

Story #141 (Tape #18, 1961-1962)

Narrator: Mehmet Çatal

Location: Çamalan village, kaza of  
Tarsus, Province of Içel

Date: February 1962

Kermece Mehmet as Kadı

Kermece Mehmet was a coal seller in Istanbul. He sold coal at all of the wealthier homes. coal from him; the

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After many years had elapsed, the Padişah's son ascended to his father's throne; the son of the Grand Vezir became the new Grand Vezir; and the son of the Şeyhül Islam became the new religious head of the state. One day Kermece Mehmet stopped before the Padişah's palace and began talking to himself. "I touched the son of the Padişah with my penis and he became Padişah; I touched the son of the Grand Vezir, and he became Grand Vezir himself; and I touched the son of the Şeyhül Islam and he became the new Şeyhül Islam. Yet here I am still a poor coal seller. What might I become if I touched myself with my penis?" Then he proceeded to try to do just this.

The Padişah saw him making this silly and indecent effort and ordered that he brought to his presence. "What are you trying to do like that Crazy Mehmet?"

"Well, your majesty, I was trying to improve my lot. After all, I touched you and you became Padişah; I touched the son of the Grand Vezir and he is now Grand Vezir; I touched the son of the Şeyhül Islam and he is the present Şeyhül Islam. So, I decided to touch myself to see what I would become."

The Padişah was greatly amused at this explanation and said, "Kermece Mehmet, you will become Judge of Malatya."

After thanking the Padişah Kermece Mehmet went to Malatya to begin his work as kadı. Soon everyone there was talking about their new judge who behaved very differently from any kadı they had known before. He acquitted almost everyone who came to trial, regardless of his offense. When he attended the mosque for prayer, he would say "Vallahi!" after every rekat. He made people take oaths in court so often that Vallahi was in his mouth all the time, as much as his food and coffee were. [In fact, when coffee would be served to him, he would always ask, "Is it Vallahi?" And the servant who brought it always responded, "Yes, Vallahi, efendi."] The first time there was a funeral service, Kermece Mehmet did nothing but walk into the mosque yard, lift the lid of the coffin, and speak in whispers for a moment to the corpse. Then he left the service.

The citizens of Malatya were amazed at the strange behavior of their new kadı. They could not understand what kind of judge he was, but they decided to try to find out something about his past. One day one of them said to him, "What is your education, Kadı efendi?"

"I was a teacher of the Padişah," said Kermece Mehmet.

Another said, "Kadı, efendi, the other day you spoke to the corpse in the mosque yard. Will you tell us what you said to it?"

"I think not," said Kermece Mehmet, "for I am really a man with no education and if I told you what I said to the corpse you might try to have me dismissed from my job."

"No we will not! We promise you that," they all shouted. "Tell us what you said to the corpse."

"Well, then, this is what I said: 'O corpse, you have sold what you are going to sell in this life and you have bought what you were going to buy. In the next world if they ask you about the state of affairs here on earth, simply tell them that Kermece Mehmet the Coalseller has become Kadi of Malatya!'"