

Story #262 (Tape #8, Summer 1970) Narrator: Ibrahim Gürsoy

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The Shepherd Who Killed the Lion

During the reign of some weak padişahs, there was a poor man who drove cattle to Istanbul to deliver them to butchers. He used to earn a few kuruş this way. This man died not long ago. While he passed through Keskin [in the Province of Ankara], he was bothered a great deal by villagers, claiming that he had caused their fields to be trampled by his animals, and he used to fight with them.

Not very far from Istanbul, a lion was causing some concern to the people. The people had left a watchman in the middle of a plain of a size two hours' walk in width and two hours in length, so that the lion would not attack passing caravans. The mail used to be carried by mules in those days. The cattle driver was warned of the danger of this lion. "There is a lion who can destroy both you and your cattle.

To this he said, "What can a lion do to me?"

It so happened that he was met by the lion after an hour's walk but he killed it in one blow of his club, and he led his herd on and delivered it to the butcher in Istanbul and returned.

A bezirgan wanted to cross the same plain, and they warned him of the danger, but they added that a cattle herd had managed to cross the plain all right. The merchant said, "Maybe he ate and drank enough and is lying down oblivious to everything. Let me go and take a look. Maybe the lion has eaten and drunk from the cattle herd, and we might be able to get past by a corner unharmed." The merchant then proceeded timidly, but he could not see any goats [cattle] or anything else. Then he found something was lying on the plain without any herd near him.

Wondering whether it was dead or alive, he thought, "If this thing were alive, he would have moved about to scare off the flies. Let me go and take a look at it." He rode to where the thing lay and saw that it was a lion, dead because blood had come from his nose. He went back and reported to the people that he had killed the lion and that the mules could now proceed.

Impostor

They took the lion's body to the palace and told the padişah that he had killed it.

"Put the lion down there and come upstairs," said the padişah.

He went upstairs, and there the padişah asked him harshly, "How did you kill this lion?"

The merchant was afraid, and left his presence without answering. The padişah made a public announcement: "Let the killer of the lion come forth and explain how he killed it."

Many people came, claiming that they were the killer of the lion. But after questioning them, the padişah was not satisfied with any of their answers. He then announced he would hold a wrestling contest at Çirpici Çayırı [grassy plain in Istanbul in honor of the killing of the lion. The shepherd who had killed the lion put on his shepherd's cloak, tied his bread in a kerchief, tied it to his stick, and put the stick on his shoulder. He thought that he might go and see the wrestling contest, as he himself was a wrestler. When passing by the padişah's palace, he saw the dead lion. He said to himself, "I killed that cat, and I wonder who brought it here?" Saying so, he kicked the animal and it rolled over two or three times

The guards repeated this to the padişah at once. They said, "Hey, uncle! Where are you going? The padişah wants to see you."

"Who is the padişah?" asked the shepherd.

"Oh, uncle, do you not know who the padişah is?"

"No, I do not." He resisted the guards, but he was stopped by five or six of them and taken to the presence of the padişah.

The padişah asked him, "Hey, uncle, why did you kill that cat of mine lying over there?"

"Because he murmured," said the shepherd.

"What did he mean by murmuring?"

"He meant to eat me," said the shepherd.

The padişah asked him harshly, "Why should you think he would eat you? Is that reason enough to kill it?"

The shepherd then jabbed his stick at the padişah. "By God, I shall do worse by you than by the cat."

Then the padişah knew that he was the killer of the lion. He then said, "Now you can wish from me whatever you like. This was a harmful creature."

"What should I wish from you?"

"No, you must wish for something."

But the shepherd took his cloak and his kerchief with the bread in it and went to the wrestling contest, and there he sat among the spectators. Later he defeated all the other wrestlers in the contest, including the padişah's own wrestlers. He scattered them about and threw them down. In the end, he was again called to the presence of the padişah.

The padişah again said, "You may wish what you will from me."

He said, "When I took my flock through such and such a place, I had to fight with the shepherds of such and such a bey. Tell them not to fight with me again. "

The padişah gave him the title deeds of those places and told him that from then on that territory was his property. Until recently he had eight

or ten villages, and not even the government could take them from him
[like an aġa]. Those places are still in his hands. Well, that is about
all. There were such people in those days.