but just by licking a drop of your blood has become your sibling, is that really so? Now, listen carefully to the result of having a relation with someone based on blood brotherhood. I know you have been listening to me, but I am reminding you to pay more attention to what will happen.

Not long after Telli had returned to her father's house, Garaca Bey, the father of Telli Hanım, died. Since Gara Bey, the blood brother of Necip Bey, had evil intentions because he desired Telli Hanım so badly, one day taking about one hundred men from his village he went to Garaca Bey's house, where Telli Hanım and her brothers had lived after the death of their father. Since they did not know what had happened between Telli Hanım and Gara Bey, Telli Hanım's brothers welcomed Gara Bey and his men. They took them in and served them tea and coffee as they talked about several topics. Finally Gara Bey revealed the reason for their visit.

"I came here to ask Telli's hand in marriage by God's will," he said.

Astonished by this request, "What do you mean?" asked Telli's brothers, and continued, "Was she not your blood brother's wife? How do you dare make such a request?"

"Well, my masters, there is no difference between a dead husband and a divorced one. When a husband of a woman dies or divorces her, the brother of the husband has

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the right to marry his brother's wife. What I am saying is that since Necip says that he divorced her, then I have a right to ask Telli's hand in marriage. For me it does not matter whether Necip died or he divorced her. Since he says he is divorced from her, now I would like to make her my wife."

They argued about this issue as to whether it was right or not. But among them there was no one who strongly opposed Gara's idea and who had enough courage to say to Gara, "No, it is not all right." Since Gara Bey was there with a hundred men who were there to show Gara's power, it did not take very long for him to get his request. These events took place in winter, and the place where they lived was getting very much snow, so they made Telli sit on a sled, and then they took her to Gara's house.

Gara brought Telli to his home; he made her his wife, but let us see what will happen. May God prevent him from reaching his goal. God willing, she will not really be his wife.

Let me provide you with news from İstanbul, news from Necip Bey. After awhile they called Necip Bey Sergeant Necip in the army. One day the sadrazam thought to himself, "I have not seen Sergeant Necip for a long time. Let me go to his office, and see the condition of my dear sergeant. Let me inquire after Sergeant Necip's life situation." Having made a decision to pay a visit to Necip, the sadrazam went to Necip's office. There he found Necip had wept very much over a letter which had been flooded in tears. With his eyes closed, Necip had been in such very deep thought that he did not pay attention to the person who was standing before him. The sadrazam understood something was wrong with him, and without asking his permission took the letter from the table and read it. Upon reading the terrifying information about Necip's wife, the pasha could not believe it, and thought, "Eyvah, eyvah. Now I understand what made Necip weep so much. But it might be a lie. It might be a terrible lie." Following a short evaluation of the situation in his mind, the sadrazam called Necip, "Necip, my son! Hisst, Necip!"

Upon hearing the sadrazam's voice, Necip opened his eyes and could not believe that he was seeing the sadrazam there. Necip quickly stood up and replied, "Yes, my pasha?"

"Why did you cry very much, my son?" the sadrazam asked.

"I do not know, my pasha. I just cried for nothing," Necip answered.



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Since the pasha had hidden the letter in his pocket before he called to Necip, Necip did not think that the pasha could have known about the problem. But the pasha continued questioning him. "Let me ask you a question, my son."

"Yes, my pasha?"

"My son, is Gara your birth brother?"

"No, my pasha. He is my sworn blood brother."

"Oh! Oh! Now I see. My son, you should not believe him. Never believe what he says. Do not believe him, because it seems to me he lies to you."

"Oh, my pasha! It does not matter whether I believe or do not believe him any more. I did what I had to do. It has been a long time since the arrow left the bow."

Upon hearing such a confusing answer to his statement, the sadrizam asked, "What did you do?"

"Well, my pasha, I sent letters," Necip said. The pasha became anxious about the letters and asked again, "What kinds of letters, my son?"

Necip explained the letters and the contents of each letter that he had sent to Gara and Telli.

"Eyvah, eyvah!" said the pasha sadly. Then he said, "My son, what have you done? Why had you not told me before you sent those letters? You must have lost your mind. What should we do now? What kind of action must we take?" the pasha asked, and then, as if he had found a solution, he said, "Wait a little."

The pasha summoned ten of his best soldiers, and also ordered his servants to prepare ten good horses. Then he ordered Necip Bey and the other soldiers to get ready. When they were all ready to go, the pasha gave them more money than they might have needed; he ordered them to stand before him and said, "Listen to me, my sons. I will give you a program which you will follow. Now, you must go to Sergeant Necip's village. My son, Necip! First of all, you must investigate the events that have occurred there. If Telli has done wrong, and if she has damaged your family honor, as was the news you got, you must kill her there; you must sell your belongings, and then return to İstanbul. I will adopt you as my son. But if what Gara has written to you is a lie and if he has blamed an innocent woman for nothing, then you must kill him. Once again, if you kill Gara for his sins, you must also sell both your own belongings and Gara's, and

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then you must return to İstanbul. These are my orders. You may depart now. May God give you well being."

Sergeant Necip, a corporal, and the other soldiers mounted their horses and rode off. They rode toward Kars Province. May God not let Necip Bey come to Kars.

If you ask about time, it flies on the wind.

If you ask about our story, it is carried in words.

One day the group and Necip Bey arrived at the village of Kara Hamza in the province of Kars. This village was about an hour's distance from Necip Bey's village. The villagers, who knew Necip Bey and had heard about the events that had taken place in his village, warmly welcomed Necip Bey and the soldiers with him. They offered good food and drink to them; they treated all of them as honored guests of the village. When Necip Bey wished to leave and go to his village, one of the distinguished villagers said, "You and your soldiers must stay in our village tonight as our guests. We have to send someone to your sister to let her know about your arrival with a number of soldiers. Thus she would have time to prepare food and a place for you and your soldiers. You may go to your village tomorrow, God willing. When you arrive there tomorrow, you will find everything ready for you and your companions." Being unable to refuse the offer and having become tired enough to sleep for a few days, Necip Bey decided to stay there for a night. Meanwhile, the villagers sent someone with the news of Necip Bey's arrival to Sırma Hanım.

On the other hand the villagers of Kara Hamza began discussing the situation and the events that might take place on the next day. One of them said, "Listen to me, my friends; Gara has done evil things in the absence of Necip. Now Necip is here, and tomorrow he will be in his village. Think about what will happen when he finds out about the villainous deeds of Gara, who has claimed to be his blood brother. I am sure they will kill each other. We know the truth. I think the thing we can do is to invite the distinguished people of the villages around ours and then try to find a solution to this problem. If we do not intervene in it, they will kill each other." The idea of this man was approved by the rest of the villagers, and therefore they sent out messengers to the other villages that night.

The next morning, many respectable men from the surrounding villages gathered at a house in the village of Gara Hamza. They all accompanied Necip Bey and his soldiers

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to the village of Tepecik. On the outskirts of Tepecik, Sırma Hanım was waiting for her brother. When Necip Bey arrived at the point where she had waited, Sırma Hanım ran and hugged her brother. As they were hugging each other, Necip Bey realized that Sırma was weeping all the time. Necip Bey asked her, "Why are you crying so much, Sister? What happened to you?"

"Do you not know what I am weeping for? Do you not know the terrible mistake you have made? If I am crying now, it is because of the mistake you have made," she answered.

"What do you mean?" asked Necip Bey.

"Do not say that you do not know it. What did you hear about Telli? What made you become so suspicious about her? Who caused you to make such a mistake?" she asked.

"That is nonsense," said Necip Bey and then explained, "I was told that Telli was having affairs with some people. I was told that she had been unfaithful to me; she had lived immorally."

"Those things are not true," said Sırma Hanım.

Having told that the news he got was not true, Necip Bey asked again, "Why do you say, 'Those things are not true'?"

Sırma Hanım explained, "You have to believe what I am going to say. After your departure, Telli did not go out for seven years; she did not even look through the windows when there were men around. She thought that she must not let anyone say anything dishonorable about her and her family name. In order to protect your honor, she was trying to do her best, and she used to say this: 'My husband is serving in the army. While he is there I must not be seen by a man.' While she was thinking about you, she was trying very hard to protect your honor. What you heard about her other than these must be a big lie. What you heard about her cannot be true, my brother. Without investigating the situation properly, how did you make such a mistake, my brother?" As she talked and explained to Necip Bey how Telli had behaved in his absence, she began crying aloud. She wept bitterly, which touched Necip Bey's heart.

"Well, my sister, I understand that Telli is not guilty of anything," said Necip Bey.

"No, of course, she is not guilty at all. No one can blame her for doing anything wrong. This is what I have been trying to say," she replied.



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Sırma Hanım continued providing information to her brother, all the time pulling her hair as if she wanted to take revenge for something or as if she were trying to prove to her brother that she was telling the truth. "She has no sins whatsoever."

Having learned that Telli did not commit such sins, Necip Bey said joyously, "Well, then, there is nothing to worry about. I shall go to Telli's village and bring her back to my house. Garnıağız village is right there."

"No, no, you cannot do it. It is impossible," replied Sırma Hanım.

"Why?" asked Necip Bey, surprised.

Sırma Hanım had to tell him, "Gara has married her."

Shocked by this news, Necip Bey asked again, "What? What? What did you say?"

"I am saying that Gara has married her; he has made her his wife," Sırma screamed.

With this shocking news Necip Bey became very sad and said, "Eyvah, eyvah, eyvah." Necip Bey felt a mixture of both grief and anger. He felt grief for himself and for Telli and anger for Gara. The feelings inside Necip Bey hurt him very badly. His heart was broken. With a weak voice he said to his soldiers, " Amaan, amaan<sup>22</sup>, my friends! Take me to my home. Something just happened to me. Take me to my home."

They could not understand what might have happened to him. In truth, it was the news provided by Sırma Hanım. This shocking news made Necip Bey very ill; it even put his life into danger. He had begun experiencing the same kind of pain that people feel just before they die. He felt that he could not breathe for a moment. Necip once again requested his friends to take him to his home. They took him to his house and put him into bed.

In a short time the news about Necip Bey's arrival and his becoming ill spread in his village and drew everybody to Necip Bey's house. People came to visit him and wept when they saw him in such a condition. They asked, "Necip Bey, what happened to you? What happened to you, son?"

One day Necip Bey felt a little better, and talked to people around his bed, "My friends, I have got what I needed. Eyvah, eyvah to me. Being very naive, credulous, my heart's being ingenuous and believing what people say has finally put me in such a condition. I think I deserved this. Since I have such a pure heart, I must suffer and will

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<sup>22</sup> Amaan is an expression of despair.

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die very soon. I am the one who is guilty of what has happened to my family. Telli is the innocent one. I do not think I will overcome my sickness. Please go to my villainous blood brother Gara and ask a favor for me: that he should give permission to Telli for about ten minutes to come over here. I would like to see her even if she only stands at the door. I would like to see her for one last time before I die. If I see her, nothing will matter for me after that."

They went to Gara Bey's house and related to him Necip Bey's final wish. "Gara Bey, this what Necip Bey wishes; you should send Telli to Necip Bey's house for about ten minutes. She does not even have to enter inside; she may stand at the door. He would like to see her for about that long for the last time. Something very bad has happened to him and he is about to die."

"Well," Gara began replying to the request, "I understand that he will never grow up. I know his character pretty well." Then he called to Telli, "Telli, Telli! Get ready. If you want to go to Necip's house and see him, you must wear your long-sleeved outer dress; you must cover your body very well. You must not let him see even a pin-size part of your body. If you do not dress in the way I have ordered, I will kill you. If you want to go, you may go. But do not forget: you have only ten minutes to stay there, no more than that. At his house, do not go near him; stay at the door, and let him see only your face for ten minutes. That is all. You have to come back to me when the ten minutes are over."

Telli Hanım dressed up as she was ordered by her husband, Gara Bey, and then walked to Necip Bey's house. There she opened the door to Necip Bey's room very slightly and sat down.

Necip Bey was looking toward the door all the time to see if Telli could have come. When the door slightly opened and Telli's face appeared, Necip Bey became very happy. He tried to say something to her with signs as if he were asking her to come closer to him. But Telli did not walk any farther and stood at the door as she was told. Necip Bey said, "Forgive me, Telli. I have made a big mistake. I plead that I am guilty for everything that has happened to us."

But Telli did not respond to him; she did not speak to him. She did not, of course, want to talk to him, since she felt that she was offended by Necip Bey's letter.

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Seeing that Telli would not talk to him, Necip Bey asked for his saz. "Give me that saz on the wall. I would like to say something to Telli with my saz before I die." They handed the saz to Necip Bey. Let us hear what Necip Bey says in grief and pain:

She dressed up; put a silk belt on;  
Necip would sacrifice his life for you; please talk to me.  
Did you come with certain orders to visit me?  
Necip would sacrifice his life for you; please talk to me.  
Did you come with certain orders to visit me?  
Necip would sacrifice his life for you; please talk to me.

Upon hearing the song, Telli Hanım said, "Wait, Necip; wait. It seems to me you have no brain. You are very naive and are deceived very easily. Instead of asking me, you have preferred to listen to other people. Now, let me sing. Listen to me." While talking to Necip, she felt sorry for both of them, and tears burst from her eyes. In such condition, she managed to sing. As soon as Telli Hanım began singing, all the people in the village gathered at Necip Bey's house and listened to her. Let us hear what she said:

Come in, ağas; sit down on the benches;  
Your talk about us increases my sorrow and grief.  
Since I received a divorcing letter from Necip,  
That is why I feel offended; I do not talk to him.  
Since I received a divorcing letter from Necip,  
That is why I feel offended; I do not talk to him.

Necip Bey replied:

I have become very ill; I will not get better;  
Forgive me, my beloved; I know my fault.  
This occurred because of Gara's letter;  
Necip would sacrifice his life for you; please talk to me.  
This occurred because of Gara's letter;



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Necip would sacrifice his life for you; please talk to me.

Telli Hanım replied:

I did not put henna on my hands for many holidays;  
 I did not go out for more than seven years;  
 Though the world has known joy, I have not looked out;  
 That is why I feel offended; I do not talk to you.  
 Though the world has known joy, I have not looked out;  
 That is why I feel offended; I do not talk to you.

Necip Bey sang again:

I feel sorry: my life is almost finished;  
 My grief and sorrow have reached the heavens;  
 Pray to the Creator not to take my life away;  
 Necip would sacrifice his life for you; please talk to me.  
 Pray to the Creator not to take my life away;  
 Necip would sacrifice his life for you; please talk to me.

Necip Bey did not let Telli Hanım reply to him; he sang once more:

Amaan, amaan,  
 I am giving up everything;  
 My days have come and passed by;  
 I have tried to become a bridge for trustworthy people,  
 But the cowards passed from one side to another all the time.  
 Cowardly people used my bridge all the time.

Upon completing his song, Necip Bey died there. My dear audience, he left his life to you. Well, Necip Bey died, and they buried him. They buried Necip Bey ; they sent his soul to God's court, but our story is not finished yet.

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Following Necip Bey's funeral, the corporal, who had become the captain of the soldiers there, gathered the soldiers and said, "Come closer and make a circle around me, my friends." When the soldiers circled around him, he continued, "For what did we come here? We came here to solve Necip's problem. But things did not go according to our plans, and by God's will Necip died. We cannot do anything against the will of God."

"Your order, captain?" the soldiers asked him, and then they added, "If you choose to die, we would also die. If you choose to remain alive, we would also choose to remain alive. We will follow you."

The corporal asked, "Are you all thinking the same, my friends?"

The soldiers replied, "Yes, captain."

The corporal said, "If that is the idea you have, then follow me. The first thing you must do is to surround Gara's house, and do not let him escape."

With the corporal's order the soldiers surrounded Gara's house. Then the corporal shouted, "Hey, Gara! Open the door. Open the door. You and I must settle our accounts today. Necip died, and his soul has reached heaven, but I am alive and waiting for you. I am going nowhere without taking Necip's revenge on you. If I return without destroying your life, as you destroyed Necip's, may I not get any benefit from the food which is provided by the state."

Gara had prepared for something like this; upon hearing the challenge, instead of opening the door, he rather searched for an opportunity to escape. He was waiting for darkness to fall upon them. That was the only hope he had, that with the darkness he could flee very easily. The corporal, on the other hand, understood the intentions of Gara and ordered his soldiers, "My friends, watch the door and do not let him slip away." Following that, he left his sword there, took only his dagger with him, and then climbed to the roof of the stable which was attached to the house. Through the chimney he climbed down into Gara's house.

Meanwhile, Gara was waiting behind the main entrance door. The corporal found his way to the place where Gara was standing. Upon seeing him, the corporal shouted, "Here I come! Take your turn and watch out! Do not look down on your challenger, even if it is an ant. Here I come to take your life away; defend yourself!" With those warnings the corporal held his dagger very firmly and rushed over to Gara, who was

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unable to move. Before Gara had made any move, the corporal stabbed him with his dagger seven times, and then let him fall down dead.

In a short time, the rest of the soldiers walked in and there they briefly discussed what was to be done next. Having decided on applying the sadrazam's orders, they sold all the properties and household belongings of Necip Bey and of Gara Bey, and then taking Sirma Hanım and Gara Bey's wife they returned to İstanbul. The corporal also took his bloody dagger with him.

As soon as they arrived in İstanbul, the pasha was informed, "My pasha, the soldiers whom you sent to the province of Kars have just returned."

"Let Necip come in," said the pasha.

The pasha did not know that the soldiers had returned with two women but without Necip Bey. They were all waiting in a line in front of the pasha's office door. The corporal walked in and stood before the pasha.

The pasha asked, "Where is Sergeant Necip, my son?"

The corporal replied in grief, "May your life be a long one, my pasha. May your generosity never diminish, my pasha."

He related all the events that had taken place from the beginning to the end of their journey. Then he showed the two women to the pasha. "She is Gara's wife, and she is Necip's sister." And then the corporal continued, "What is your order, my pasha? I obey your orders whether you order me to be killed or to be freed. I did my best, but without your permission, my pasha."

The pasha said, "Great, my son. You have done well. I believe you have accomplished God's will. Let me kiss your eyelids<sup>23</sup>," and then kissed the eyelids of the corporal. The pasha continued, "Now, my son, listen to me carefully. It will be your choice to marry one of these women. From now on, I am considering you in place of Necip. Let me hear your answer."

The corporal thought for a moment and replied, "My pasha, forgive me for what I will say. Since you said that you are considering me as Necip, who was your best

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<sup>23</sup> In Turkish tradition in order to express appreciation for something good, it is common to say "I kiss both of your eyelids." This is also true for parents to kiss both eyelids of their children when they are parting.



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sergeant, then I consider Sırma Hanım as my sister. If you allow me, I will marry Gara's wife, God willing. That will take Necip's revenge on Gara."

"Well done, my son. That is what I was expecting from you," the pasha said. He kissed the eyelids of the corporal once more and said, "I am giving you the palace just across from this building as a wedding gift. Now you have my permission to leave."

The pasha made all the arrangements for the corporal's wedding ceremony. The corporal married Gara's wife.

Well, my dear audience, my ağas, they went their way, and I came here to tell you what happened. The name of our master is Hıdır<sup>24</sup>. This is the best I can do. My dear audience, forgive me for any mistakes I might have made.

May it be very sweet what you eat;  
May it be fur that you wear;  
May God grant long life for each of us.  
Good-bye, good-bye.

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<sup>24</sup> This word might be "Hızır" or "Hıdır." The minstrels and other narrators in Turkey mention the name of this holy person in different parts of a story. At the end of each story the name Hızır/Hıdır is mentioned as a rhyming word as well.