

Story 1509 (1970 Tape 9)

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Location: Erzurum, capital city  
of Erzurum Province

Date: 1970

Cover-Up for a Crime

There used to be a very large annual market held at Erzurum at a square near the Tophane Hotel. One year a man from one of the Erzurum villages came to that market in order to sell a goat. After trying to sell the goat throughout most of the morning, the man became hungry and decided to go to another section of the market to get some food. He said to his son, "You stay here with the goat while I go to a bakery and buy us some bread."

After the father had been gone for a few minutes, a middle-aged woman wearing a çarşaf<sup>1</sup> approached the boy and asked, "Are you selling this goat?"

"Yes, we are."

"How much do you want for it?"

"My father is not here right now, but he will be back very soon. Can you wait until he returns?"

The woman answered, "Help me take the goat to my house, and then I shall return here and pay your father for it."

The boy was very pleased at having sold the goat, and so

<sup>1</sup>Long black coat which covers much of body of conservative woman. It once included a veil, but since the veil was outlawed, the large collar of this garment is used to cover the neck and part of the face.

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he took the goat to the woman's house. When they arrived there, the woman said, "Son, put it into the barn. There is some clover there which it can eat." The boy did this and then returned to the house. There he was surprised to discover that the wearer of the çarşaf was not a woman but a man. This man said, "Don't be frightened, son, for I shall not harm you." then gave the boy some food to eat.

When the next prayer time of the day arrived, the man performed the Moslem prayer service. When that was completed, he got out his Koran and began to read it. The boy was greatly relieved to see the man doing these things. He thought, "This must be a good man, for he completed the prayer service and read from the Koran."

When the boy's father returned to the place in the market where they had been trying to sell their goat, he found neither his son nor the goat there. He began searching at once for the boy

By the time it had become dark, two teenagers came to the house where the boy had delivered the goat. They knocked gently on the door and asked, "Tahsin Bey, are you ready?"

"Yes, I am. Let us go now!"

Taking the village boy with them, they went to a house near Erzurum Castle. Climbing quietly to the roof of that house, Tahsin Bey put a rope around the waist of the village boy in

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order to lower him into the house through the chimney.<sup>2</sup> He said, "I shall hold the end of this rope and lower you slowly into this house. When your feet touch the floor inside, go and unlock the door so that we can enter the house also." The boy descended through the chimney and then unlocked the door. After Tahsin Bey and the two teenagers had entered the building, they locked the door again. Tahsin Bey went alone into another room of the house and after ten minutes he returned with a freshly decapitated human head. He placed the head in a sack

After they left that house, Tahsin Bey and his two younger companions were startled by the approach of two policemen. Handing the bag to the boy, they fled. The boy also fled and hid behind a rock in front of a nearby house. He was so tired that he soon fell asleep there

In the morning a woman opened the door of that house and saw a boy sleeping on the ground. She awakened him and said, "Son, come inside. You must be cold and hungry." He entered the house, where the woman gave him a glass of hot tea and some bread.

When the woman was just about to begin her ablutions<sup>3</sup> for

<sup>2</sup>Turkish chimneys are very large, for they have a very wide fireplace beneath them in which there is sometimes a built-in oven.

<sup>3</sup>Before each of their five daily prayer services, Moslems take ritual ablutions that require several minutes of bathing time.

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the morning prayers, a policeman came in and said, "Mother, we still have not discovered who committed the murder." Then, seeing the village boy there, he asked, "Who is he?"

"I don't know," answered the woman. "I found him outside sleeping on the ground. He was cold and hungry, and so I brought him inside and gave him some tea and bread."

The policeman kicked the sack by the boy's side, and a human head rolled out of it. The boy was taken at once to the police station where another policeman questioned him. "Who committed this murder?"

"A man, but I do not know his name

"Can you show us where he lives?"

"Yes, I can find his house if I can go back to the marketplace near the Tophane Hotel.

"Why do you want to go there?"

"Because I met him at the farm-animal section of that marketplace and I went to his home from there."

The policemen took him back to the animal section of that large marketplace where the boy's father was still searching for his son. The father was relieved to see him, but he wondered why he was accompanied by several policemen. "What has happened?" he asked the policemen. "Has my son done something wrong?"

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"No," said one of the policemen. "He is helping us locate the home of a murderer. Ask no further questions!"

Quite astonished by this information, the father said, "Very well! But permit me to follow along behind you."

The policemen agreed to this, and the boy continued looking for the house to which he had gone the day before. When the boy finally found the house, the policemen knocked on the door. When it was Tahsin Bey who opened the door, the policemen were amazed. "We must ask you to come to the police station, Tahsin Bey."

"Yes," answered Tahsin Bey. "You go back there and I shall come along right behind you."

When they all arrived at the police station, they were taken into the office of the chief of police, who was seated in a large chair. When the chief of police saw Tahsin Bey, he immediately arose and said, "Tahsin Bey, please take this seat."

After everyone else had been asked to leave that room, the chief and Tahsin Bey talked together for some time. Then the two of them went to see the mayor of the city. When they reached the mayor's house, Tahsin Bey kicked open the door and entered rudely. "Are you looking for me?" he asked the mayor.

"No, I am looking for the man who committed the murder that occurred last night," answered the mayor.

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"I committed the murder, and let that be the end of the matter. I want to remind you that when we were all living in Istanbul, you sold my sister to an Armenian and in that way caused her death. Do not try to have me prosecuted for this murder, for I can give you just as much trouble as you can give me.

As a result of this threat, the mayor decided to cover up this murder and not have Tahsin Bey charged with having committed it