

Story 906 1961-62 Tape 71)

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Hasan Ağa the Köse¹ and the Flock in the Sea

There once lived a köse named Hasan Ağa² in a small village. One day some of his neighbors decided to play a trick on him. They suggested to him that he kill his bullock and give all his friends a feast, and that then the next time, one of them would kill an animal for a similar feast. Hasan Ağa agreed to this. He slaughtered his bullock and prepared a feast, but his neighbors did not come to it.

Hasan Ağa rolled up the bullock skin and started to town to sell it. Along the way he sat down to rest, and as he did so, a magpie came along and began to peck at his bullock skin,

¹A köse by definition is a beardless man, but the word always carries additional implications. He is viewed as a shrewd, vicious, and cruel trickster who shows no mercy and deserves to be shown none. Like the supernatural monsters of earlier times, he is evil, and no one thinks twice about abusing or even killing him. --Besides his beardlessness, he is also thought to have a heart-shaped face and short bandy legs.

²Ağa is usually not a name but a title (for a rural landowner) or an honorific (for a distinguished man or one above the social level of the speaker).

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tak, tak, tak.³ This annoyed him, and he tried to get rid of the bird, saying, "Get out of here and don't annoy me!" Frightened, the bird flew away, but it soon came back again. Finally, he caught the magpie, and then he walked to a nearby village where a friend of his lived. This friend entertained him in his home and also gave him some money for the bullock skin.

When he returned to his own village, Hasan Ağa let it be known among his neighbors that he had received a great amount of money for his bullock hide. Accordingly, all of them slaughtered their bullocks and took their skins to town in hope of selling them for a high price. But they discovered that they could not sell them anywhere, and so they returned to their village in disappointment.

To take vengeance against the köse, his neighbors all decided to urinate and defecate down his chimney. When he discovered what they had done, Hasan Ağa carefully packed all of the dung in sacks, poured sweet-smelling perfume over the sacks, and loaded them on his donkey. On the way, he encountered a camel caravan³⁻⁴. Noticing the scent of perfume coming from the köse's load, the caravan leader asked, "What are you carrying in your sacks?"

"Rare perfumes and herbs[?]" answered Hasan Ağa.

³ Onomatopoeia for the pecking sound.

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"For those two bags of perfume and herbs I shall give
goods that you wish to select from this caravan.
Would you be willing to make such an exchange?"

"Yes." Hasan Ağa then selected two bags from the caravan
load and replaced them in the load with his bags of dung.
caravan moved on, and Hasan Ağa returned to his village. When
he and his wife opened the two bags from the caravan, they
found very expensive clothes in one and gold in the other.

"Hang these clothes on a line outside in air," said the köse

When his neighbors observed all of the fine garments
hanging on the line, they asked, "Hasan Ağa, how could you
afford to buy such expensive clothes?"

"I was able to do so because my neighbors made me wealthy.

"What do you mean?" they asked.

"You filled my chimney with dung just at the time the
padişah was building a dung palace. He is paying a very high
price for dung. That is how I became rich

Hearing this, the neighbors went home and began sacking
up dung from their toilets. When each had a donkey load of
dung sacked up, they proceeded to town to sell this to the
padişah. But when they reached the home of the padişah, they
were laughed at and driven away with many hard blows. Dumping
their sacks along the way, the villagers started home again
One of them said, "We should kill that awful köse for doing

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this to us!" All of them agreed to kill him as soon as they back.

Going directly to the köse's home they grabbed him, tied him in a bag, and carried it to the seashore. As they were about to throw the bag into the sea, one of them suggested, "Wait! Let us go home to wash ourselves and eat something so we can enjoy fully the pleasure of drowning this cursed köse."

"Yes, yes, that is a good idea!" they all agreed, and so they went home, leaving the köse tied securely in a bag by the sea.

Soon after the villagers had left, a ⁵⁻⁶shepherd and his flock of ⁵⁻⁷forty sheep came along the seashore. When the köse heard them coming, he began shouting loudly, "I don't want her I don't want her!"

Going up to the bag containing Hasan Ağa, the shepherd asked, "Who is it that you don't want?"

"The padişah's daughter I don't want her at all, but have captured me and are taking me to the palace to be married to her. But I don't want her!"

"That is very strange. I wish that I were in your position!"

"Well, you can be, friend. Just take my place in this bag, and you will be the one they marry to the padişah's

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daughter." The shepherd agreed to this, and in a few minutes he was the one tied inside the bag, and the köse was the one leading away the flock of sheep.

After they had washed themselves and eaten some food, the rest of the villagers returned to drown the köse. They heaved the bag out as far as they could into the sea and watched it slowly sink into the water. Then they started home. Along the way they were amazed to find Hasan Ağa grazing a flock of sheep. "How can you be here when you were drowned in the sea?" the asked him.

"I wasn't drowned," he said. "You threw me right into a flock of sea sheep, and I was able to capture these forty of them. Why didn't you throw me in farther? If you had, then I might have gotten more than forty!"

The villagers could hardly believe this, but the man who was speaking to them was certainly the köse, and he clearly did have forty sheep that he had never had before. "Are there more sheep in the sea? Could we get some of them?" they asked.

"Yes, there are many, many more, and anyone may take them

Returning to the seashore, they drew lots to see who would be the first to catch a flock of sea sheep. When the winner was thrown into the deep water, he started drowning,

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and from his throat there came a strangling noise, "Kırk, kırk, kırk!"⁴

"You heard him!" said the köse. "He says he is getting forty!"

After that, the greedy villagers were thrown in, one by one, until only one of them was left. Jealous of all his neighbors, this shouted, "Come, Hasan Ağa, and throw me in too!" Throwing this last man into the sea, the köse gathered his flock together again and led them home.

⁴The Turkish word for forty is actually kırk.