

Story #43 (Tape 27)  
1961-1962

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#43  
The Many Dilemmas of the Padişah's Three Sons

#43  
Padişah -- three sons  
of

There was once an old padişah who was about to die. He called his eldest son to his bedside and said to him, "According to our tradition, you will inherit the throne when I am gone." inheritance

Not long after this, the padişah died, and, as it had been willed by him, his eldest son became the new padişah, and with the approval of his two brothers and his mother, he sat upon the throne. One night shortly after he had become padişah, the young ruler had a dream in which he was told that he would go on a most adventurous journey and see many miracles before he returned home. When this dream was repeated for three nights in succession, he left the throne temporarily to the older of his brothers, filled a saddlebag with gold, mounted his horse, and set out on his journey.

He went a short way; he went a long way. He went over hills and dales, but he went straight, too, stirring up dust from the road like flour that is borrowed.<sup>1</sup> And when he looked back, he saw that he had gone only the length of a grain of barley.<sup>2</sup> He finally reached a place where three roads branched off. One of these roads was marked with a sign that read, "Whoever goes will probably return." The second was marked, "Whoever goes will probably not return." And the sign on the third road said, "Nobody returns."

After reading these three signs, the boy talked to himself. "Anyone,"

<sup>1</sup> This is a proverbial expression. When one borrows a bit of flour, he carries it home in a dish, and inevitably the wind blows some of it into the air.

<sup>2</sup> This passage is a standard tekerleme, a rimed and highly rhythmic pattern of nonsense. There are many tekerlemes in Turkish tales.

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Cross roads -- from one of

traveller will probably return 143, 145, 146

"Will probably not return" 143, 145, 146

will never return 143, 145, 146

he said, "can complete an easy journey. It is the task of the brave to choose the difficult." And so he took the road labeled "Nobody returns."

He traveled for a few days along this road and then he saw in the distance a high hill, but this hill was somehow different from all the hills he had ever seen before. As he drew nearer to it, he realized that the hill was made entirely of <sup>skulls--human</sup> human skulls. <sup>hill made of</sup> Near this hill there was a city which he entered. Tying his horse in the courtyard of an inn, he took his saddlebag of gold with him and went to a barbershop. As he was leaving the shop he asked the barber, "Will you keep an eye on this saddlebag until I return?"

"Yes, of course," said the barber.

"May I ask you a question?" inquired the young man.

"Certainly," answered the barber.

"Where did that hill of skulls come from? How did it get there?"

Sighing deeply, the barber said, "Please don't ask me this question, for if I answer it, then, in the end, you too may leave your skull there. Don't make me be the cause of this."

But the young man insisted that he be told how the mound of skulls came to be there, and after a while, the barber gave in and told him the facts of the matter. "Our padişah <sup>daughter of</sup> has a daughter who became mute <sup>muteness</sup> as a result of some strange disease. The padişah said that whoever could make his daughter talk again would receive her in marriage, along with a large dowry. Anyone who tried to cure her and failed would have his head cut off. Many have tried and failed, as you can see from the hill of skulls."

Tash -- to win bride -- has death penalty for failure  
Bride -- tash to win -- " " " " "

<sup>3</sup> Mounds of skulls occur frequently in Turkish folk tales. The motif may owe its frequency partly to the deep impression left in the Turkish mind by the invasion of Tamerlane who, supposedly, did actually heap up the skulls of massacred enemies.

When the young man heard this explanation, he realized that what he had dreamed about now looked as if it might come true. Whatever was written on his forehead<sup>4</sup> was apparently now about to take place, for he decided to try to cure the girl himself. He wrote a petition to the padişah requesting that he be permitted to try to cure his daughter of her inability to talk. The padişah advised him not to take such a chance, and he said to him, "You look like a noble young man. I should be very sorry for you if you should fail."

"My blood is no redder than any other's," said the young man. "I shall try my luck and discover what is written upon my forehead."

A hoca was called in and a nikah {wedding contract} was drawn up and signed, and then the young man began to do his utmost to make the girl talk. He had three days and three nights in which to do this, but although he spent all this time trying, he was unable to make her utter a single sound. Consequently, he was brought to the public square to be executed. When the executioners were about to chop off his head, they noticed that the young man was wearing a leather band on his upper arm, an indication of royalty. When it was discovered that he was the son of a ruler, the padişah stopped the execution and ordered <sup>that</sup> the young man be

thrown in jail instead.

At home on the throne, the next oldest brother wondered why his

elder brother stayed away so long, and after wondering thus for some time, he decided to go and search for him. This middle brother called the youngest of the three to him and said, "I am giving the throne to you temporarily. I am going to search for our brother, and I shall not return with-  
out him."

<sup>4</sup>It is a widespread belief in Turkey that one's fate is written on his forehead. Ordinary mortals cannot see this writing, but seers may. Parents sometimes extract from children the truth about their recent behavior by telling them a lie could easily be detected; their recent activities, along with the rest of their lives, can be read on their foreheads.

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out him."

After a long journey, he too came to the place where the three roads branched off, one marked "Whoever goes will probably return"; one marked "Whoever goes will probably not return"; and the third, "Nobody returns." Like his brother before him, he was a young man who preferred to undertake the difficult, and so he chose the road with the sign "Nobody returns."

Traveling along this road for a few days, he at last saw the huge hill of skulls in the distance, and he too was curious about it. He came to the inn where his brother had left his horse, and when he saw the animal he was glad, for he knew that he had indeed traced his elder brother. He left his horse at the same inn and then went to the barber-shop, where he saw his brother's saddlebag hanging on the wall.

"What is the meaning of that huge hill of skulls that I saw as I entered the city?" he asked the barber.

"Young man, I cannot answer this question, for I do not want to be the cause of your death. A couple of months ago another young man, exactly like you, came and asked me the same question. You and he are like two halves of the same apple. His head was not chopped off because he was discovered to be the son of a padişah; they threw him in jail instead. I fear that the same thing, or worse, may befall you, and so I will not answer your question."

"But I came here to save my brother," the young man said, and he insisted so long that finally the barber told him the story of the padişah's daughter and the skulls of the young men who had failed to cure her.

The middle brother sent a petition to the padişah saying that he would like to try his luck in curing the speechless girl. The petition





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the two saddlebags of his brothers, he hung his beside theirs, and then he sat down in the barber's chair for a haircut. While he was having his hair cut, he questioned the barber about the hill of skulls that he had seen upon entering the city.

"Two other young men have recently asked me that question," the barber said, "and their lot has been unfortunate."

"What was their lot?" asked the youngest brother.

At first the barber refused to say more, but when the young man insisted on learning about the lot of the two others who had come before him, the barber told him the story. "The daughter of our padişah has been unable to talk for many years. The padişah has promised both the girl and great wealth to anyone who can restore her ability to speak. Those who try and fail have their heads cut off and added to the hill of skulls."

"And were the two young men who recently tried to cure the girl executed?" asked the youngest brother.

"No, they were thrown in jail instead when it was discovered that they were the sons of rulers. The executioners saw that they were wearing the leather arm bands of royalty."

The young man said to the barber, "In all this city there must be someone who knows the remedy <sup>-- for muteness</sup> cure <sup>-- for muteness</sup> for the disability of the padişah's daughter. If you know of such a person, tell me where he may be found, and <sup>Muteness --</sup> Cure for the three saddlebags of gold will be yours."

"I know of such a person," said the barber, "but he is a wise man with such great power that I am afraid to show you where he lives. If I tell you where he lives, my tongue <sup>-- to be cut out</sup> will be cut out. If I show you by a look or a gesture, my eyes will be poked out. If I point at this house with my finger, my arm will be chopped off. So please don't ask me."

eyes -- to be poked out

arm to be chopped off

Saddlebags -- three  
-- of gold  
Gold -- three  
saddlebags of

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But the young man pleaded so hard that the barber could not resist forever, and so he said to the youngest brother. "This learned man lives on such-and-such<sup>a</sup> street, and I shall show you where he lives. I shall walk along that street and you follow me at a distance. When I come before his house, my foot will slip and I shall fall down. You will know then which house is his." Falling down -- deliberately -- as signal

They went to that street, the barber ahead of the young man, and when he came to the house of the learned man, who was called Ahmet Efendi, he fell down. He got up immediately, brushed off his clothes, and went on his way. The young man went up to the door of this house and knocked

and was admitted. When shown into the parlor of that house, he saw an old man sitting on a rug on the floor. He went to the old man, kissed his <sup>Hands -- hissing at and touching to</sup> hand, and then touched it to his forehead.<sup>6</sup> Kneeling before the old man <sup>forehead -- as sign of respect</sup> he said, "Efendi, I am in trouble. I am the son of a padişah, and I have come here to save my two brothers, who are in jail, by curing the daughter of the padişah of this land of her inability to speak. I have heard that you are a very learned man. Will you teach me how to cure the girl?"

"All right, my son," said the old man, "since you have come to consult me, I consider it my duty to show the truth to those who seek my advice. <sup>box -- talking -- magic</sup> Take this box. It is a talking box. <sup>magic box</sup> As soon as you have entered <sup>talking</sup> the girl's room, hide this box somewhere. Then greet the place where you have hidden it, and it will answer you. After that, you can carry on a conversation with that place."

After leaving the wise man's house with the box, the youngest brother wrote a petition to the padişah requesting permission to try his hand at curing the girl. The petition was granted, the hoca was called,

<sup>6</sup> Respect to a person is shown by kissing the back of his hand and then pressing the back of his hand against your forehead. This is a very common practice in Turkey, especially among the peasants.

a marriage contract was signed, and the young man was led to the room of the padişah's daughter. Many of the palace women were secretly listening through a door to see whether or not the girl would at last talk.

When the young man entered the girl's room, he immediately slipped the box he had brought into a bookcase near the door. "Selâm ûna ley-kûm, Oh bookcase," he said.

"Aley kûm selâm, my young guest," answered the bookcase. "Come in and sit down."

The young man sat down and then he said to the bookcase, "Dear bookcase, the nights are very long. Let us tell stories to one another to pass the time away."

"But you are my guest here," said the bookcase, "and it is not proper to tire guests by making them tell stories. Let me tell you a story."

"All right, let us hear it, then," said the young man, and the bookcase told the following story: friends -- three

"Once there were three friends, a tailor, a carpenter, and a hoca. They became acquainted with each other while they were on a journey. One day they walked until dark, and then, since there was no village in sight, they decided to spend the night in a cave by the roadside. They entered the cave, covered the mouth of the cave with a large stone, and built a fire to keep themselves warm. One of them suggested that they take turns staying awake to keep guard while the others slept, and they agreed to this.

"The carpenter was the first to be on watch, and while his two friends slept he stayed awake. For something to do to while away the time, he took his adze from his belt and started to carve a log which lay in the cave. By the time his watch

Cev :- mouth of

[ignore period]



was over, he had carved the log into the statue of a girl.  
When the time came for the tailor to be on guard, the carpenter woke him up and then went to sleep himself.

"When the tailor saw the wooden statue of the girl, he said to himself, 'Look at what the carpenter has made! If he has done this, then I, in my turn, should make a dress for the statue.' He cut a piece from the lining -- of overcoat of his overcoat and with it made a pretty dress for the girl. He put the dress on the statue and then stood it against the wall of the cave. When the hoca's turn came to watch, the tailor awoke him and then went to sleep himself.

"When the hoca saw that the carpenter had carved a statue of a girl and that the tailor had made a dress for her, he thought it his duty to try to give life to this wooden girl. He immediately took ablution<sup>7</sup> and then prayed to God to endow the statue with life. All at once, the girl became alive and started to walk around the cave talking like a nightingale.<sup>8</sup> *express: in of eloquency 150, 154*  
*8 - talking like as in the*  
morning when the hoca's two friends got up they were surprised to see a living girl. She was, of course, the product of all three of them."

Having finished its story, the bookcase addressed itself to the young man again: "My dear guest, here is a dilemma. *To whom does living statue belong -- To which of the carpenter, tailor, or hoca?* To which of the three friends would you have given this girl?"

<sup>7</sup> All Moslem prayer and religious activities-- not only prayers in a mosque--are preceded by a protracted ritual ablution. Before every mosque is a fountain or tap to provide fresh water for this purpose.

<sup>8</sup> Nightingales are not among the birds taught to talk. Nightingales are thought to sing continuously throughout the night, and so the simile means ceaseless vocalizing. It is a figure of speech used frequently by Turks.

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"I would give her to the carpenter," said the young man, "for it was he who laid the foundation for what they made."

"True," said the bookcase, "but it would be very awkward to travel with a <sup>girl--nude</sup> nude girl. I would give her to the tailor."

When the padişah's daughter heard these answers to the dilemma, she jumped up and said, "Nonsense! I would give her to the hoca. What would be the use of a piece of dead wood covered with a piece of cloth? It was the hoca who gave her life, and he should have her."

This was the first time in many years that the padişah's daughter had said anything. The palace women who were listening outside the door <sup>clapped</sup> ~~clapped~~ their hands and raised a cry, shouting, "The padişah's daughter has spoken! The padişah's daughter has spoken!"

When the padişah heard their outcry, he rushed to the room and asked, "Did she really talk?" He did not believe that she had spoken, and so he examined his daughter to see whether she could talk. "Did you really talk, my dear?" But the girl would not say a single word.

"It doesn't matter, sir," said the young man. "I still have two nights more in which to try."

As the young man left the girl's room, he quietly took the talking box from the bookcase and put it in his pocket. After he had gone, the padişah's daughter took an axe and smashed the bookcase into pieces. When the young man came to the room next day, he saw what she had done to the bookcase, and so this time he put the talking box on a table and then greeted the table as if it were a person: "Selâmü-naleyküm, Oh table!"

"Aleykümselâm, oh young man!" said the table.

After talking with each other for a few minutes, the young man said, "Oh, brother table, the nights are very long. Let us tell tales to one another to pass away the time."

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"All right, then, go ahead," he said, and the table told the following story:

Each of the cousins wanted to marry the girl, and the father did not know what to do. If he gave her to any one of the cousins, the other two would certainly be offended. He decided *Gold -- 500 pieces of* to test them to decide which would get the girl, and so he said, "Whichever of you can bring me 500 pieces of gold will receive my daughter." *Jam -- to win bride -- Be first of three contenders to return with 500 pieces of gold*

"The three cousins set out *to earn money* for different parts of the country in search of *work* which would pay them the necessary money. All three worked hard and each earned 500 pieces of gold. When the first cousin was about to return to his village, he heard a town crier announcing the sale of a wonderful device which, when placed *News -- magic device for reporting it from entire world* on the ground, would tell the news from all over the world. The price of this device was exactly 500 pieces of gold, and so the young man spent all his money for it. *Magic device -- same as above*

"In the town where the second cousin was working, there was a rug being sold. When anyone stood on this *rug -- magic -- flies when touched with st by owner* rug and touched it with a magic stick that came with it, the rug would fly into the air and carry him to any place that he wished. All he would have to do was close his eyes, touch the stick to the rug, wish where he wanted to go, and he would find himself there when he opened his eyes again. This rug cost 500 pieces of gold, and the second cousin used all his money to buy it. *Carpet magic -- flies when touched with by owner*

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"The third cousin heard that there was a magical bead -- can cure illness to be sold in the town where he was working. He asked what power the bead had, and he was told that it would cure any disease when placed on the forehead of the patient. The third cousin thought this a very valuable object to have, and so he bought it with the 500 pieces of gold which he had earned.

"The three started home, and along the way, they met, and so traveled along together. The one who had the device for getting news from all over the world was asked by the others to try it and see what the daughter of their uncle was doing. He placed it on the ground and put his ear to it. It said to him, 'By God, the girl is very sad, for your uncle is gravely ill. One doctor leaves and another comes, and your uncle is about to give out his last breath.'

"The cousin who had the magic rug was asked to carry them all back to their own village. 'All right,' he said, 'climb on the rug and close your eyes.' He hit the rug with the magic stick. It left the ground and immediately afterwards it landed right near their uncle's front door.

"They walked in and saw at once that their uncle was near death. The cousin with the magic bead placed it on his uncle's head, saying, 'In the name of God, be well,' and the sick man began at once to recover."

Having finished this story, the table addressed itself to the young man again and said, "Now, my young guest, here is a dilemma. If you had been the uncle, to whom would you have given the girl?"

Dilemma -- which cousin should win girl -- owner of reporting device, owner of flying rug, or owner of curative bead?



Without hesitating, the young man answered, "I should have given her to the cousin who had the device for getting news from all over world, for if they hadn't heard of the uncle's illness, they would not have gone so quickly to cure him."

"No," said the table, "I should have given her to the cousin with the magic rug. What would have been the use of getting the news if they had been unable to reach the uncle until after his funeral?"

When the padişah's daughter heard them arguing in this way, she said, "You are both wrong! You are both wrong! Suppose they did get the news of their uncle's illness, and suppose that they did reach his bedside before he died. Of what use would that have been if they had not had the magic bead with which to cure him? I should have given her to the third cousin."

When the girl started to talk, the palace women listening at the door called the padişah at once, and he reached the spot while she was still speaking. He agreed that the girl had been cured of her inability to speak, and so he gave her to the youngest son and freed his two older brothers from prison.

On the way back to their own kingdom, the brothers discovered that the girl's inability to talk had recurred. She would not say a word. The three brothers were so annoyed at her that they drew their swords *thrust -- cutting at -- threatened* and were going to cut her throat. They noticed, however, that she was choking and straining in an attempt to do something. Finally a large rat jumped out of her throat, and they killed this rat, and then she began to talk like a nightingale. *Rat -- in throat -- prevents speech*  
RAT

They then proceeded on their journey home, and at last they reached their palace where they were greeted by their mother. They were all

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happy but they were faced with a dilemma: Which of them should have the girl. They had all contributed to curing her and bringing her here, and there began a great discussion among all the people at the palace as to which should have the girl. But their mother said, "I shall settle this dilemma at once. The youngest shall have her, for he not only cured the girl but he saved my other two sons as well." Everyone agreed to the justice of this decision, and so a gorgeous wedding was held for the girl and the youngest son, after which they all lived happily forever.

Dilemma -- Which of <sup>brothers</sup> ~~sons~~ should have as bride the  
 girl with whom all three return -- the oldest ~~son~~ <sup>brother</sup>  
 the middle brother or the youngest brother