

Story 1264 (1972 Tape 10)

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kaza, Çorum Province

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Behlül Dane Urinates in Public

Behlül Dane was Harun Reşit's brother.¹ One day some people of their city /Bāghdad/ complained to Harun Reşit about the behavior of Behlül Dane. They said to him, "Your brother has no respect for us and other human beings around him. urinates in the presence of many people."

Harun Reşit was a padişah in those days.² He immediately issued an order for Behlül to report to him, and when Behlül arrived, Harun Reşit scolded him. "Oh, Behlül, why do you do such crude things? Everyone is now complaining about your behavior in public."

"What are they complaining about? What do they claim I am doing?"

¹The two men are usually said to be half brothers, and Behlül is often said to be mad, though his supposed madness is like that of Shakespeare's fools, a "cover" beneath which he can satirize with impunity the Moslem establishment. Behlül's historicity is very dubious.

²Harun Reşit was the caliph, leader of Islam, not a temporal ruler. But he had a great amount of power, backed by strong military forces, and so he might well have been designated padişah, a term ordinarily used for a political rather than a spiritual leader.

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"They say that you urinate in public. That is a shameful thing to do in the presence of other people."

"But where I urinated in a side street near the marketplace there were no human beings! Let us go there, and I shall show you."

They went to the street near the marketplace, and there Behlül Dane touched his brother's eyes with his hand. When Harun Reşit looked around him, the only living creatures he could see were various kinds of animals. He could see no human beings whatsoever on the street. When Behlül Dane removed his hand from his brother's eyes, Harun Reşit said, "Very well, Behlül! I shall not interfere with your affairs again."³

³In many tales Harun Reşit discovers that Behlül has preternatural power and contact with the spiritual world. Behlül performs near miracles, reads minds, and casts people temporarily into a trance state. Here again Harun Reşit is reminded of his brother's superior spiritual status.