

Story #382 (Tape #3, 1972)

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of Karacabey, Prov-  
ince of Bursa

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The Kastanbullu in Istanbul

The Kastanbullu<sup>1</sup> left his hometown, Kastamonu, to go to Istanbul. He had heard that the stones and dust of Istanbul were of gold,<sup>2</sup> and so he decided to see the city before he died. He took the train to Istanbul. When the train stopped at Haydarpasa<sup>3</sup>, the Kastanbullu got down, stretched a little, and yelled at the top of his voice, "Hey Istanbul! Look at me! It is seldom that you see lions like me."

Then he took the ferryboat and went to the Galata Bridge. Whether by luck or coincidence, the Kastanbullu noticed a fat billfold lying on the ground. He was not surprised to find the billfold, for he had heard the stones and dust of Istanbul were of gold. He picked it up and looked

<sup>1</sup> People from the northeastern province of Kastamonu are reputedly very rustic and unsophisticated, sometimes stupid. A person from that province would normally be identified as a Kastamonulu, but peasant dialect changes this, most frequently to Kastanbullu.

<sup>2</sup> A proverb says "İstanbulun taş toprağı paradır (or altındır)" -- "The stones of Istanbul are made of money." It is, of course, a figurative expression. Gullible people in folktales take the expression literally. During the 1950's there was a mass invasion of Istanbul, as well as Ankara and other large cities, by rural peasants who seemed to be taking the proverb almost literally. Stories of quickly and easily gained wealth lured hundreds of thousands of peasants to the cities, there to exist in the shanty-town ghettos that ring all major cities.

<sup>3</sup> Haydarpasha is the railhead on the eastern bank of the Bosphorus at which the Berlin-to-Baghdad railroad continues into Asia Minor.

inside. There was a great deal of money in the billfold. However, the Kastanbullu considered, "If God gave me this much money this time, who knows how much more He will give next time," and he threw the billfold--with the money inside--into the sea.

As he was walking down a busy street, he saw restaurateurs invite the passers-by to try the delicious foods of their restaurant. One of them stopped the Kastanbullu man and asked him to eat his food. Our Kastanbullu had been greedily watching the food in the show windows of restaurants and did not need the invitation. He was ready to eat. He said, "You don't have to invite me. I was going to eat anyway

He said, "Greetings, everybody" to the customers in the restaurant and sat at a table. He ordered the restaurateur to bring him the best of everything. He ate some of every food on the menu: beans cooked in oil, squash casserole, stuffed mussels, and so forth. It was almost closing time, and the restaurateur was getting short on food. Therefore, he filled up a container with water, added soap to it, and was ready to wash the dishes. When the Kastanbullu man saw this, he wanted to taste the dishwater. The restaurateur said, "Brother, this is nothing to eat."

"Never mind that," the Kastanbullu interrupted, "Bring it anyway. I want to taste it."

The restaurateur thought the man was insane and began to grow frightened. Instead of arguing with him any further, he gave the dishwater to the Kastanbullu man, who started drinking it with growing appetite. When the pieces of soap came onto his spoon, he said to himself, "I didn't

know they put cheese in soup. They must do it in this fancy city." As he ate the soup, bubbles began to form in his mouth, but he wiped the bubbles off his moustache and continued drinking the dishwater. When his spoon hit the dishcloth, he said, "This must be the tripe I have heard praised," and ate it very contently.<sup>ed</sup>

After he finished drinking the dishwater, the Kastanbullu got up to leave the restaurant. At the door he met the restaurateur, who had found it safer to wait outside, in case his customer got out of control. He asked the Kastabullu to pay the bill, but the peasant answered, "What bill? You invited me to come, so I did. In my country guests don't pay for what they eat." But the restaurateur insisted on having the bill paid and would not let him go. The two started fighting.

A gentleman who happened to be passing by intervened and asked what the matter was. "This man invited me to eat; now he wants me to pay," the Kastanbullu explained.

"He is justified. Why don't you give what you owe for the dinner?" the gentleman tried to reason.

"Why should I? I am a Kastanbullu," the peasant exclaimed.

"Well, in Istanbul you have to pay for everything you buy," the gentleman said.

"I don't have any money. I spent all the money I had on the train ticket," the Kastanbullu replied.

Finally the gentleman paid for the Kastanbullu's dinner and said, "Next time be sure to pay for everything you buy."

The Kastanbullu said, "I will," and he started walking down the street.

He returned to the Galata Bridge. A boatman, who was a Laz,<sup>4</sup> had four persons in his boat and was announcing that there was room for one more person in his boat going to Kadıköy: "Room for one more to go to Kadıköy!"

The Kastanbullu shouted, "Wait for me!" The boatman pulled the boat to the dock, but the Kastanbullu was in such a hurry to get on that as he hastily jumped in, the boat began to rock. The motion made him sick to his stomach. First the soap bubbles began coming up. Just when the boatman, who was frightened by the looks of the Kastanbullu's thick moustache alone opened his mouth to protest, the Kastanbullu threw up the dishcloth, which landed right on the boatman's forehead.

Despite the commotion, the boat reached Kadıköy. The Kastanbullu got out and started looking around. The proprietors of the restaurants which were lined up along the street were inviting customers in. This time the Kastanbullu did not pay any attention to the invitations. He had had enough of Istanbul. He headed straight toward Haydarpaşa, got on the first train, and left for his home town.

<sup>4</sup>Laz people come from the eastern shores of the Black Sea. They are good seamen and would quite possibly become ferrymen at Istanbul. It is interesting that one should appear in this tale, for the Laz is most often the uncouth rustic that is here represented by the Kastamonu man.