

Story #591 (1964 Tape #10)

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The Stonecutter

Padişah

Padişah -- daughter of

Daughter -- of padişah

At one time there was a padişah who had a daughter. This girl had had a gardener who had worked for her for many years. When this princess was to be married to the son of another ruler, she decided to reward her old gardener so that she would not be in a position of having denied him his rights,¹ or of having left herself under any spiritual obligation to him.² The princess was thinking about this matter, but let us leave her to her own thoughts.³ He lâl

One day a stonecutter found a gem while he was cutting rock from a bank. Although the man showed this stone to many jewelers (whose ability to evaluate gems is proverbial), none of them could set a value on it. Finally all of the merchants and jewelers of the city gathered and informed the man that he had made his fortune.⁴ They informed him that the gem was too valuable to be purchased by any one of them, and that the only man who would be able to purchase it would be the padişah himself. "If you take this gem to the padişah, he will pay you the price it is worth, and

¹ The actual expression used here is birinin hakkını yemek--to eat somebody's right.

² This is a reference to the helâl/haram distinction. If one dies under obligation to someone, one is called to account for this debt on Judgment Day. Before a Moslem dies, he asks all his friends, relatives, and other associates to absolve him of all indebtedness--not just the indebtedness of money or property but also that of services rendered or favors done. "Make all my obligations to you helâl," he requests, helâl here meaning morally correct or spiritually approved. It is the opposite of haram, which means improper, immoral, or spiritually forbidden.

³ This would appear to be false start on the part of the narrator. This first paragraph anticipates part of an interpolated story that occurs much later in the tale.

⁴ The actual expression used here is "he had awakened his fortune."

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with the money, you will be able to take care of your family for the rest of your life."

The man went home in great joy. Putting on his cariks⁵ and taking some food tied up in a kerchief, he set out. He wanted to take his gem to the Padişah of Yemen. He walked day and night for some time, and then one day, he came upon two old dervishes ^{--two--dishonest} along his way. He greeted the dervishes, "Selāmūnaleykūm."

"Aleykūmselām," they responded.

"O dervish fathers," he said, "Let us become friends and travel along our way together."

"Very well, young man," they said. "Where are you going?"

This young man had never told a lie in all of his life, and so he told them the truth now. "I am a poor man, dervish fathers. My trade is stone cutting. One day while cutting stone from the earth, I found a gem among the stones. None of the jewelers to whom I showed it was able to evaluate it; nor could any of the merchants offer what would be a fair price for it. Finally, they told me that my fortune had been made, and that the leading padişah of our time was the only man who could offer to buy this gem. And now I am on my way to the chief padişah of our time, the Sultan of Yemen.⁶ I shall see what value he will place upon this gem."

⁵ The çarık is a sandal with turned-up toe. It is made of camel or donkey skin. Until the mid-1960s, it was the type of shoe worn almost universally by Turkish peasants when they traveled; while at home, they usually went barefoot. Since the mid-1960's rubber shoes (made from rubber melted out of old automobile tires and poured into a mold) have replaced the çakık as peasant footwear.

⁶ For the past two or three centuries Yemen has been of little financial or political importance among nations. At one time, however, it had a thriving economy, prominent position in the world, and a high level of culture.

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The old men wanted to see this gem, and they asked the young man if they might look at it. He took a box out of his shirt front, removed the gem from this box, and held it in his hand. The dervishes gazed at this jewel, which was about the size of an egg. They returned the gem to the young man after examining it, but they soon started talking secretly about it between themselves. They were walking along, but they were discussing the matter between themselves.

The young man felt that the old men either were plotting against him or that they had some secret design of their own. But the young man did not try to overhear what they were saying, for he was the kind of person who would not interfere in things that did not concern him directly.

The old men, realizing that they could not take the gem from him by force, decided to try to take it by stealth as the young man slept. They agreed, "We shall stop somewhere along the way, spend the night as the guests of someone, and there we shall steal the gem from the bosom of the young man. Then we shall disappear while he is still asleep. How and where could he ever find us?"

In the evening they came to a house and stopped there to spend the night as guests of the owner. Their host brought them what Allah had provided that day for them to eat and drink. After dinner, it was soon time to go to bed. While the three of them were in the same room, the young man, who was very innocent, fell asleep, while the two old men stayed awake. Stealthily they reached into the bosom of the young man and removed the gem. They then attempted to leave, but they discovered that the door to their room had been locked, and that they would have to remain until morning.

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In the morning their host came and opened the room. He saw that although the old men were awake and up, the young man still slept. He asked the old men, "Will you perform your morning prayer? Shall I bring water with which you can take your ablutions?"

"Please do," they said.

He brought them water with which they took their ablutions, and by the time they had completed their prayers, the young was awake. He put his hand into his bosom and discovered that the gem was missing. He thought, "There were only myself and the two old men in the room. Whatever happened must have been done by those two old men," but he kept very calm. He thought that if he accused these old men who looked so religious and even now were saying their prayers, it was possible that the stone might not be found on their persons, and then no one would believe that the old men were actually thieves. (One should never be deceived by a man's appearance. He may look very pleasant on the outside, but if one searches his inside, one may find something quite different there! If a man's heart and hand and tongue are connected, then no harm will come from him. But if hand and heart and tongue are not straight, that man may, of course, do anything.) The young man pretended that nothing had happened and that he still had the gem in his bosom. He took his breakfast with the old men, and after their host had bidden them goodbye, he set out again in their company.

"After they had walked for about an hour, one of the old men said, "This is where we part company with you."

"No," said the young man, "for we have become friends. I am going to see a padişah, and you said that you would go with me. You must go the whole distance with me, and I shall give you some part

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of whatever reward I may get from the Padişah of Yemen. Why have you changed your minds? You are obligated to come with me." As he was saying this, he held the old men by the lapels of their coat and forced them to walk along with him.

Finally, after many days of travel, they reached the land of the Sultan of Yemen. Taking the old men with him, the stonecutter went to an inn. There he saw the innkeeper and spoke privately with him: "O innkeeper, I am here to see the padişah. I am turning over these two old men to your keeping. Do not release them before I return."

"Very well."

After leaving the old men in the custody of the innkeeper, the young man went to a bath and had himself thoroughly washed. Then he went and had a long application written to the padişah⁷ in which he said the following:

"O my padişah, once I was a stonecutter. One day while cutting stone from the earth, I found a gem. The jewelers of the town could not place a value on it, and that only the leading padişah of our time could offer to buy it from me. While I was bringing this jewel to you, carrying it inside my shirt, I was joined by two dervishes who accompanied me here. They asked me to bring them with me to see your majesty, thinking that my jewel would please you and that they too would receive some reward as a result. I said, 'All right. You are welcome. Come along with me.' One night we stopped at a home

⁷ Although neither the narrator nor the characters says so, it is obvious that the young man went to a yazıcı [a scribe for hire] to have this application written. In every town, and even in some large villages, there will be such a scribe, now usually equipped with an old typewriter, who will write letters and fill out forms for illiterate peasants. They sometimes also provide quasi-legal advice.

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of a man, but there the two old men stole the gem from my bosom while I slept. When I awakened in the morning, I discovered that the gem was gone. But I kept quiet about this, for I knew that if I accused the two old men of theft, it was unlikely that anyone would believe me, for these two old men looked very respectable, and they talked in the manner of honest men. And in their hands they always had their prayer beads. If I had made such an accusation, everyone might have thought me the dishonest person. Only wise men are great men. Without giving them any indication of my surprise, I brought them to Yemen. I left the two old men in the custody of an innkeeper and then came to you with this application. The two old men are thieves, and I beg your majesty to recover my gem from them. I should like to have your majesty accept the three of us in your presence. We are at such-and-such an inn, and we are at your service."

He left the application at the palace and returned at once to the inn. As soon as the application had been read at the palace, a patrol was sent to the inn, and the three were taken to the presence of the padişah. As the three stood in the padişah's presence, the Sultan of Yemen and his viziers looked first at the faces of the two old men and then at the face of the young man. They saw that the young man was shabbily dressed while the two old men were most respectable in appearance. But this was only the way they appeared on the outside; it was impossible to tell what they were like on the inside. Looking into the faces of his viziers, the padişah asked, "How shall I determine the truth in this matter?" He asked that the application be read again.

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Standing beside the padişah was one of his children who listened to the reading of the application. After hearing it, the girl said, "O shah-father, this is very simple. I can solve it for you easily."

"How can you do it?" he asked.

"Shah-father, we shall subject them to a trial of the heart. Let us subject their hearts to examination to determine if they are honest within. We must not be misled by outward appearances, for outer appearances can hide what is within."

Both the padişah and his viziers were surprised at such a remark from the young girl. "What kind of a trial is a trial of the heart?" they asked.

She said, "Allow me an hour's time to reveal the inner thoughts of these individuals in a test."

As this conversation had begun, the young man and the two old men had been taken from the padişah's presence and detained in another room. The padişah said to his daughter now, "All right, my daughter, I shall give you an hour. Try them, and let us see what kind of a trial it will be."

"Very well, father," she said. Then turning to the Vizier -- Grand Grand Vizier, she said, "Bring the two old men here." When they were brought into the presence of the padişah, the girl said very politely to one of them, "My dear father, will you come forward a little more?" The old man went forward to within three paces of the girl and stopped there with his hands clasped before him. "My dear father, what could be the reason that a dear old man like you would come into the presence of my padişah father? We always send away those who visit the

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padişah by rewarding them in a way quite in keeping with the honor and prestige of the sultan. Now I shall tell you a story, but old men are experienced, and I expect that you will easily solve the problem which will appear in this story of mine."

The old man said, "Very well, my girl. Let us hear your story."

The girl started. "Once upon a time there was a girl who was the daughter of a padişah--just like me. A gardener used to tend her garden. One day this girl was given in marriage to the son of another padişah.⁸ She said, 'I have an attendant who has worked many years for me in my garden. Now I am going to be married, but if I go away without receiving this gardener's statement of helâl,⁸ it would be very wrong of me.' The girl asked the gardener, 'O gardener, you have cared for my flowers and trees now for many years, and your work has pleased me. Now I am to be married. What do you wish from me? Make your wish known, and whatever it is, it will be given to you.'

"The gardener looked at the girl's face and smiled. 'Why do you smile?' she asked.

"He said, "My girl, my wish is a heavy one. You may or may not like it."

"The girl insisted that he state his wish.

"He then said, 'It is my wish that you will dress in your bridal gown, put on all of your jewelry, and (without being seen by either your parents or your bridegroom) come in the middle of the night to my garden. There I want you to stand before me, with your hands clasped before you, so that

⁸ See Note 2 above.

This is the
uncorrected
copy of the
tale

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I may gaze upon you thus for an hour. That is my wish. I have cared for your garden for many years out of respect for your beauty, but I do not carry any evil thoughts in my heart about you. If I can gaze at your face for an hour, all of my wishes will be fulfilled. And may Allah fulfill all of your wishes too!'

"The girl then said to the gardener, 'O gardener, inasmuch as you have tended my garden for so many years, I shall see to it that your wish is fulfilled. If you have no evil intentions in your heart, I shall come at midnight in my bridal gown and remain in your presence for an hour--and this will be unbeknown to all others.'

"The gardener left the girl's presence, very happy. At midnight the girl put on her bridal gown, and, without telling anyone, walked out through lonely streets toward the garden. But when she was only halfway there, a stranger stood before her blocking the street. 'Stop! Where are you going?' he asked. 'I have been a thief for many, many years, but never in all of my years have I had such a victim as you. Take off your clothes and the gold you are wearing and give them to me, along with any other valuables you may have. But your life is yours, and so you may take it and go.'

"O thief, I have a reply for you.'

"Well, let me hear it.'

"Do not touch me. I have made a promise and I intend to keep that promise. You wait for me here. Dressed in all of this finery, I am going to fulfill someone's wish. I am going to stand before a gardener, wearing my bridal gown and my jewels. The gardener, according to his wish, will gaze upon my face for an hour. You wait here for me for that hour, and I promise you that I shall remove whatever jewels I have and place

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them all before you.'

"The thief asked, 'Will you really return?'

⑥The girl swore that she would do so.

"'Very well, then,' the thief said. Thereupon the girl went on her way, and the thief waited."

At this point the daughter of the Padişah of Yemen turned to the old dervish and said, "My dear dervish father, I do not mean to suggest that you are a thief, but what would you have done if you had been this thief? Suppose that you were out to steal and that you had caught a victim in the middle of the night in this way. Would you have let her go or kept her there? I want your opinion, but I want a truthful answer."

The old dervish smiled and said, "My girl, that thief was a fool. If I had been that thief, I would have stripped her, taken all that she had, and told her, 'Go now wherever you wish to go.'"

"All right, then, dervish father, you may leave now." She then turned to the second old man and said, "That first old man told the truth, and that is how it should be. Now I shall continue with my story."

"The thief waited at that place while the girl proceeded to the garden at midnight. The gardener was awaiting her there. 'O gardener--Selâmünaleyküm--here I am,' she said, and she leaned her back against a wall for an hour, wearing her bridal gown and having all of her magnificence about her. The gardener gazed at the girl, and when the hour was finally ended, she asked, 'O gardener, is your wish fulfilled now?'

"'Yes, it is. You have fulfilled my wish, and may Allah fulfill your wishes too.'

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"The girl now left the garden and the gardener. She knew that the thief was still waiting for her along the road. She also knew that he would rob her if she went to that place, and so she wanted to return home by a different route."

Now the daughter of the Padişah of Yemen said to the dervish, "I am going to consult you about this situation. If you were that gardener, and if such a beauty had come to your garden house at midnight and stood, with all her magnificence, before you for an hour, what would you have done? I do not mean to suggest that you are the kind of person who would do anything immoral, but I want your opinion on this. The gardener gazed at the girl for an hour and then let her go. Would you have allowed the girl to go?"

The dervish smiled and said, "O princess, if I had been that gardener, what would I have benefited myself by merely looking? Can one have his wish satisfied simply by gazing? After all, we are human. I ~~would not have~~ left that girl a virgin. What good is looking? Dogs look at butcher shops, but what do they get by doing so?"

The daughter of the Padişah of Yemen said, "You have spoken the truth, dervish father. Very well. You may go now."

Finally the girl asked the young man (the owner of the jewel) to come forward. She asked for the young man's opinions of the answers given by the two old men. She said, "Those old men told the truth. One said that he would not let the girl go but would rob her, saying, 'I have a victim. If I let her go, she may never return. While she is here, I had better take advantage of this opportunity.' The other old man said that if such a beauty should come to the garden at midnight with all of her

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magnificence, he would not be satisfied by just looking at her. She should not leave unmolested. I believe that both old men told the truth. I now want to consult you, young man. What do you say? Who is right? Are those old men? The gardener? The girl? Who is right and who is wrong?"

The young man shook his head, turned to the girl, and said, "O my sultana, that gardener had no conscience, had no honesty."

The girl was very surprised at this remark of the young man. She said, "That gardener must have been a conscience-filled and honest man, for he did not even touch the girl but sent her away, saying, 'May Allah fulfill your wishes as you have fulfilled mine.' You are accusing him of a lack of conscience and honesty. Would he have permitted such a beautiful woman to go unharmed if he had not been conscience-filled and honest?"

The young man said, "O my sultana, if you wish to know the truth, I shall tell you. I think that the gardener was dishonest and lacking in conscience, for if I had been in his place, I would not have requested a girl, wearing her bridal gown and jewels, to come at midnight to stand before me for a full hour. After keeping her there for an hour, he let her go, saying, 'May Allah fulfill your wishes.' Now, if that had been I, I should have escorted her back to the entrance of her kiosk, and I should not have left her before she had entered her home. If that gardener had had any conscience and honesty in him, he would have done this and then returned. This is why I think that the gardener lacked both conscience and honesty."

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As soon as the daughter of the Padişah of Yemen heard this, she glanced at the two old men and asked that one of them come forward. One of them came and stood by the young man. "O dervish father," she said, "I asked you what you would have done if you had been in the place of the thief. Now do not deny this, for these were your own words. You said, 'My girl, that thief was a fool. If I had been that thief, I would have stripped her, taken all that she had, and told her, "Go now wherever you wish."' This means that that though outwardly you are an honorable old man, inwardly you are not good. If you had been there in the place of the thief, you would have robbed her--would you not?"

She then summoned the other old man. "Come forward. I have already talked with you. You said that if you had been in the place of the gardener, you would have behaved very differently from the way he did. You said, 'O princess, if I had been that gardener, what would I have benefited myself by merely looking? Can one have his wish satisfied simply by gazing? After all, we are human. I would not have left that girl a virgin. What good is looking? Dogs look at butchers' shops, but what do they get by doing so?' On the other hand, this young man said, 'I think that the gardener was dishonest and lacking in conscience, for if I had been in his place, I would not have requested a girl, wearing her bridal gown and jewels, to come at midnight to stand before me for a full hour. After keeping her there for an hour, he let her go, saying, "May Allah fulfill your wishes." Now if that had been I, I should have escorted her back to the entrance of her kiosk, and I

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should not have left her before she had entered her home. If that gardener had had any conscience, he would have done this and returned, for if the girl were left to go home by herself, another thief might have robbed her.' This means that this young man has an honest heart. But your ideas are wrong. You appear to be mature persons, and you have ^{beards -- white} white beards, but your ^{hearts -- evil} hearts are evil. Come now and bring forth the jewel that you have stolen from this young man."

"But my dear girl," one of the old men said, "you cannot compare us to thieves. We cannot accept that."

The girl responded, "If you were good men, one of you would not have said, 'I would have robbed her,' and the other would not have said, 'I would not have let the girl go unmolested.' Your hearts are evil. One should not be misled by your outward appearance. Let us now have the gem, or I shall issue orders to my executioners."

Fear of losing one's life is like nothing else. The gem immediately came out of the bosom of one of the old men. Upon this, the girl dismissed the old men and sent them off with an ^{gesture -- insulting} insulting gesture. She then turned to the young man and said, "O young man, you are young, but your heart is true. All people should be true inside--like you."

People who hear this tale take a lesson from it, for if men are true in their hearts, they will be true in all else. And such people advance and prosper, gaining [?] esteem everywhere. People

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with evil hearts are always left behind. Here ends our tale.

The Padişah of Yemen was amazed to see his daughter conduct this trial in such a manner. He asked her, "Where did you acquire this judicial skill?" skill -- judiciary

"O padişah father, wisdom is not in one's age but in one's head."

It is, in fact, very much so. Wisdom is the most valuable gift a man can have, for one can gain anything through wisdom. Wisdom and intellugence always raise a man.