

Story #246 (Tape #7, Summer 1970)

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The Padişah and the Three Ruffians

Once on a time, a padişah went to market [i.e., downtown], and three ruffians* were walking along the quay side. One of them made a remark about the padişah: "If the padişah were really a padişah, he would have given me the most beautiful of his five daughters."

Another said, "If the padişah were really a padişah, he would have given me a saddlebag of gold."

The third said, "What I want is from God."**

When the padişah heard these remarks, he became angry. He returned to the palace, and sent two guards [narrator said military police] and ordered them to pick up the three men at such-and-such a place in the city and bring them to the palace.

The three ruffians were brought to his presence. "Now let us hear what you said," said the padişah.

The first ruffian said, "If the padişah were really the padişah, he would have given me the most beautiful of his forty girls."

* The word that Kara Yakup used here for ruffian was külhanbey, a well-known type in Istanbul of earlier centuries. Külhan means furnace room of a bath, and these bully boys often lived in such places. They were bullies with a chip on their shoulders, always looking for a fight. They swaggered when they walked. They wore their clothes in a special way--jackets slung over their shoulders, heels of shoes broken down, fezzes (later caps) worn at a slant. They had a code of their own, part of which required that they not eat salt in food. Tuzsuz Deli Bekir of the Karagöz theatre was a külhanbey. He often entered a scene with the challenge, "Can anyone look at me even through smoked glass?"

**This is the most insulting remark, for it belittles the power and wealth of the padişah.

The padişah said, "All right. Go in there [to the harem]." He went in and chose a girl who happened to be the padişah's own daughter.

When he came out, and it was the second one's turn to be questioned, he said, "I said, 'If the padişah were really a padişah, he would have given me a saddlebag of gold.'"

The padişah said, "Well, fill a bag for him."

Then he asked the third one, "What do you want?"

"What I want comes from God," he said.

After hearing them, the padişah said, "All right. Off you go!"

When they were as far as Alatlı Akça, he sent two executioners from behind, ordering, "Take the head of the one who is walking empty-handed."

When they reached a pass called Kapanbeli [closed pass], the one carrying the saddlebag of gold said to the one who had wanted nothing from the padişah, "Will you relieve me of my load for a while?"

"If you pay me a lira, I shall."

He paid him a lira, and the other shouldered the saddlebag, and by then the executioners had caught up with them. They decapitated the man who carried no load. The man who said what he wanted was from God thus got the gold.

They went a little, they went far, they went over hill and dale and finally came to the Kızılcahamam Stream. In those days there was not a bridge over the stream. The one having the daughter of the padişah said to the other, carrying the gold, "Let us cross this stream

He said, "No, I do not want to cross it."

The other said, "I shall go and look. If it is all right, we shall cross it." When the man with the daughter of the padişah wanted to test the depth with his foot, he fell into the stream and was carried away,

thus leaving the padişah's daughter to the man who had gotten the gold.

"There must be a bridge around here somewhere. There was once the Hacı Ali Bridge," he said. They went to that bridge, crossed the stream, and came to Kızılcahamam and sat down there [i.e., stayed there for a while].

They rented a house. The man, named Mehmet Bey, gave instructions to the hamam keeper: "Do not charge anyone for a bath. I shall pay for all who bathe here."

He then went to the coffee house keeper and said, "Whoever drinks coffee, I shall pay for it." He gave the same instructions to the restaurant keeper, the barber, the hotel keeper, and all.

The padişah came that day disguised as a dervish, went into the bath, and offered the attendant money.

They said, "Your bill has been paid by Mehmet Bey."

He slept in the hotel and wanted to pay. They said, "Your bill has been paid by Mehmet Bey."

He went to the restaurant and ate, and wanted to pay. They said, "Your bill has been paid by Mehmet Bey."

In the coffee house, he was told, "Your bill has been paid by Mehmet Bey"

"What sort of a fellow is this Mehmet Bey?" the padişah asked. "Is he richer than I?" he wondered.

In cities there is many a person who will act as a hoşamacı* [special dialectal word for spy]. [Hacı Gonen interrupted, "That is espionci, he means."]

spy

*hoş a medi=flatterer (from Persian) to gain favor of important people.

They took the dervish to Mehmet Bey's front door and knocked on it,
^{from}
tak tak tak.

"Come in," he said, and received him. He showed him a chair.

When the padişah's daughter saw the dervish, she recognized him as her father. She said, "Mehmet, come here. After you give him water, do not turn your back on him, but leave still facing him.* Do not turn your buttocks to him."

[Hacı Gönem interrupted: "'Heavy' guests are treated in that manner," and Hacı gave a demonstration of how to walk.]

The dervish asked, "Oh Mehmet Bey, how did you come to possess all this wealth?"

"God gave it to me," he answered.

When the dervish seemed doubtful about it, he kept repeating, "God gave it to me. God gave it to me. God gave it to me."

He then asked, "Dervish baba, will you go into the other room?" When the dervish went into the other room, he saw there his own daughter, with a child in her arms. They embraced.

The padişah then said, "Well, Mehmet Bey, now you may tell me everything."

Now that Mehmet Bey knew the dervish was the padişah, he said, "Your majesty, the secret is now revealed. We walked along the quay one day. One of us wanted the padişah's most beautiful daughter; one wanted gold; and I wanted what I said would come from God. Well, what I now have was given to me by God. You sent executioners to cut off the head of the

*This is a courtesy still accorded strangers. The practice of receding five or six meters--perhaps even to the door--is still prevalent in villages and some communities.

second man. The man carrying the gold asked me to relieve him by carrying his gold. As you had ordered the executioners to kill the empty-handed one, they decapitated the man who had given me his load of gold to carry. So the gold was given to me by God. When, later, we reached a stream, the one who had your daughter tried to cross it and was drowned when he stepped in the stream, and thus left me your daughter. So, she was given to me by God, too."

Now that the man had become his son-in-law, the padişah said, "I am greatly surprised. You were the one among the three who asked for what was the best, the wisest wish."