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Nasreddin Hoca Winnows the Wheat

Nasreddin Hoca told his wife one day that he wanted to go to the mill and grind some wheat. Hoca filled several bags with wheat and he loaded them on his donkey and set out for the mill. As he was carrying them home, after he had had the wheat ground, he came to a hilly part of the road. As the Hoca was going up the hill he fell off of his donkey and he lay for a while unconscious on the ground. While he was lying there wolves came along and started to eat his donkey

When the Hoca opened his eyes and saw the wolves were eating his donkey, he said to them, "You picked a fine day for that job. All right, eat him up."

A little while later some peasants came along the road, saw Hoca lying there, and asked him what he was doing. He said to them, "I have died. That is why I am lying here in the road."

One of the peasants said to him, "No, Hoca, you aren't dead. You are a healthy man. Get up!"

Nasreddin Hoca got up from where he was lying and started for home. He remembered that his wife had warned him to have the flour ground fine at the mill. He felt the flour then, and discovered that it was really very coarse. He decided to winnow¹ it and make it finer. Of course, most of the flour was

¹Both in thinking he has died and in winnowing the flour Nasreddin Hoca is here playing the role of the numskull. Wheat is winnowed in the fields of rural Turkey, after it is threshed. There are always grains and heads of wheat that remain in the straw after the threshing. To extract this good grain from the straw the harvesters toss the straw up in the air with pitchforks. If a light breeze is blowing, the ground straw will blow downwind ten or fifteen feet while the grain, being so much heavier, will fall just beyond the worker. Thus, there will be two piles, one of chaff and one of wheat grains and wheat heads. Hoca here uses the same process, the heavier hulls and improperly ground wheat falling at his feet and the fine flour blowing away in the wind. Nasreddin is alternately the clever man and the numskull, and at times he falls between the two types when he achieves a success quite accidentally, as he does in the following tale.

carried away by the wind when he winnowed it. Hoca lost most of the wheat and all that was left was bran. Hoca took the bran and went home.

When he arrived home his wife asked him, "Where is your donkey?"

Hoca said, "The donkey has been eaten by wolves."

His wife said, "What happened?"

Hoca said, "I died on the way, and while I was lying there in the middle of the road my donkey was torn to pieces and eaten by wolves. Then I remembered what you told me, as I was lying there, about the flour. I got up and checked it and found that it was very coarse, and so I winnowed it against the wind and brought home what was left to you."