

Story 1351 (1969 Tape 5)

Narrator: Mevlüt Kaya

Location: Tütenli village,
Kelkit kaza, Gümüşhane
Province

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Collected by Dr. Saim Sakaoğlu

Pears for Sultan Mahmut¹

In the old days there was a padişah who went traveling with his family. One day he and his family became the house guests of a poor woodcutter^{All}. Because she did not have anything else to serve them, the woodcutter's wife gave their guests pears for lunch. These pears were from a tree that grew alongside their house. The padişah enjoyed these pears very much and he said to the woodcutter's wife, "Oh, sister, tell your husband that I liked those pears very much and that I appreciate the hospitality of this household. Tell him also that if he would bring some of those pears to my home in the city, I would declare him to be my brother. He would be able to find my house very easily, for it is the tallest building in the city. I'll not mention my name, but he will not need it to find me." The padişah and his family then left the woodcutter's home and continued their journey.

¹Mahmut might be any one of the six Ottoman sultans so named. Peasant narrators often have no awareness of historical sequence, but the Mahmut often mentioned in folktales is Mahmut IV, who reigned from 1648 to 1687. Tales about İncili Çavuş

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When the woodcutter arrived home from work that day, his wife told him what had happened. Then she said, "Husband, you should take some pears to this man. Although he did not give his name, he said that he lived in the tallest building in the city."

A couple of weeks later the woodcutter picked some pears from their pear tree and took them to the city to deliver them to his recent guest. When he arrived in the city, he asked someone where the tallest building was, and that person showed him the padişah's palace. The woodcutter and his guide approached the palace, but they were unable to enter it because at that very minute the padişah's guards were chasing some fleeing criminals. The guards captured all of the strangers near the palace, including the woodcutter and his guide, and threw them in jail to hold them for questioning.

After they had been held there for forty days, they were, one by one, called into the presence of the padişah to be questioned. When it came the turn of the woodcutter to provide evidence, he explained to the padişah everything that had led and Bekri Mustafa are often said to have occurred at the time of (and sometimes in the court of) Mahmut IV. See Walker and Uysal, Tales Alive in Turkey, pp. 238-240, 297.

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to his imprisonment.

The padişah expressed his sorrow for the unjust treatment which the woodcutter had suffered. He said to one of his viziers, "Take this man to the royal treasury and let him have whatever he wants there."

When they arrived at the treasury, the woodcutter said to the vizier, "I want only three things: a copy of the Koran, an axe, and a rope."

Surprised, the vizier said, "Oh, brother, why do you wish only those inexpensive things when there is so much gold and jewelry here from which you might choose?"

When they returned to the presence of the padişah, the vizier reported on the woodcutter's three wishes. Curious about these wishes, the padişah asked, "Why did you ask for those three particular things? What will you do with them?"

The woodcutter answered, "Oh, my padişah, I shall use the rope to hang my wife. I shall use the axe to chop down the pear tree. And I shall swear upon the Koran never again to speak to any padişah named Mahmut."