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How the Three Itching Peasants Won the Reward
[Variant of Story #8]

There was once a padişah with a very peculiar temperament. Frequently he demanded strange things from his subjects, and from time to time he requested peculiar entertainment. One day he said to his grand vezir, "I feel like having some fun today. See that I am amused."

"How can I entertain you, your majesty, while the palace is already filled with all sorts of entertainment? What would you like?"

"Something original," said the padişah, "something that I've never seen before."

"Very well, your majesty," said the grand vezir, "I shall see what I can do."

He went to the market place of the town where he saw a young man whose head was bald from one ear to the other. He was a Kel.

here, young man," said he.

do you want with me?" asked the bald young man.

"I am going to take you to the padişah," said the grand vezir. "You are going to receive many gifts and money there. What else do you want?"

right," said the young man, "I shall come with you."

The grand vezir continued to look through the market place and at last he came upon a man who had a mangy back. He scratched his back continuously because it itched him. The grand vezir said to this young man, "I am going to take you to the padişah. You are going to receive many gifts and money there. What else do you want?"

"Very well," said this mangy man, "I shall come with you."

The grand vezir looked still longer in the market place and eventually found a lip-licker.¹ He said to the lip-licker, "I'm going to take you to the padişah. You are going to receive many gifts and money there. else do you want?"

"Nothing else," said the lip-licker. "I shall come with you.

As they were walking to the palace, the three asked the grand what it was they had to do in order to receive the money and gifts. will have to stand and do nothing," said the grand vezir, "In fact, to earn the money and the gifts you must guarantee me that you will do nothing."

"How can this be?" asked the Kel. "Are people paid so well for doing nothing?"

"Yes," said the grand vezir. "You will stand before the padişah for an hour and do absolutely nothing. And that is your task

The men were amazed that jobs for the padişah were so easy. They followed the grand vezir to the palace

When they arrived at the palace, the grand vezir whispered to the padişah, "Your majesty," he said, "one of these men is a kel, one of them has a mangy back, and one of them is a lip-licker. Let us see how long they can stand before you without relieving themselves." The padişah was pleased with this entertainment and observed the men standing in front of him.

The room was very warm, and the three men soon began to be extremely uncomfortable. The kel wanted very desperately to scratch his head. The

¹The verb yalamak means to lick. A yalama is a lip-licker. Sores on the lips--sometimes the result of a type of dermatitis--cause the sufferer to lick his lips, just as people with chapped lips moisten them often with their tongues.

man with the mangy back wanted to scratch his back, and the lip-licker wanted to lick his lips to moisten them. They knew, however, that they would not win the reward offered to them if they moved at all during the time that they were supposed to be standing there. Finally, the kel could stand it no longer, and so he began talking.

"Your majesty," he said, "I'm going to tell you something very important. When I was in the market place, a charitable man bought me a new fez. I ~~tried~~ tried on the fez. I pressed it like this and then I turned it like this, and then I turned it this way, and then I pressed it that way, and finally I got it to fit on my head." In this manner, by imitating his moving the fez, he was able to scratch his head and stop the itching for awhile.

The man with the mangy back was encouraged by what he had heard from the bald man, and so he, too, addressed the padişah. "Your majesty," he said, "a charitable person bought me something, too. He bought me a jacket today, and I tried it on. I pulled it this way and pulled it that way. I stretched it over this shoulder and I stretched it over that shoulder, and, finally, after working on it for awhile, I made it fit me." By going through these gestures, as if he were trying on a coat, the man with the mangy back had been able to relieve the itching of his back.

Now it was the lip-licker's turn. He was standing between the kel and the man with the mangy back. He said to the padişah, "Your majesty, this man on my left is lying," and as he said this, he pointed to the man on his left with his tongue, thus wetting the left side of his mouth. Then he said, "And that man on my right is lying, too." As he did that he stuck out his tongue to point at the man on his right, thus licking the right side of his mouth.

The padişah was quite impressed with their cleverness and he was also pleased with the entertainment which the grand vezir had provided for him. He gave the three peasants the gifts and the money which the grand vezir had promised them, as rewards for their cleverness.