

Story 1698 (1974 Tapes 42-47) Narrator: Behçet Mahir, 65;  
odacı at Atatürk  
 University and  
 coffeehouse racon-  
 teur

Location: Erzurum, capital  
 city of Erzurum  
 Province

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Kirman Shah<sup>1</sup>

This is a story about Kirman Shah, but it is related to many other people too. Part of it goes back even as far as the time of Solomon, the son of David. It will soon tell about Kirman Shah on his way to Hirat,<sup>2</sup> for he has discovered that his true love was the daughter of the Shah of Hirat, Abul Khan.<sup>3</sup> But before we report any more about his travel to Hirat, let us first say something about Solomon, the son of David.

Solomon, David's son, had once had some of this

<sup>1</sup>The name Kirman Shah refers to several different people and to at least two geographical places in Middle Eastern literature and lore. An Arab named Kahrman Shah had a role in the minstrel tale "Salman Bey and Dürretül"; ATON 1699 is a Karakalpak variant of that romance. Kerman is a province of Iran, and one of its principal cities is named Kerman Shah.

<sup>2</sup>Usually Herat, this city is located in eastern Persia in the large area known as Khurasan or Horasan.

<sup>3</sup>A name so common that it probably does not refer here to any identifiable historical person.

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inscribed on the door of the treasury building. He had once called to his presence three ferocious giants and said to them, "Oh, you cruel giants, know that if I had been permitted to do so, I should long ago have had the ifrits<sup>4</sup> tear you to pieces. But Allah had not given me permission to do that. Your deaths will be brought about by sons of Arabs.<sup>5</sup> Each one of your killers will be brought into this world and then reared under the protection of a patron saint."<sup>6</sup> Pointing to one of the giants, Solomon said, "Your killer will meet you in the land of Çükükaf."<sup>7</sup> So Solomon had warned the giant about that thousands of years before it was to happen.

<sup>4</sup>A demon, often pictured as very large and ferocious. Solomon had brought under his control both demons and jinns, and in folktales he enslaves these supernatural creatures and uses them for his own purposes.

<sup>5</sup>Legends about Solomon are numerous. Behçet Mahir in several tales touches upon this account of three giants allowed to live by Solomon because they were fated to be killed by other sources of evil forces. One was to be killed by Hamza, Islamic warrior of Mohammed's time; see "Hamzai Sahip Kiran," ATON No. 1700. One was to be slain by Ali--perhaps the giant he slays near the end of Ali Çiftçi's tale "Blood Castle," ATON No. 927. And one was to be killed by Kirman Shah.

<sup>6</sup>The term used here by the narrator is pir.

<sup>7</sup>Unidentified location.

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Upon hearing the words of Solomon, that giant had written down the date when he would supposedly be killed. He said, "Will I allow that Arab's son to grow up so that he can confront me and kill me?" (Related to this thought is the proverb "Crush the head of the serpent while it is still small lest it grow into a dangerous dragon." There is truth in this proverb, but one cannot follow such advice if it is opposed by Fate. As soon as the giant had written down that date, Allah had caused him to fall into a very lengthy sleep, and as a result he was entirely unaware that much of his allotted life span had passed away. A storyteller should explain the ways in which the truth of proverbial expressions may be effective or ineffective. A similar explanation should be made about words relied upon by the Devil--who originally was called Ahut in heaven and Ezacıl<sup>8</sup> on earth. The Devil proudly relied upon certain words, even though Allah was the only one who had any right to be proud. The Devil was so proud that he refused to revere<sup>9</sup> Adam after Adam had just been created

<sup>8</sup>Not listed in Standard Turkish or Ottoman Turkish dictionaries or in the Encyclopaedia of Islam.

<sup>9</sup>Mahir here and Ali Çiftçi in his accounts of the Creation story claim that the angels were instructed to worship Adam. It is our judgment that revere is a better translation.

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and taken to heaven, even though all of the other angels revered Adam. For his refusal to revere Adam, the Devil

been cursed.<sup>10</sup> But the Devil was unconcerned about

damnation, for he relied for his welfare upon a set of words that he had learned. "I know the ismi-azan prayer."<sup>11</sup>

I have always relied upon that prayer, and I shall rely upon it until the end of the world. Thus by continuing to recite this prayer, I shall at last use it to enter heaven." But on that day Allah will remove from his memory the words of the ismi-azan prayer. No matter what precautions a person may take against it, that which is written<sup>12</sup> as your fate always occurs.)

Upon hearing his destiny spoken by Solomon, the giant had written down the date of his destined death so that several years before that time he could kill Kirman Shah while that hero was still an infant. But the giant then fell asleep and did not awaken until the time that Kirman

<sup>10</sup>The Moslem explanation of why Satan was damned differs from the Christian explanation, which condemns Satan for having led a revolt against God by a third of the angels.

<sup>11</sup>Not explained in available commentaries on the Koran or in the Encyclopaedia of Islam.

<sup>12</sup>Although folk narrators frequently speak of fate as having been written, they actually mean predestined; among early peoples, writing had about it an air of the magical or sacred.



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Shah had reached the age of eighteen years. (For this reason Yunus Emre,<sup>13</sup> the teacher of the whole community of minstrels who have entered this world, once said,

Come listen today to Yunus Emre's words.

Loving this world may keep you from the next.

For he who dons the shirt of somnolence

May fail to note the passage of life's years.

He may not even have the time to cede

His wealth unto his daughters and his sons.<sup>14</sup>

The fact is that there is not necessarily any relationship between what one earns and what one eats. One man may work very hard to earn five kuruş,<sup>15</sup> but another who is an idle, drunken fellow may acquire the same amount without having made any effort to get it. Only the amount of food that goes down one's throat and enters one's stomach is of any use to that person. The rest will fall to the ground or be taken away.)

<sup>13</sup>The most famous Turkish folk poet of the Middle Ages Yunus Emre lived between 1250 (?) and 1307.

<sup>14</sup>Whether or not Yunus Emre ever composed any such lines, he is often quoted, misquoted, and used for the convenience of storytellers and others.

<sup>15</sup>The para was formerly the smallest monetary unit. There were 40 paras to the kuruş and 100 kuruş to the Turkish lira. By mid-20th century, devaluation of Turkish money had eliminated from use the para, and by the 1970s

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When the giant awakened from his extended sleep, he discovered that Kirman Shah had come from the unknown into this world and had grown up. When he looked at the date which he had written down, he said, "Alas! What have I done? That son of an Arab will soon enter the battlefield against me!" Let us now turn our attention to Kirman Shah.

One night when Kirman Shah was eighteen years old, he fell into a deep sleep and dreamed. In his dream he saw an aged pir who handed him a cup of sherbet,<sup>16</sup> saying, "Here,

Drink your first portion." But as Kirman Shah lifted cup to his mouth, the old man held his wrist and said, "Wait, son; wait. It is not the sherbet itself that is important but rather the love for whom you drink it."

Kirman Shah replied, "Father, compared with you I am both naive and ignorant. I shall drink it for the love of whomever you indicate."

"Well done, son You have said the right thing. Your first drink should be pledged to Him with 1,001 names,<sup>17</sup> the kurus also fell out of circulation. When the lira fell to the value of 1/10 of a U.S. cent (and much lower in the late 1980s), the kurus became utterly meaningless.

<sup>16</sup>In the Middle East, sherbet is usually a cold fruit drink, not the icy milk confection it is in some other places. It is usually not alcoholic, but here it seems to be toxic.

<sup>17</sup>Moslems frequently refer to the 1,000 or 1,001 names of Allah. Actually they are referring not to names but to qualities such as mercy, knowledge, or forgiveness.

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One who created existence from the non-existent."

Agreeing with this, Kirman Shah raised the cup to lips and drank the sherbet. As the liquid went down throat and spread to all 366 of his veins,<sup>18</sup> a fire of love filled his body. You would think that the whole body was filled with fire. "Father, what is this?" he asked. "It feels as if my lungs are burning."

"A pir's hand holds a whole lake of power," said the old man. "Drink this second cupful, and it will quench that fire."

When the pir handed him the second cupful of sherbet, he asked, "For whose love are you drinking this time, son?"

"You tell me, father.

"Son, look around on all four sides. Assembled here in groups of three, five, and seven are assembled all of the pirs of the universe. Drink for the love of these pirs.

As soon as Kirman Shah had drunk the second cupful to the love of the assembled pirs, he was handed a third cupful

<sup>18</sup>Behçet Mahir associates human energy and activity with the free flowing of the blood in the body's supposedly 366 blood vessels. Mahir believes that the success of his narrative skill depends upon his vascular condition, and so to allow his 366 "veins" to vibrate freely, he always insists upon standing while storytelling.

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of sherbet. The grandfather pir asked, "And to whose love are you drinking this last cup of sherbet?"

"You tell me, father.

"Drink to the love of Mahberi, daughter of Abul Khan, ruler of Hirat." After Kirman Shah had drunk the third cupful of sherbet, the pir asked, "My son, did you see anything?"

"No, father, I did not

"Then look beneath my arm<sup>19</sup> and see what is there." When the old man raised his arm, you would have thought that he had brought Mahberi herself beneath it, that she was right there instead of being at Hirat.

Kirman Shah thought, "Perhaps she had been standing behind him all the time but he is showing her to me only now." As the old man lifted his arm, Kirman Shah tried to reach toward the girl, but he stumbled forward and collapsed in the middle of the room, where he lay, unconscious and with green foam running from his mouth.

As Kirman Shah lay there unconscious, the pirs closed their eyes and then opened their eyes, reaching Hirat

<sup>19</sup>It is a common device of Turkish oral narrative for saints to make some distant person or action visible beneath their outspread arms.

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within the same moment. At that same instant Mahberi became aware of what was happening in her dream. The grandfather pir said to her, "Be aware, my girl, of what is taking place in this dream of yours." He had the girl also drink three cupfuls of the beverage of power, revealing to her some of the turns she would take on the Wheel of Fortune. "Did you see anything, my girl?"

"No, father."

The pir then revealed beneath his arm the image of Kirman Shah in Tebriz. Mahberi also stood up to clasp her beloved, but her movement caused her to collapse, unconscious, on the floor in the middle of her room. She too lay unconscious, with green foam flowing from her mouth.

That night passed, and in the morning Kirman Shah's mother and his nursemaid went to awaken him. The daughter of the sultan of Yemen was waiting in her room for Kirman Shah. That princess had vowed to be the groom, the keeper of Kirman Shah's horse, for the remainder of her life.<sup>20</sup> She wore men's clothes, and those who did not know who she was

<sup>20</sup>There has been a serious omission in this narration. We have been given no information explaining how Kirman Shah acquired such a groom. Needing explanation even more is the fact that this groom is female, and no less a person than the daughter of the sultan of Yemen!

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could not possibly have guessed that she was a woman.

When they opened the door of Kirman's room and looked inside, they discovered that the bed, which stood on side of the room, had been untouched. On the other side of the room Kirman Shah lay in a small pool of green foam. The women shouted and cried until Huşuş Shah, the boy's father, came to see his son lying on the floor and looking as if he were dead. Looking more closely at the body, however, Huşuş Shah realized that his son was still alive even though he could not rise. He went and gathered his council at once in order to get the advice of his wise men. /1974 Tape 47 begins here. It should be noted that the six tapes on which this long tale are recorded are incorrectly numbered. Obviously No. 43 should follow No. but in narrative order it is No. 47 that follows No. Problems in translating the different sections of the tale caused this deviation from the normal numerical order.

If you want a remedy for your illness, look to Dr. Lokman.<sup>21</sup> Look to the One who created us from nothing.

<sup>21</sup>Legendary physician sometimes thought to have been a contemporary and acquaintance of Plato. He is the most renowned of all physicians mentioned in Turkish folktales.

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Look at the firman<sup>22</sup> through which Allah sent His orders. Who sent the four great books?<sup>23</sup> Look at people reading the Koran. Think of all the people who have come and gone. Think of Zal's son Rüstem,<sup>24</sup> who killed thousands and was both saint and padishah. Look at the prophet David and at his son Solomon, who ruled the entire land from door to door

Men of learning and astrologers gathered around unconscious Kirman Shah. The astrologers circled around him and said to his father, "Do not worry about him. There is nothing seriously wrong with your son. He will awaken in due time. His star has inclined toward love. He drank three cups of powerful liquid given to him by the pirs, and he will awaken again soon." Upon hearing this good news from the astrologers, Huşuş Shah dispensed charity among the poor.

<sup>22</sup>A firman (ferman) was literally an imperial decree issued by a sultan. It seems to be used here figuratively to mean the revealed scriptures through which the Deity supposedly spoke to human beings.

<sup>23</sup>The Biblical Pentateuch, the New Testament, and the Koran are almost always cited as being among these books. The fourth scripture is sometimes some other section of the Old Testament.

<sup>24</sup>Persian mythical figures featured in Ferdowsi's Epic of the Kings (sometimes called The Book of Kings).

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After a while Kirman Shah awakened and, looking up he saw his mother on one side, his father on the other side, with neighbors and council members standing around on all four sides. Turning his head this way and that way, he looked for the assembly of pirs. "For whom are looking?" his father asked

"Oh, shah father, where are the grandfathers with green hats?"

Huşuş Shah looked at the people around him and said, "There was nobody in this room before we came. For whom you looking? We found you alone here in your room. We saw no one else. For whom are you asking?"

"Oh, Father, I was looking for the old men with green hats and white beards who gave me from you to my mother. Last night they had me drink three cupfuls of the beverage of power to show me my future turning on the Wheel of Fortune."

"Tell me, Son--what is your problem?" his father said.

To answer this question Kirman Shah would have had to say, "I fell in love with a girl" before a whole crowd of people. He felt too shy to do that, and so instead, he said, "I shall tell you later." Every child is closer to his mother than to his father, and so he later explained



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his situation to his mother. "I fell in love with a beauty. One day with her would be equal to a thousand other days; one hour with her would be equal to a thousand other hours. Tell my father to grant me permission to go and find that girl so that I may attain my love. Otherwise, after forty days you will find me only by looking in the soil.

Crying steadily, his mother went and repeated to her husband everything that Kirman Shah had said. Huşuş Shah went at once to his council for advice. "Where is Hirat, and who is Abul Khan?" he asked. "He has a daughter named Mahberi with whom my son has fallen deeply in love

There were men there who could answer these questions. They stood up and said, "Although we have not been to Hirat, we know where it is located. The distance between Tebriz and Hirat would require a journey of seven years."

The astrologers were then called upon for their advice, and they gave the same opinion. "Yes, it would take seven years to get there," they said

Upon hearing this, Huşuş Shah said, "I cannot permit my son to go there. Do I have fourteen years of life left? Seven years to go and seven years to return. That is a large part of a brave man's lifetime. I cannot bear to be

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separated from him for that long. Would I still be alive when he returned?"

No one disagreed with him and said, "Why don't you let him go?" Instead they said, "You are his father, and this decision is yours to make."

Calling his son into his presence, Huşuş said, "Come now, Son! The country for which you drank sherbet is so distant that reaching it will require a journey of seven years. Seven years to go and seven years to return mean that you would be away from home for fourteen years. Do I still have left fourteen years of life so that I could ever see you again? Abandon the idea and give up this love.

Hearing this, Kirman Shah grew ill in a way that could not be cured by any doctor. No matter what he said to Huşuş Shah, the words had no effect. In the end, Kirman Shah realized that he could find a solution to his problem only by applying at one door. It was midnight when Kirman Shah begged Allah for His assistance. "I knew nothing about Hirat or Hirat's ruler, Abul Khan. It was You who caused me to have any contact with that city. Inasmuch as You are the owner of supreme power and capability, it

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is You, O merciful Allah, who can place some mercy in my father's heart."

The Bektāşi<sup>25</sup> has said, "Call only at that door from which you will surely get an answer." Ultimately, everyone goes to that door which never fails or disappears.

If only a man will open his eyes from sleep,  
He will find the way to remove the rust from his heart.

If he goes with sincerity to Allah's door,  
He will know no want in this transitory world  
The truth is that Allah's response matches the sincerity of the person who prays. No matter how much Kirman Shah pleaded with his father, he could not achieve anything, but when he turned to the right door and prayed to Allah at midnight, he aided his own cause. The same whitebearded grandfather pir who had given Kirman Shah the sherbet to drink appeared to Huşuş in a dream and said, "Come, now!

was our agreement? Did I not tell you not to prevent Kirman Shah from going wherever he wished? Now bid him farewell so that he may go. He will go in health and come back safely. What have you got inside you? It is Allah

<sup>25</sup>A Bektāşi is a member of a dervish order founded by Hacı Bektaş, a thirteenth-century mystic.

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takes and gives. If you stand in his way, you will receive a slap from me. Didn't my words do you any good?" Saying this, the pir slapped Huşuş Shah.

The ruler cried out and jumped up to see if he was still in his tent.<sup>26</sup> His wife woke up at the sound of his and asked, "What happened, ruler?"

"Get up, lady; get up! We have struck our axe against a rock. We have received a slap from a pir. Light the lamp and see if there is anything different in my appearance."

The woman lighted the lamp and looked at him. "Yes, the color of your face is so dark that it seems clear that you must have been struck by a pir."<sup>27</sup>

Huşuş Shah immediately called Kirman Shah to him and said, "Son, come here. This night will turn out to be a morning. I did not come to my senses until I was slapped

<sup>26</sup>The implications of this remark are not clear. The ruler lives in a palace, not a tent--and certainly not in the domed tent known as an otağ. The narrator uses otağ instead of çadır, the modern word for tent. Is to be out of one's tent an idiomatic expression for something quite different?

<sup>27</sup>This is the first instance to this point in the Archive tales that a character has been struck by a pir. Apparently it is an experience recognized by the folk, for both the husband and wife here seem familiar with the results of such a blow.

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in my sleep. I shall bid you farewell for your journey to Hirat or anywhere else you may go. I entrust you to Allah. There is nothing that I can do except pray for you."

"Oh, Father, I need your prayers. Don't worry about the rest."

The night passed, and morning arrived. As soon as it was light enough, Huşuş Shah began to make preparations for his son's departure. He said, "Son, let us provide some soldiers to accompany you. You have a long way to and there is no way in which you can now know what happen along the way

"Father, you have just said something amusing. Whom I take with me on a fourteen-year journey? Who would wander with me in foreign lands for fourteen years? But because you are a ruler, you will tell some men that they required to go with me. Perhaps their feet would move their hearts would curse. Not only would they curse but so too would their mothers, fathers, partners, and friends. They would not come by their own will but because of fear, and those who went out of fear would be of no use at all. I do not want anyone, shah father. I can cut my

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belly band by myself." He kissed the hands of his mother and father and talked briefly with his friends. Then only he and the daughter of the padishah of Yemen (who had vowed to be groom to his horse as long as she lived) mounted their horses and started their journey.

Although they knew the direction to Hirat, neither knew the exact route to take. After they had gone the distance that could be covered in a month, they came upon a clearing where an old man sat at the roadside. Such a thing cannot be kept a secret from anyone who can see. Kirman Shah said to the daughter of the sultan of Yemen, "Girl, you had better remain behind until I discover what is involved in this situation. Those traveling alone, as we are, are often at great risk. That old man ahead may not be the same pir who set me traveling on this road."

Kirman Shah advanced alone to where the old man sat. Then he dismounted, knelt before the old man, and kissed his hands. "Where are you going, son?" the old man asked, as if he did not already know.

"Father, I am going to Hirat."

"Why, son?"

Then Kirman Shah explained what had happened to him to cause him to travel. "They have put me on this road,

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and so I continue to travel."

"Did you ask about the distance to Hirat?"

"Yes. The astrologers and the learned men who knew about that city said that it would take seven years to get there and seven years to return--a total of fourteen years of travel.

"Son, would you be pleased if I were to do you a great service?

"Who would not be pleased to receive such help? It would be welcome!"

"Would it be agreeable to you if I reduced the time of this journey from seven years to seven months?"

"Oh, father, I should be so pleased by that that I would kiss your feet as well as your hands."

"But you must be aware that there are seven fearsome things that you will encounter on this shorter route. I shall tell you about them. Then if you think that you can handle those obstacles, I shall show you how to get there in seven months. If you feel that you could not handle those seven obstacles, then you should continue on the seven-year road."

"Tell me what those obstacles are," said Kirman Shah.

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"After traveling from here for a month," the old man explained, "you will come to a narrow passage along the road where there will be a lion on the right side of the road and a tiger on the left. It will be impossible to go any farther without having killed those two wild beasts. Do you think that you can handle the lion and the tiger?"

"Father, when I reach that place, if the termination of my life is at hand, then even a cat would be as dangerous as a lion to me, but if my life span has not ended, then it will make no difference whether I meet a lion or a tiger or anything else. I agree to encounter such obstacles. Show me the seven-month road.

"Very well, son. You have spoken the truth. If Allah wishes, He can make all go well for you." Then the old man continued, "You will then travel for another month until you come to a place where a dragon has blocked passage along the road. In fact, the huge body of the dragon fills completely the pass there between two mountains. Because of the black smoke that pours from the mouth of that evil one, no plants grow on those mountains. Can you kill that dragon in order to pass farther along that road, son?"



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In response to this, Kirman Shah said, "Father, this is not the same kind of thing as a lion or tiger. dragon is a creature capable of turning a forest or even the earth into ashes. If the earth burns, will not flesh also burn? But whatever Allah has written down will happen. It may be a dragon, but then even a fox could be as dangerous to me as that dragon if I did not have the support of Allah. Whatever was written down as my fortune will happen. Therefore show me the seven-month road."

"Very well, son. Now listen to this third difficulty. After traveling for a third month--actually, the fourth month, for you spent a month getting here--you will come upon the castle of Big Arab. That Big Arab has 18,000 horsemen commanded by a man named Mecal Vermez. Son, Big Arab collects a tribute of taxes every year from rulers throughout this part of the world. Even your father, Huşuş Shah, pays taxes to Big Arab. You may not have known this, for all the taxes for Big Arab are taken to him secretly. Son, the Big Arab who collects tribute from seven rulers is not like the daughter of the sultan of Yemen! His back has never touched the ground. If can win over Big Arab and his 18,000 horsemen, you will have only three months of travel left, and from then on-

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ward you will encounter little danger. Do you still wish to take the shorter route?"

Kirman Shah laughed and asked, "Father, are they not all human beings?"

"Yes, son, they are all human."

"They will not, then, make any difference to me. The only thing that gives me some fear is the dragon. I have no fear of the other obstacles."

"Very well, son. If it is the will of Allah, victory will be yours. I cannot depend upon myself; I can depend only upon Allah, Who created me. Hopefully, even the dragon will not be able to make any gains against you." He then showed Kirman Shah the seven-month route to Hirat

Kirman Shah again kissed the old man's hands. He then said to him, "May Allah make your work go well

"Kirman, if you should be beset by trouble, call upon me, but do so only after you have first called upon Allah. Having said those final words, the old man vanished

Kirman Shah and the daughter of the sultan of Yemen then renewed their journey. Kirman Shah said, "Girl, we shall be traveling in such a wild and remote area that we shall not be able to tell Tuesday from Wednesday or Wednesday from Thursday. Draw a line upon something every

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so that we shall know not only what the Mirror of Fate show us but also exactly when it does so." They drew a line at the end of every day, and after they had drawn thirty such lines, they knew that they should be at place on their route where the lion and tiger were supposed to be stationed.

When Kirman Shah peered ahead, he saw the lion on the right side of the road and the tiger on the left. He then said to the daughter of the sultan of Yemen, "Girl, they are two, and so are we. Do you want to fight against the lion or the tiger? You kill one, and I shall kill the other."

The girl reined her horse to a stop and said, "Kirman Shah, a lion is needed to fight against a lion. I can fight against men, but I have never fought against a lion. I am not capable of that. If you wish, we can turn around and return, or you may proceed alone. Those are your two choices. I cannot undertake such a battle."

"O beauty, you are a groom. I was just teasing you. It is not your job to fight when I am here. Remain here and watch. If my life span ends here, very well. But on the chance that it will not end here, take our horses and stand aside in safety until I have killed these two crea-

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tures." He then handed her the reins of his horse, drew his sword, and proceeded ahead on foot.

As soon as he got close to the two wild beasts on the right and on the left, they started walking toward him. As he observed this, Kirman Shah thought, "Those who are coming are two, but I am only one. If I thrust my sword into one of them, the other will have an opportunity to attack me. I shall kill one, but the other will kill me. They are two, and Allah has given me two hands." He then replaced the sword in its sheath and continued walking toward the two animals. One went to his right side and the other went to his left. He grabbed the fur on the head of each animal and smashed their heads together. When he loosened his grip, the two beasts fell to the ground dead. The head leads the body around, but when the head is gone, the body collapses.

The girl took the horses to where Kirman stood and said, "Bravo, Kirman Shah! Well done!"

They then mounted their horses and continued their journey. Again Kirman Shah said, "Girl, draw a line on something every day, and we shall see what the Mirror of Fate will show us next." As soon as she drew the first line, Kirman Shah drew away from the battle with the lion

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and tiger and toward the battle with the dragon. As he approached the place of that second battle, he noticed how blackened all of the surroundings were. Flames from the dragon had burned all of the trees and had scorched the ground in that area. Smoke curled upward from the two mountains between which the dragon lay. Every creature--even wolves and birds--avoided that part of the land out of fear that it would be eaten by the dragon.

When they had gotten quite close to the dragon, the daughter of the sultan of Yemen said, "O hero, let us return. This situation is far different from the one involving the lion and the tiger!"

Kirman Shah replied, "Girl, I shall not return to the long road upon which we started our journey. Let us see what the Writer wrote as our fate. We should not give up trust in help from Allah. Hopefully this dragon is near the end of its life. Those who set me on this course are certain to help us penetrate this pass in the mountains." He then uttered what might be his final will and testament. "If Allah gives His permission to me to kill this dragon, then you will rejoin me, and we shall continue our journey. On the other hand, if the dragon should kill me, go to my mother and father and tell them that the

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next time we meet will be in the other world." Having given this final declaration, Kirman Shah advanced on foot with his only weapon being the sword tied to his waist.

As soon as the dragon noticed the scent of a human being, it began drawing in its breath. Kirman immediately felt as if someone were pushing him forward from behind. He looked around but saw that there was no one behind to do this, and he realized then that the dragon intended to swallow him alive. He tried to resist the current of air that was pulling him toward the dragon, but he still found himself being drawn closer and closer to the monster. Noticing that the dragon had raised its body and left tail in a stream, Kirman Shah climbed upon a rock, said, "O Blessed pir," and leaped upon the monster's back. Swinging his sword with all of his strength, he cut the dragon into two parts. The main part of the dragon's body lay writhing on the ground, and its tail lay writhing in the stream. The whole area was engulfed in flames. Kirman Shah climbed to a higher rock and watched the dragon writhe. The stream flowed with its blood for two hours before the dragon gave its life to Hell. Kirman Shah then thought, "I was of no more force than what can be exerted by a single finger before this monster What can a drop

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do against a whole sea? Oh, the power and capability of Allah! You are the only one who can both create and destroy!" Thanking Allah, he wiped the blood from his sword sheathed it again. "Now the only great obstacle left is the castle of Big Arab."

After the girl had rejoined Kirman Shah and looked briefly at the dead dragon, they continued on their way. "Draw another line on something every day as you have done twice before. It will be our turn next to encounter Big Arab. We survived battle with the lion and tiger and with dragon. Let us now see what Big Arab will do and what the Mirror of Fate will show as our lot." As they traveled and night toward their next encounter, let us see what Arab was doing.

Big Arab had among his followers two especially faithful men. One was Meral Vermez, commander of all his horsemen; the other was his geomancer.<sup>28</sup> As Kirman Shah was

<sup>28</sup>Remil is a form of geomancy or numerology used for acquiring information, including information about the future. The practice of remil involves the casting upon the ground a number of small cubes (like dice). On each of the six sides of each cube there is a letter or number. Whatever letters and numbers face upward after a casting of the cubes supposedly provide coded information to adepts at this kind of numerology. In rural areas of Turkey sheep knucklebones (aşıklar) are the ready-to-hand cubes which are marked and then used for remil.

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still some distance from Big Arab's castle, Big Arab sent for his geomancer. (Big Arab lived in a castle so large that it seemed to threaten even the sky. When children used to cry in their cradles, their parents would frighten them by saying that Big Arab would hear them and come. But Big Arab had frightened everyone, not just children, with his great force of 18,000 horsemen. It was not just the number of horsemen that made Big Arab so powerful; it was the warlike capabilities of those horsemen. They were as powerful as 150,000 ordinary horsemen. "Geomancer!" Big Arab said.

"Yes, ağa?"<sup>29</sup>

"Geomancer, cast remil and read the results to see what my future will be. Will there be anyone on this earth who will be able to defeat me? I have fought repeatedly, and so far no one has been able to defeat my sword. Cast remil in order to tell me my fortune. Let us see if there is my equal on earth, or if I shall live and

<sup>29</sup>The ağa (English, agha) is a rural landowner, sometimes wealthy, often powerful. The word does not indicate an official title but describes an economic status. They are often the principal employers of farm workers, and they are often viewed by their employees as harsh, driving, and abusive. The term ağa is also used in a complimentary way, as an honorific, for a distinguished or just older person than the one using the term. Thus an older brother is called ağa bey by his younger siblings. Ağa bey may be



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without ever coming across such an equal.

"Very well, ağa," said the geomancer, and he cast remil. When he read the information from the remil pieces, he opened his mouth to report their message, but fear prevented him from speaking.

Big Arab noticed this and asked, "Geomancer, why do hesitate? Tell me the result of the remil. Whether prediction is for me or against me, I shall accept the decision. Geomancer, if the report is bad but you say it is good, I shall catch you when things start to go wrong, then you will not be able to escape alive. Don't hide whatever it is that you see on those remil pieces. Tell me the truth

The geomancer replied, "Ağa, the prediction about you does not look very good. Count thirty-nine days and be prepared for an Arab boy to arrive here on the fortieth. He is only eighteen years old, but you will be defeated by this inexperienced young man."

Hearing this, Big Arab looked into the geomancer's face and asked, "Isn't he, then, my equal?"

used as a deferential term to one older or more prestigious than the speaker. A taxi driver may refer to his passenger as ağa bey; a salesman speaking to a male customer may call him ağa bey.

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"No, for you are forty years old while he is only eighteen

"Geomancer!"

"Yes, ağa?"

"Cast remil again. How can an inexperienced eighteen-year-old defeat me? Cast remil again and discover the answer to that question."

The geomancer cast remil a second time and got the same results. He said, "Ağa, whatever is true will hap-

I have been consulting geomancy for you for a long time, and my prophecies have never been incorrect. I have reported, one by one, both good things and bad things.

can be sure that on the fortieth day an inexperienced eighteen-year-old man will come here through that pass in mountains. He will have a friend beside him when he arrives here, but the child himself will defeat you and press your back to the ground. However, this is not the kind of man with whom you are acquainted, for this one was brought up under the protection and guidance of pirs."

Big Arab then said, "Geomancer, I have learned from about my future. I have no objections to anything that you have said, but if he does not arrive on the

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fortieth day, your head will go.

"All right," said the geomancer, "but you should know that men of this kind are not easy to contend with. He will fight with you and bring you down, and he will do the same with many other rulers."

"Very well, geomancer. Let us see what will become of your prediction

A short while later, he spoke to Mecal Vermez, his commander. "Distribute the horsemen along the road leading to our castle. You stay at the pass that was shown in your geomancy. Hide there day and night awaiting the arrival of the two intruders. From whichever direction they may come, if you can cut off their heads and bring them to me, I shall set you free and give you all the money you will ever need."

"Ağa, in all of the time that I have been with you, have you ever seen me return empty-handed?"

"Boy, you have cut off many heads, but the most important are now on their way here." He then stationed the horsemen along all the roads leading to the castle, and he himself took up his position at the pass that the geomancer had indicated as the entrance to the castle that Kirman Shah would use. Grasping a large scimitar in his

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hand, he waited there day and night. As the people at the castle await the arrival of Kirman Shah, let us go and see what Kirman Shah himself is doing.

Together with the daughter of the sultan of Yemen, Kirman Shah traveled day and night until he reached the border of Big Arab's territory. They arrived there at dawn when the birds were singing and the wolves were howling, when both the trees and the water were being blown by the morning breezes. Mecal Vermez saw them approaching the pass and called to them, "Young man, it is enough that you have come this distance. Turn around now and return on the same road that brought you here. Otherwise the feet will not carry you away from here once the head is cut off. This is the border of Big Arab's territory. Don't you know that? People who come here alive are unable to leave in that same condition. Therefore, turn back now before I shed your blood.

The daughter of the sultan of Yemen asked, "Kirman, what is he saying?"

"Girl, do not respond to him in any way. Act as if you hadn't heard anything. Although he does not know it, what he is really saying is this: 'My appointed hour of

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death has arrived. Therefore come and kill!'"

When the girl heard Kirman Shah's remark, she laughed. Seeing that, Mecal Vermez said to himself, "My words had no effect whatsoever! The young man is still advancing." He then called out again and repeated exactly what he had said before, but Kirman Shah ignored his words completely. As a last resort, Mecal Vermez said to himself, "Let me tell him my name, and then perhaps he will go away." He called out, "Hey, young man! They call me Mecal Vermez. Having very little mercy, I have never shown any pity on anyone. I shall surely shed your blood if you do not turn back!"

Hearing this, the girl looked at Kirman Shah's face and asked, "O Kirman Shah, will you give me permission to go and take care of him?"

"Why?" asked Kirman Shah. "You did not volunteer to fight with the lion or the tiger or the dragon."

"It was the right of a lion to fight a lion, and it was the right of a dragon to fight with a dragon. That is not my right. It is within my power to fight only with human beings like this one."

"Is that so? You are my horse's groom until death. Whenever I die, you may then fight to protect yourself,

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until that time let me do the fighting. Stand back and let me go and discover what is the matter with this fellow."

Kirman Shah advanced toward his opponent. When Mecal Vermez saw that the stranger was not afraid of him, he too advanced rapidly. When the two were about the distance of an arrow's flight apart, Kirman Shah made a gesture to indicate, "My ears do not hear well, and my tongue is speechless. Come closer and shout in my ear."

Mecal Vermez believed him and thought, "If he hadn't been deaf, hearing of my reputation would have driven him back. He is both deaf and mute. It is better, therefore that I take him to Big Arab alive instead of taking his head."

As the two came alongside each other, Kirman Shah clenched his fist. The blessed pir said not to hurt any-seriously. Kirman therefore thought, "What good would it do if I were to kill him? Instead, I shall punch him so hard that he will be knocked unconscious or he will surrender to me or he will just run away." Thus while Mecal Vermez was leading Kirman Shah to the castle of Big Arab, Kirman suddenly struck him with a mighty punch. The scimitar slipped from Mecal Vermez's hand and fell to one side while its owner tumbled from his horse onto his head.

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Before Kirman Shah could even dismount, Mecal Vermez got left his scimitar on the ground, and fled.

Kirman Shah said, "It is not proper to chase a man who is fleeing." He simply watched Mecal Vermez running away

Mecal Vermez ran to the castle and entered the presence of Big Arab. Big Arab had been watching what had been happening from his tower, but when Mecal Vermez entered, he asked, "Mecal Vermez, is the news good or bad?"

"Don't be concerned about the news. Instead, have the doors of your castle locked! Such a man as this had never been seen before! He struck me such a blow with his hand that I cannot remember anything else! My scimitar fell from my hand, for I had never before received such a terrible blow at any time in my life! The man must have had mercy upon me, for if his punch was so damaging, think of what his sword blow might have done to me. I would be dead now instead of being alive!"

While listening to these comments of Mecal Vermez, Arab was so fearful that there was no color in his face. He said, "Mecal Vermez, you said that you never returned empty handed, but this time you did not return

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with heads as you had always done before." Big Arab then gave orders to Mecal Vermez to have all their horsemen completely circle the castle and close all of its many doors. "Besides doing that, place in the middle of the road a cauldron containing some pilav<sup>30</sup> with a little blood poured over it." After these orders had been carried out, Big Arab and Mecal Vermez watched the strangers below from one of the towers of the castle.

In the meantime Kirman Shah and the daughter of the sultan of Yemen drew even closer to the castle. Noticing a cauldron in the middle of the road, they rode up to it, but what did they see? There was pilav in the cauldron but it had blood sprinkled on it. As Kirman Shah was looking around for some way to account for that cauldron, Big Arab called from the castle, "Hey, young man, why don't you eat your pilav?"

Upon hearing this, Kirman Shah looked up and saw Big Arab looking as threatening as Azrail.<sup>31</sup> He answered, "Arab, this pilav is bloody. Do you offer me this because you think that bloody meat is edible?"

<sup>30</sup>A rice dish containing small flecks of meat. In some cases pine nuts and/or currants may be added.

<sup>31</sup>The angel of death, often pictured as huge, powerful and terrifying.



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"Young man, a brave person's morsel is likely to be bloody here, for blood rather than water flows within our borders. Your mind must have wandered away from your head. One who comes here alive cannot return the same, for he will leave here headless."

Kirman Shah laughed heartily at Big Arab's words. He answered, "What you say, Arab, is only partly true. But at this moment my head is with the rest of my body. If it were no longer there, then what you say could be true. Come down now, cousin, and we shall settle this matter.

What Big Arab responded was caused by fear. Under normal circumstances the Arab was never afraid, but remembering what the geomancer had told him, he was influenced by fear now. He called down, "Young man, I cut off many heads and shed much blood. Mountains trembled because of me, and they still do so. However, I cannot help observing how young you are. May your mother and father not wait in vain for your return. I forgive your trespassing here because of your youth. Go back to the place from which you came. Otherwise your head will be separated from your body. Be well aware of this!"

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Kirman Shah again laughed loudly at Big Arab's words. "Arab, don't you understand what I say? My head is still attached to my body, and if the two should separate, it would be very apparent. A man is one who fights in the field. You are up in your castle while I am on the ground waiting for you. Your hand cannot reach me from there. Come down from the castle and come here before me. Come and see how a head is cut off."

Big Arab realized now that Kirman Shah was not going to leave because of fear. In fact, he was determined to stay and fight. Big Arab ordered the geomancer to come again, and while he was coming, the castle doors were opened. When Big Arab rode forth on his horse, Karakartay, he pulled forth his sword and shook his shield, causing both earth and sky to be filled with the flashing of steel. He called, "Mecal Vermez!"

"Yes?"

"We and our horsemen are so many, but they are only two. Order the horsemen to surround them on all four sides. Above all else I wish to talk with this young man. Perhaps he will surrender to me. Order the horsemen not to strike until I raise my hand."

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"My head is guarantee that your orders will be obeyed."

Then the geomancer, who had been directed to cast a final remil, spoke up and said to Big Arab, "Arab, never give the command for swords to be drawn from their sheaths. He will destroy all of your many horsemen. You may possibly be able to make him surrender by using kindness, but it will be impossible to succeed against him by using violent means. Be well warned about this!"

After hearing this, Big Arab went before Kirman Shah. He said, "Young man, I gave you good advice, but you did not listen to it. Now let us talk with each other before we begin to fight. What do you say to the idea that whichever of us should win, he will cut off the head of the other?"

"Arab, I was ready for this three days ago. You keep your word, and we shall see what will happen before another sunrise.

Big Arab now saw that no matter what he said, Kirman Shah was going to maintain the original position he had taken. He also understood that Kirman Shah would not allow anything to frighten him. "May Allah help!" he said and begin putting on his kispets.<sup>32</sup> Kirman Shah was

<sup>32</sup>Kispets are the short (knee-length) leather trousers worn by Turkish wrestlers.

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watching him. He called out, "Young man!"

"Yes?"

"If you have any kispets to wear, you had better put them on now."

"Arab, I am not going to wear kispets. I have never worn such things, but I am not saying anything against your wearing them. I shall just watch you putting on your own."

Big Arab greased<sup>33</sup> his kispets and his body and then walked forth onto the battlefield. The horsemen had surrounded that battlefield and were watching to see what would happen. In order to impress Kirman Shah with his prowess, Big Arab was swaggering around the field causing dust to rise.

Kirman Shah observed that and said to himself, "Look at that foolish man jumping up and down in all that dust!"

When Big Arab saw that Kirman Shah was not at all impressed by the way he was swaggering, he wondered, "Does he think that this is a spectacle garden which he has entered solely for the purpose of watching?" Then he

<sup>33</sup>Turks engage in what is known as "grease wrestling." Both contestants usually smear their pants and their bodies with olive oil in order to make themselves more difficult to grasp.

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called to Kirman Shah and asked, "Hey, brave man, why don't you swagger as well?"<sup>34</sup>

Kirman Shah laughed and replied, "You are playing, and it is enough that only one does that. I am watching. Our purpose here is not to play but to win. You are playing now, but after this fight has ended, the one who has conquered will play."

In anger Big Arab pounced upon Kirman Shah, hoping to trip him so that he would fall beneath the Arab. Because Big Arab was forty and Kirman Shah was only eighteen, the former's arm was as big around as the latter's whole body, but the younger man was never awed by this. Because his back had been stroked by the grandfather pir, Kirman felt that even if a thousand Arabs attacked him, they could not harm him. Big Arab extended his arm with the hope of bringing Kirman Shah to the ground, but in this exchange Kirman threw a rope around his opponent's waist and cinched it so tightly that the Arab's feet danced off

<sup>34</sup>Although the swaggering of Big Arab may seem to be a matter of personal whimsy, it is actually part of the ritual of Turkish wrestling. Before a set of wrestling matches begins, all of the contestants stalk around the outer edge of the ring, close to the audience. They walk in a slow, greatly exaggerated muscle-bound fashion; this deliberate tread gives them the appearance of weighing 300 or 400 pounds. This heavy-footed promenade is still common in wrestling matches in rural areas. It does not occur in Olympic or other international competitions in which Turks appear.

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ground. This made it easy for Kirman Shah to push him over backwards and pin his back on the ground. As soon as Big Arab had fallen, Kirman Shah sat upon his chest, took out his own sword, and held it to his opponent's throat. Kirman Shah said, "Oh, Arab, you were playing before, but this is the way that I play. Where now is your prancing in the field? Tell me that!"

When Big Arab responded only by bowing his neck and begging for his life, Kirman Shah continued. "Arab, up to this point in my life I have never shed human blood. I had no intention of fighting with you, for the business of the traveler is to travel. I did not leave home to shed blood, but you stood in my way. I did not even throw a stone at a flying bird on my way here. I have some conditions I want you to accept. If you accept them, I shall forgive you and get off your chest. If you do not accept them, I shall not move from where I am now until I have separated your head from your body. Here are my conditions: First, you are to promise never again to collect taxes from any rulers. Second, you are never again to prevent the passage of travelers along this road. Third, you are not to throw stones at birds flying over your territory.

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Fourth, you are to perform prayer services five times every day. Fifth, you will become a spectator rather than a participant in all human conflict. If you will promise to fulfill these conditions, I shall forgive you. Otherwise I shall not climb off your chest without first having cut off your head."

Big Arab thought about these conditions for a minute before answering. He realized that the words he had just heard spoken were those of a friend, not of an enemy. He realized also that those words were full of important meaning. He therefore finally responded, "Young man, I think I shall accept your conditions, but now I too have something to say. If you will accept what I propose, then I shall accept your conditions. If you do not accept my proposal, then I do not care whether or not you cut off my head. So if you do not accept my proposal, I shall not accept your conditions, and then you may cut off my head."

"Tell me what your proposal is, Big Arab

"What is your name?"

"They call me Kirman Shah.

"Very well. Where are you from?"