

Story 1505 (1970 Tape 19)

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Location: Erzurum, capital city
of Erzurum Province

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A Village Köse¹ Outwits Seven City Köses

There was a köse, his wife, and their son who lived in a village of Pasinler kaza here in the Province of Erzurum. One day the son said to his mother, "Mother, ask my father to get a girl for me to marry

"All right," she said. That night after they had gone to bed, the woman told her husband of their son's wish to marry.

"Very well," said the köse. "Tell him to take the ox to Erzurum, and if he can sell it there for a lira,² I shall have him married.

The following morning the woman told her son what his father had said. The boy said, "I can probably sell it for more than a lira." He took the ox and set out at once for Erzurum with it.

At that time there were seven köses who lived in Erzurum. They were very clever men, and they made their living by cheating people out of their goods and property. Two of these köses

¹A köse is a special folk type. He is beardless, and he is often said to have a heart-shaped face and bandy legs. He is always considered to be extremely shrewd and cunning in his dealings with others. Usually he is a very unsympathetic figure, so much so that in many tales he seems to replace the ogre or monster, and hence any stratagem against him is considered fair.

²Once a golden coin of considerable value, the lira had

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the boy as he was approaching Erzurum. They asked him, "Son, are you selling that ox?"

"Yes.

"How much do you want for it?" they asked.

"One lira

"That would be a reasonable price for your ox if it had horns removed," said the two köses.

After the köses had left, the boy took a stone and used it to break off the horns of the ox. Shortly after this, two the other köses saw the boy coming along, and when they noticed the broken horns, they concluded that two of their köse companions had already tricked the boy. As they went up to the boy, one köse said to the other, "What a smart boy this is! He has broken the horns from the ox so that it would not anyone."

"Yes, he is a clever boy! How much do you want for your son?"

"One lira

"That would be a fair price, but you should cut off the lips of the animal so that buyers could more easily judge its age."

After this second pair of köses had left him, the boy took been so devaluated by early 1992 that it took 6,000 liras to equal one U.S. dollar.

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out his knife and cut off the ox's lips. When he was finally entering the city, he encountered the remaining three köses.

of the three said, "How smart this boy is! He cut off the ox's lips so that a buyer could see the animal's teeth easily and be able to judge its age."

third köse then asked, "Son, how much do you want for your ox?"

"One lira."

"That would be a fair price for your ox if its tail were first removed."

After the three köses had left him, the boy again took out his knife, and this time he cut the tail off the ox. By now the ox had lost so much blood that it collapsed in the road and died. The boy skinned the ox, put the hide on his shoulder, and returned home.

Upon seeing their son returning in this way, his father said to his wife, "That son of ours is the kind of man who cannot earn even enough money to buy a loaf of bread!"

the boy reached the house, his köse father asked, "Son, were you cheated by those Erzurum köses?"

"Yes."

Turning then to his wife, the köse said, "Wife, I shall go to Erzurum myself tomorrow. Prepare some provisions for my trip."

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On the following day the köse mounted his donkey and set out for Erzurum. When he had gotten quite close to the city he stuffed three golden liras into the rectum of the donkey. Soon after that he came upon the seven köses of Erzurum as they sat eating bread at Paşa Bağır.³

"Selamünaleyküm," he called to them.

"Aleykümselam," they answered.⁴

Then one of the seven asked, "Köse, are you selling your donkey?"

"Yes, I am, but I am going to sell it only for a very high price, for this is a donkey with a very unusual ability."

"How much do you want for this donkey?"

"I will sell it for 100 gold liras."

"A hundred gold liras for a donkey? You must be crazy!"

"I am not selling simply a donkey but also its very unusual ability." He then hit the donkey in the head with his fist, and the animal defecated a gold coin. The seven köses watched as the owner of the donkey picked up the gold coin and put it into his pocket.

³Bağır usually refers to the middle of the body, but it can also mean (as apparently it does here) a small dip or saddle between two hills.

⁴Selamünaleyküm/Aleykümselam--traditional exchange of greetings between Moslems not well acquainted with each other. It means roughly May peace be unto you/And may peace be unto you, too. If Selamünaleyküm is not responded to, the speaker should be wary of the one so addressed.

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"How much do you want for that donkey?" the seven köses asked.

"Don't think that you can bargain with me! I have already told you what price I want for this special donkey." Having said this, he again struck the donkey in the head, and a second gold coin fell to the ground

When the seven köses saw this, they quickly paid the price of 100 liras. Before he left, the former owner of the animal said, "Place this donkey in a stable with just a small portion of oats and a bowl of water before it. Then lock the door and leave the animal undisturbed for a week. After that amount of time you should unlock the door and collect the gold that the donkey has dropped."

Following these directions, the seven köses placed the donkey in a separate stable. After placing a portion of oats and a bowl of water before it, they locked the door and left it alone. After a day or two the donkey brayed loudly in hunger, but the köses ignored it and left the door locked, for they wished to collect a great amount of gold at the end of the week. When they finally unlocked the door after seven days, however, they discovered that the donkey had died of starvation and had produced no gold at all.

At the end of the week, the former owner of the donkey

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said to his wife, "If the seven köses come here from Erzurum, tell them I am working in my field. Then after they have left to find me, prepare a meal of such and such kinds of food."

"All right," she answered.

The köse then set traps and caught two foxes in them. He left one of them in a cage in the house and he took the other with him to his field.

After a while the seven Erzurum köses arrived at the home of the farmer köse. They called out to the woman, "Sister, where is your husband?"

"He is working in his field," she answered. Then she set to work to cook the food that her husband had ordered.

The seven Erzurum köses went to the field and said to the farmer köse, "That donkey you sold us died before it produced any gold."

"What kind of a stable did you put it in?"

"A big one."

"Did I tell you to put it in a big stable? I know that you men do not appreciate anything properly." Then he said to the fox, "Go and tell my wife to prepare such and such foods. I have some guests coming for dinner." Then he released the fox, which quickly ran off.

The seven Erzurum köses were amazed at this, for a fox is

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not a domesticated animal. They were even more amazed when they arrived at the farmer köse's home and there saw the fox in a cage. And they were still more amazed when they discovered that they were served for dinner the very same foods that the fox had been told to have the wife prepare. After they had finished their meal and drunk their coffee, the seven köses said to their host, "Köse, sell this fox to us."

"No, I won't do it. You do not appreciate anything. I sold you a very valuable donkey, but you caused it to die." But after they had pleaded and bargained with him for some time, he finally sold them the fox for 200 golden liras.

The seven köses took the fox and set out for home with it. When they reached Gümüşlu Kümbet,⁵ the oldest köse said to the fox, "Go to my house in Erzurum and tell my wife to cook such and such food for my supper." Then each of the other six gave the fox similar instructions about going to his house and telling his wife to prepare certain foods. They then released the fox, and it ran off.

The seven köses then proceeded on their way to Erzurum. When each reached his home, he asked his wife, "Did someone arrive here before me and tell you what kind of food I wanted you to cook for my supper?"

⁵Silvery Tomb.

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"No," each wife answered, and from these answers the seven köses realized that they had been cheated by the farmer köse.

Knowing that the seven Erzurum köses would soon return to avenge themselves against him, the farmer köse said to his wife, "I shall slaughter a sheep and fill part of its intestine with blood. I shall hang that intestine around your neck. Then, after the seven köses arrive here, I shall give you orders to prepare some food for my friends. When I do that, you to respond, May Allah curse both you and your friends! I am tired of your friends' visits to this house I shall then rush upon you and pretend to cut your throat, but I shall cut the blood-filled sheep intestine. Fall down and pretend you have died. Then when I have blown my reed pipe three times into your ear, you say, 'Praise be to Almighty Allah and Prophet, Mohammed, and then get up.'"

The seven Erzurum köses arrived at the farmer köse's house, knocked loudly on the door, and shouted, "You cheated us! You cheated us When we released the fox, it did not go to our homes as we instructed it to do! It ran away and did not return!"

Opening the door, the farmer köse asked, "Did you teach the fox exactly where your homes were located?"

"No.

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"Then how could it know where to go? I spent years teaching it, and now through your foolishness you have lost it!" Then, turning to his wife, he said, "Woman, my friends have come to visit me again. Cook something for them to eat."

"May Allah curse you and your friends!" responded his wife. "I am tired of these visits by your friends!"

Pretending to be very angry, the farmer köse shouted, "How dare you speak that way to me in the presence of my friends?" Taking out his knife, he grabbed the woman and cut sheep intestine that hung around her throat. As the woman the sheep's blood flowed out on the floor.

The seven Erzurum köses were frozen with horror. Although he was hospitable to them, he had murdered his wife because she embarrassed him in their presence.

The farmer köse then took his reed pipe and blew some sounds into his wife's ear. After he had done this three times, his wife said, "Praise be to Almighty Allah and His Prophet, Mohammed." She then stood up and was perfectly well again.

When the seven köses saw the miraculous recovery of the woman, they went out of their minds with excitement. "Köse, sell us your pipe! Sell us your pipe!" they shouted.

"No, I shall not do so!" he answered. "I sold you a valuable donkey, and you let it die. I then sold you a very

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intelligent fox, and you let it get lost. You do not know how to appreciate such valuable things!"

"You killed your wife when she did not obey your commands, and then you revived her with your magic pipe. Our wives do not obey us either. We should like to punish them in the same way and then afterwards revive them again. Sell us the magic pipe so that we can do that!"

"No, no!" the farmer köse kept saying. After they had pleaded and bargained with him for some time, however, the farmer köse finally sold them the pipe for 300 liras.

Buying the magic pipe, the seven köses had to spend all of the money they had among them, but they were pleased with the bargain they had made. When they got back to Erzurum, the oldest of them said, "I shall use the magic pipe first. I am old, but my wife is very young and she often refuses to obey me. I shall teach her a lesson." Taking the pipe to his house, he said, "Wife, I want you to cook this and that for me at once!"

She said, "Husband, hold on for a minute!"

"What? How dare you disobey me?" he demanded. Then taking out his knife, he cut her throat. After a few minutes he blew the reed pipe in her ear, but the woman did not move. After he had blown it into her ear several times, he failed to revive her.

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He then took the reed pipe to the home of another köse, who asked him, "Did it work?"

"Yes, I cut my wife's throat, and then I blew the pipe in her ear to revive her. Since then she has paid attention to me and obeyed my orders." After that, each of the köses killed his wife and was unable to revive her again. When they were all aware of what had happened, the seven köses met and decided to kill the farmer köse. They were angry at him both because he had all of their money and because he had caused them to kill their wives

Knowing that the seven Erzurum köses would try to kill him, the village köse said to his wife, "I have done them so much harm that the Erzurum köses will surely come here to kill me. I shall pretend to die, and you will then have me buried. Leave a hole to the surface of the ground so that I shall be able to breathe. After they have seen my grave, the Erzurum köses will go back home."

The other villagers respected this köse and they agreed to help his wife carry out his request to be buried. They put him in a grave in the village cemetery and left a small hole through which the köse could breathe. His wife then put on mourning clothes and began to lament for his death. All of the other villagers also pretended to mourn the köse's death.

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When the Erzurum köses reached the village, they saw at once that someone had died. They asked the first person they met, "What is the matter? Who has died?"

"We are all in deep grief, for a greatly respected man here has died.

"Who was it? Was he a hoca⁶ or a wise man?"

"He was neither a hoca nor a wise man. He was both the mother and the father of this village.

"Who was he?"

"He was your friend, the köse of this village."

When they heard this, the seven köses decided to return to Erzurum. On their way, however, the youngest of them said, "You go on to Erzurum, and I shall come along later. I shall wait here until it is dark and then I shall dig up the coffin⁷ and make sure that he is really dead."

"Come along with us Do you think that all of the villagers are lying?"

⁶Moslem preacher and religious leader. During pre-Republican times, a hoca was both a preacher and teacher. At present, the word hoca has primarily a religious connotation, but secular teachers of modern Turkey are still often referred to as hoca.

⁷Turkish villagers are rarely buried in coffins. They are borne to the cemetery in a community coffin with four handles (often referred to as the four-armed one) but are then, shrouded, buried directly into the soil.

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"You know this village köse! He has already cheated us three times, and he may possibly be tricking us again."

These remarks persuaded the others to return to the village also. When it became dark, they went to the cemetery, and they smelled tobacco smoke coming out of the hole through which the farmer köse had been breathing. He was smoking a cigarette while waiting to be rescued from the grave. The seven Erzurum köses immediately dug up the coffin, took the farmer köse out of it, and put him in a bag. They decided to throw him into Badacan Lake⁸ from the cliffs above the lake-shore.

As they were walking toward the lake, dawn arrived, and the seven köses encountered a long wedding procession passing by. They tied the bag containing the village köse behind a tree some distance from the road so that he would not be seen, and then they returned to watch the wedding procession.

The village köse in the bag soon heard the quiet voice of a shepherd talking to his sheep as he herded them along. The köse began saying, "No, no! I won't marry the padishah's daughter! I would rather die than do that!"

Hearing this, the shepherd went to the bag containing the köse and asked, "What are you talking about?"

⁸Not identified.

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köse answered, "That wedding procession that you can see passing along the road is going to celebrate the marriage of the padishah's daughter. They have captured me and are going to compel me to marry that girl."

"Why should anyone refuse to marry a padishah's daughter?"

"Because I am not in love with that girl. I have no interest at all in her," said the köse.

"I should be willing to marry a padishah's daughter even though I had never seen her before," said the shepherd.

"You can marry her if you wish simply by exchanging places with me."

shepherd untied the bag and released the köse. Then he himself climbed into the bag and had the köse tie it shut again. Before the last of the wedding procession had passed, the köse had quietly led the shepherd's flock away in an opposite direction.

the wedding procession had passed out of sight, the seven köses recovered their heavy bag and continued on their way to the lake. When they got there, they all grasped the bag and threw it from the cliff into the water below. Then they turned their direction toward Erzurum again and started to go home

After they had been traveling for a short time, they were

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astonished to come upon the village köse leading a large flock of sheep. "What are you doing here?" they asked. "Just a short while ago we threw you off the high cliff into Badacan Lake!"

"May Allah bless you, brothers! There are thousands of sheep grazing at the bottom of that lake. Because I was alone down there I was able to lead out only this one flock.

"Are you telling the truth?" the seven köses asked.

"Aren't these sheep enough proof that I am telling the truth?"

The oldest of the seven köses then said to the village köse, "Let us return to the cliff so the you can throw me into the lake at the same place where you got this flock." After they had returned and the oldest of the Erzurum köses had been thrown into the lake, he made the sound, "Kırk! Kırk! Kırk!"

"What is he saying?" asked the other Erzurum köses.

"He is saying 'Forty! Forty Forty!'" said the village köse. "He means that he has already caught forty sheep.⁹ He wants help from you in order to capture still more sheep!"

Upon hearing this, each of the Erzurum köses asked to be

⁹As the oldest Erzurum köse is drowning, he makes an involuntary gurgling, choking noise that sounds like kırk, kırk, kırk. In Turkish, the word kırk means forty, and the cunning village köse quickly exploits the verbal situation for his own purposes.

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thrown into the lake. The village köse granted their wishes,
he threw them, one after another, off the high cliff into
lake.