

Story 1984 (1969 Tape 3)

Narrator: Mustafa Güleç

Location: Alıçlık village, Bayburt kaza, Gümüşhane Province. (This tale was taped before Bayburt became the capital city of a new province of that same name.)

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Collected by Dr. Saim Sakaoğlu

A Magic Spell Broken

There was once a farmer who was at work harvesting an excellent field of wheat. In those days people used sickles to cut wheat and other grains. With a swing of his sickle the farmer accidentally cut off the head of a snake that was hidden from view in the tall wheat plants. Immediately after that had happened, the farmer suddenly felt very ill.

After his illness had lasted for three days, the farmer went to a doctor for help, but the doctor could not understand the man's ailment. He then went to a sorcerer to see if that kind of person might be able to cure him by means of magic. But despite the sorcerer's repeated efforts to heal the farmer, he failed.

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Finally the man consulted a hoca.¹ This hoca said, “I know how to cure you of your illness, but to do so need the help of a man who is not afraid of anything.”

After searching for some time, they found a man who said, “I am not afraid of anything.”

After writing a short letter, the hoca said to this fearless man, “Take this letter and go and hide beneath such and such a bridge tonight. Just before sunrise, a procession of jinns² will march across that bridge followed by a gorgeous carriage carrying the king of jinns. As soon as the carriage rolls upon the bridge, come out of hiding. Walk up to the carriage and hand to the king this letter. Then quickly return to your hiding place beneath the bridge.”

The fearless man went to that bridge and hid himself beneath it. As the hoca had said, just before dawn, a procession of jinns crossed the bridge, followed by a beautiful carriage. Coming out of hiding, the

¹A hoca is the preacher and religious leader of a community. In pre-Republican times the hoca was also the community teacher. Separation of church and state in the Republic required that teachers be people of secular rather than of religious training.

²The word jinn suggests two very different kinds of supernatural creatures. The first is the huge supernatural being who comes forth from a bottle 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 achieve what he wishes. The other kind of jinn is never seen. It is a spiritual force referred to in some Sufi beliefs and in other mystical systems.

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fearless man approached the carriage and handed into it the letter that the hoca had given him. He then quickly returned to his hiding place.

The king of jinns ordered the procession to halt. After reading the hoca's letter, he read it aloud to all of the other jinns. He then asked his followers, "Which of you put a spell upon the farmer referred to in this letter?" When no one responded, he said, "Well, if you did not do it yourself, tell me the name of the jinn who might have done it."

Then one of the jinns came forward and said, "I put the curse upon that farmer because he cut off the head of my brother with a sickle."

"In what form was your brother at that time?" asked the king.

"He was in the form of a snake."

The king of jinns said to his subjects, "This killing of a snake seems to have been accidental, but others might be deliberate. I have warned you repeatedly not to transform yourselves into snakes. Most human beings dislike snakes. Whenever they see one, they want to kill it. But the man involved in this incident has a right to request us to remove the spell that he now suffers." He then wrote out directions for breaking the spell. Calling the fearless man to him, he handed those directions to that man, saying, "Tell your friend to follow these

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instructions. If he does so, the spell now afflicting him will be broken.”

The fearless man took that message and gave it to the sick man in his village. After following the directions sent to him, the farmer was cured immediately. (I heard this tale from my grandmother.)