

Story 787 (1970 Tape 15)

Narrator: Mehmet Ece (alias Topal Ahmet), one-legged auto mechanic

Location: Ece is from Erzurum but tale was taped at Bursa

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Circumcision Ceremony as Revenge

Once in the past there was a vizier whose wife unable to bear a child. The vizier was very fond of women, and his lady dominated him.

There was in their home a maid whom his wife had adopted, but the vizier was completely unaware of this. She had been kept out of his sight. She had now grown to the age of fifteen. When the vizier arose earlier than usual one morning, he saw this girl in the house. "What are you doing here?" he asked.

"Don't you know me, Father? I am your daughter."

"I do not have any daughter. Have you been circumcised yet?"

"No," she said, but she did not understand what he meant by this.

The vizier then took the girl's virginity and "circumcised" her. Later in the day she looked very pale. When the vizier's wife asked her what was troubling the girl replied, "Well, very early this morning my vizier

father circumcised me

Determined to get even with her husband, the wife sent invitations to the other viziers and the other government officers, saying, "We are having a circumcision ceremony at our house. Please come and help us celebrate this event."<sup>1</sup>

One morning while the vizier was still in bed, there was a loud knocking on the front door, and through a crack in the bedroom door, the vizier saw the Minister of Interior<sup>2</sup> enter the house. Before very long, all of the other ministers and government officials had gathered there.

vizier whispered to his wife, "Lady, what is this all about?"

scoundrel!" she said. "You had the girl circumcised--didn't you? Well, then, the people have come for

<sup>1</sup>In order to have this tale make sense to a Western reader, it must be explained that in Turkey circumcision is not merely a minor bit of routine surgery. It is a rite of passage accompanied by three or more days of celebration--music, dancing, feasting for not only the family of the circumcised eight- or ten-year-old boy, but also for a great gathering of relatives, friends, and neighbors. The cost of this celebration is all borne by the father of the boy, and if he is poor, it may all but bankrupt him.

<sup>2</sup>This is a cabinet post in the Republic. It is doubtful that any post so named existed under any early sultan.

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the circumcision celebration!"

To cover up their conflict, they found an orphan boy and had him circumcised that day. There was a circumcision celebration, and all of the distinguished guests were given a fine feast.