

Story #179 (Tape #3, Summer 1970)

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Location: Kızılcahamam
Ankara vilayet

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Namık Kemal Completes the Sultan's Verse

Namık Kemal was once thrown into jail | by I do not know which sultan. The sultan and his grand vizier were on shore one morning watching the Mediterranean Sea. It was lightning and raining, and the Mediterranean Sea started getting stormy. The sultan [attempting to say something poetic in rime] said,

The raindrops fall down from on high;

The lightning streaks flash in the sky;

The storm clouds o'er Ak Deniz fly.

But he was unable to make a fourth rhyming line.

His grand vizier suggested that Namık Kemal might be able to complete this verse. The sultan remembered he had thrown Namık Kemal into jail, and when he heard Namık Kemal's name suggested, he said, "Bring him here. If he can complete this verse, he shall be set free."

When he was brought to the presence of the padişah, the problem was explained to him, and the padişah's three lines were read to him:

The raindrops fall down from on high;

The lightning streaks flash in the sky;

The storm clouds o'er Ak Deniz fly.

When Namık Kemal heard this, he said, "Very well, sir:

The raindrops fall down from on high;

The lightning streaks flash in the sky;

The storm clouds o'er Ak Deniz fly;

For your servant, Your Highness, an ass now supply."