

Story #463

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Dream Kingdom or Real Kingdom?

One day under the blazing heat of the noonday sun, Behlül Dane saw Harun Reshid being fanned by four servants in order to be kept cool and free from the nuisance of flies. Behlül looked at this for an hour without saying anything; he just looked at the Caliph. Then he turned away and disappeared.

Harun Reshid asked, "Who was that man, and what did he want?"

The servants had recognized Behlül Dane but had not known what he had wanted. One of them went to find Behlül and said to him, "Earlier today you entered the presence of the Caliph."

"Yes," said Behlül, "I was there to see him about some business."

"Why, then, did you not state your business?"

"I did not state my business because I saw that the Caliph was weaker and more helpless than I myself. I had been molested by children in the streets who had thrown stones at me. After thinking about this abuse, I concluded that those who are exposed to such cruelty should go to the ruler and demand justice from him. I had made up my mind to go to the Caliph and ask him to protect me from such children. That was why I entered his presence. But when I arrived there, I saw that the Caliph was incapable even of defending himself from flies.

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mischievous children? That was why I changed my mind about talking with him."

When the servant reported this to the Caliph, he thought about it for an hour. Then realizing that he was really a weak and helpless ruler, he asked, "Where is that fool?"

"Your majesty, he lives at such-and-such a cemetery."

The Caliph then went, with a team of his best servants, to that cemetery. There they found Behlül Dane lying in an old, caved-in grave, with his feet stretched out. One of the servants approached Behlül and awakened him.

"Why did you depose me from my throne?" Behlül asked angrily.

Then the Caliph intervened and asked, "O, Behlül, from what throne did they depose you?"

Behlül answered, "I dreamed that I was a king, wearing a royal uniform, sitting on a royal throne, while my subjects stood meekly before me, with their hands clasped in front of them.¹ And right then you awakened me. In this way you deposed me from my kingdom."

Smiling, the Caliph said, "Seeing oneself as king in a dream has no real value."

"There is one important difference between our kingdoms," said Behlül. "I had become a king by closing my eyes. You made me open my eyes, and thus you deposed me. But in your case, it is the other way around. You will be deposed when at last you close your eyes [that is,

¹Hands clasped before one is a sign of deep respect.

when you die]."

These words of Behlül Dane left a deep impression on Harun Reshid.