

Story 1147 (1974 Tape 11

Narrator: Necip Görpele

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The Three Shepherds and the Song That Saved the Padişah

In the olden times there were two villages near each other which were controlled by cruel and abusive men. One day three shepherds met and began talking about this situation. "Are we ever going to get rid of this problem?" one of them asked.

"What can we do about it?" asked the second shepherd

"Let us compose a song about it," said the third. "Let us get together and agree upon what it will be."

"We have no instruments to play upon."

"We do not really need any. Let's each compose a line.

"The leaf is from the mountain," one sang.

"The leaf is full of holes," a second sang.

"Our heart now lies in fear," the third added.

They sang other songs, too, but they kept returning to these three lines

Pleased with their ability to sing, they decided one day to have others hear them sing. "Let us go to the padişah and tell him that we can sing. Perhaps he will hire us to be his singers."

Accordingly, they walked to the palace and were received

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there as guests. After some time had passed, the padişah asked to hear their music. The three former shepherds began to sing:

leaf is from the mountain;

leaf is full of holes

heart now lies in fear.

The padişah liked these lines. He had them written down in large letters and hung on the wall. Years came, years went, and after a while the padişah grew oppressive and harsh in his methods of ruling the land. It reached the point where the viziers began to plot against him.

"How can we get rid of him?" asked one.

"The one certain and safe way to get rid of him is to have his barber kill him while he is shaving him. We must bribe the barber to do this."

The next day as the barber was shaving the padişah, he completed his work except for one patch of hair beneath the padişah's chin. It was while he was shaving that patch that the barber intended to cut the padişah's throat. But as he started to do that, he glanced upward and saw the three lines of song hanging on the wall:

The leaf is from the mountain;

The leaf is full of holes.

heart now lies in fear.

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Afraid that the padişah knew his intention all along, the barber dropped his razor and exclaimed, "Forgive us, our padişah! We have been mistaken. Don't you do the same thing!"

"What have you done?" asked the ruler.

"Because you became a very harsh leader, your viziers planned to kill you. They told me to cut your throat. I going to do that, but then I discovered that you had known intentions all along." As he said that, he pointed to the sign on the wall.

"Ah, so that is the way it is!" said the padişah. Then, turning to a servant, he said, "Call my singers." When the three singers arrived in the presence of the padişah, he to them, "You have served me well, for you have saved my life. Now I want each of you to wish for whatever reward you want."

The one who had sung "The leaf is from the mountain" said, "Make me muhtar<sup>1</sup> of such-and-such a village," and he named one of those two villages in his home area led by cruel authorities.

<sup>1</sup> The muhtar is the head man of a village or town mahalle (ward). He is elected by the people, and he may possibly be the only elected official with whom they have any contact. Most other officials that they see are appointees of one or another federal ministry. Nowadays a muhtar is elected, not appointed, but during the time of the sultanate, the absolute monarch could, of course, do whatever he wished.

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one who had sung "The leaf is full of holes" said, "Make me the captain of the guard in such-and-such a village, so that we can punish those evil men there who have abused the people." He named the other village whose leaders had mistreated the residents.

Having granted these two wishes, the padişah turned to the third singer and said, "Your words, 'Our heart now lies in fear' were the most important.

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now have that appointment," said the padişah. He sent this third shepherd to Baghdad, and he sent along with him several knowledgeable administrators from İstanbul to help him understand his new duties

the group arrived in Baghdad, they were met and welcomed by a large group of people. There began immediately music and dancing of the residents in the streets. The new governor left his own group and began dancing with the people. The administrators from İstanbul were shocked at this inappropriate behavior of the new governor. One of them gave a brief speech in which he tried to explain the governor's action: "It was a very special wish of the governor to dance with those

<sup>2</sup> Padişahs existed in pre-Republican Ottoman times. During that Ottoman period Baghdad and what is now Iraq were part of the Ottoman Empire, and thus the sultan might well appoint its governor.

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people who welcomed him to the city. You must forgive him for this."

After the welcoming ceremonies had ended, there was a banquet for the new governor given by the wealthy and prominent people of Baghdad. As it was about to begin, the governor arose from his chair and seated each of the other guests. The aides from İstanbul reproached him for this, saying, "Governor you must not be so accommodating and modest toward people. You must make them fear you a little or they will have no respect for you.

The new governor of Baghdad wondered what he could do to put fear in these people. Going apart, he rolled up his shirt sleeves and trouser legs. Then, taking twelve different colors of paint, he decorated himself until he was as gaudy as a Pakistani cow. Because he was an uneducated man, this was all he could think of to do. As he was painting himself, there were many people arriving to greet their new governor. "Wait just a few minutes and I shall come out," he called to them. People wondered what he was doing in there

He then suddenly opened the door and screaming fiercely burst out upon the people. The crowd panicked and ran terrified in every direction. Some arms and heads were broken in the rush. "What kind of a governor is this?" many shouted.

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One of the aides from İstanbul addressed the people in an effort to calm the crowd. "Dear people of Baghdad, your new governor spent years studying for and yearning for his present position. He has been so fervently preparing to come here that about once a year it causes him to act strangely. Please be forgiving. I apologize to you on his behalf."

It became necessary to recall the governor to İstanbul. But he was the very first Turk to become governor of Baghdad, and after that time many other Turks filled that position.