

Story #77 (Tape #18, 1961-1962)

Narrator: Mehmet Çatal

Location: Çamalan village, kaza of
Tarsus, Province of Içel

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false
Piety in Excess

*Adultery
Unfaithfulness
Chastity
Virtue*

There was once a man whose wife did not like him very much, but she did not say anything about this. One day the man noticed that when his wife was in the yard, she turned her face to the wall when a rooster walked by.¹

"Why did you turn your face to the wall then?" he asked her.

"Well," she said, "The rooster is a male creature, isn't he?" By doing this she was trying to make her husband believe that she was an exceptionally chaste woman, but really she was not.

The wife had a secret lover who visited her sometimes when her husband was away, but he did not go away from the house often enough to suit her. One day she made a plan to get him away from the house for a while so that her lover could visit her. She told her husband that pups were being sold in the market in a nearby town at a very high price. The man collected a great number of pups from his own village and took them to that town. There he met a friend of his who asked, "What are you doing here?"

"I have brought some pups to sell. I have been told that they bring a very high price here."

"Where did you hear that pups were selling at a higher price here than any place else?" asked the friend.

¹Despite the fact that the veil has been outlawed now for nearly four decades, there is still the feeling in some rural parts of Turkey that women should not expose their faces to the gaze of men. Peasant women nearly always wear shawls or "head squares," clutched at throat level, framing the face closely. In some areas of Turkey a woman will turn her face to the wall when a man approaches. The woman in this tale is affecting such virtue that she faces the wall in the presence of any male creature, even a rooster.

"My wife told me so," said the man.

wife is not a good woman, then," said the friend

"Oh, yes, she is. My wife is so chaste that she avoids looking at any male creature, even a rooster."

Grape seller
"No, I think that your wife even has a lover," said the friend. "Let me sell this load of grapes and then I shall show you that your wife is receiving lovers secretly." He sold the large basket of grapes that he had, and then he had the husband climb into the basket, and he carried him to his own home.

When they arrived at the house the friend said to the wife, "I am selling grapes. Would you like some?"

I would like some. Won't you come in?"

He unloaded the basket from his back and set it down in the front room. The friend sat down in a chair, and the man's wife began to entertain him. She sang for him and danced for him, and was becoming very familiar with him. The husband, who was hidden in the grape basket, was listening to everything that was going on, and he concluded that his wife was really not a very virtuous woman.

Murder - of wife by husband

The husband was so discouraged by this turn of events that he killed his wife and her lover, and then left home and lived in a cave. In the meantime there was a robbery in the palace of the Sultan. The Sultan's treasury had been broken into, and the thieves were hunted all over the country. The Sultan's men found the husband hidden in the cave, and so they accused him of the theft. The husband tried to explain to the Sultan that he had had nothing at all to do with the robbery and he asked the Sultan to give him forty days to find the real culprits. The husband

said, "If I cannot find the real thieves in forty days, then you can have me beheaded

The Sultan agreed to the husband's proposal and let him go for forty days. The husband began to think about catching the thieves. A few days later when the husband was walking in the market place, he saw a hoca coming toward him. He was the famous Hoca with the Bells.² This hoca had little bells attached to his toes so that when he walked the ringing of the bells would warn little creatures on the ground to get out of the way. He said that he did not want to step on any living creature.

Hoca-immoral

The husband asked a bystander, "Who is that?"

he is the grand vezir of the Sultan, a very religious and good man," said the bystander. The husband returned to the Sultan immediately and said, "Your majesty, I have found the thief. It is the Hoca with the Bells, your grand vezir. If you do not believe me, just ask your grand vezir to give you his prayer beads and then you will discover it for yourself. I will be able to show it to you clearly then."

When the Hoca with the Bells came to attend the Sultan, the Sultan said to him, "Give me your prayer beads for a while, hoca." The hoca did as the Sultan asked him, and afterwards the Sultan gave the prayer beads to the husband. "Here are the prayer beads," he said, "Now you must prove to me that the thief was the Hoca with the Bells."

The next day the husband went to the hoca's house while the hoca was at court. The hoca's daughter opened the door for the husband and the husband showed the daughter the hoca's prayer beads as a token of his friendship with the hoca. He said to her, "You will show me where there

²The narrator spoke of the Zilli Hoca (Hoca with Bells) as if he had been a historical personage.

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is stored the money from the treasury which your father robbed the other

Where is it hidden?" The girl showed the husband the way to the stolen treasure, and there he found everything that had been taken from the palace. The husband then went to the Sultan and asked him to come with him to the home of the hoca. When they saw the entire treasure hidden in the hoca's house, the Sultan was greatly surprised. He said to the husband, "How did you discover this?"

"Your majesty," said the husband, "I had a wife once who pretended she was so chaste that she would not even face a rooster when it approached her. But later I discovered she was a bad woman. I killed her and her lover and then hid myself in a cave. Your soldiers found me there and accused me of this offense. I discovered the guilt of the Hoca with the Bells because of my experience with my wife."