

Story 1542 (1992 Tape 1)

Narrator: Mustafa Aytekin, 30

Location: Derinkuyu, kaza town
in Nevşehir Province

Date: 1992

Judge Nasreddin Hoca¹ Pays the Laborer His "Nothing"

One day during the time that Nasreddin Hoca was serving as a judge, a man went to him with an unusual problem. This man wished to bring legal action against a man who, he said, had done him an injustice. "One of my neighbors asked me to help him move his belongings from one house to another. I agreed to do this, but I asked him, 'How much will you pay me?' My neighbor answered, 'Nothing.' Well, I helped him to move, but after we had finished the work, he did not pay me what he had promised. Therefore I am filing this complaint against him. He did not pay me my 'Nothing.'"

After hearing this complaint, Nasreddin Hoca called to his office the defendant in this case. When the Hoca asked him to tell his side of the matter, the defendant told him exactly the same story that the plaintiff had.

Lifting up one end of the carpet on his floor, Nasreddin Hoca asked the plaintiff, "What do you see under this carpet?"

¹A hoca is a preacher and the religious leader of a community. In pre-Republican times the hoca was also the community teacher. Separation of church and state in the Republic required that teachers be people of secular rather than of religious training. Nasreddin Hoca is Turkey's most popular comic character.

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"Nothing," the plaintiff answered.

The Hoca then said, "Very well, then. That is the 'Nothing' that the defendant owes you. Take your 'Nothing' and leave here at once."