

Story #198 (Tape #4, Summer 1970)

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The Guessing Children [variant of #1]

There were once three young men. One day they lost their donkeys. They said, "Let us be guessing children and find out who stole the donkeys."

One thought a little and said, "The man who stole our donkey is a short man.

The second said, "If he is short, then he must be a beardless man."

The third said, "If he is short and a köse, then his name must be Musa. Let us go and search for such a man."

They went and found a man who was short. They looked for his beard, but he had none. They asked him his name, and he said it was Musa. "All right, then," they said, "let us have our donkeys back.

"I do not have your donkeys."

The case was taken to court. When the judge asked the brothers, "What do you want of this man?" the three brothers claimed the man had stolen their donkeys. "Have you any witnesses?" asked the judge.

but we are guessing children," they replied

"What do you do as guessing children?" he said.

"We know how to discover things."

"All right, then," the judge said, and he opened a drawer and took something into his hands. "Since you are guessing children, tell me what I have in my hand."

The first said, "The object in your hand is round.

The second said, "If it is round, then it is yellow."

The third said, "If it is round and yellow, then it is an orange."

The judge said, "Very well. You know. It is an orange. You stay here," the judge said, and left the court. He went home, caught a cock, held it beneath his arm under his gown and returned. "Oh, Guessing Children, what am I holding under my arm?"

The first said, "The head of the thing under your arm is like a comb [tarak].

The second said, "If its head is like a comb, then its tail is like a sickle [orak].

The third said, "If its head is like a comb and its tail is like a sickle, then it must be a cock."

The judge said, "It is a cock indeed. Father," turning to the suspect, "you must pay for these brothers' donkeys." Turning to the three brothers, he said, "I would like you to be my guests today." He invited them to his house. Before they started eating, the kadı had food laid on the table, but he himself went out.

While the guests were eating, one said, "This bread smells of human flesh."

The second said, "This lamb smells like dog flesh."

The third said, "The kadı himself is a bastard, anyway."

All the while, the kadı was listening through the door to them. When the table was cleared, he went to his family and asked, "Where did you get this bread from?"

"We got the wheat for the bread from so and so." They found the man who sold them the wheat and they asked, "Where did you raise that wheat?"

"In a cemetery that was turned into a field," he answered.

It became obvious why the bread smelled of human flesh. The kadı then

went to the butcher and said, "You gave us dog flesh, not lamb,"

the butcher said.

"From whom did you get the sheep?"

"From so and so."

"Go and call him here," the judge said. The man was brought. The kadı asked, "Where is your sheep?"

"I do not know," the man answered.

"Who knows?"

"My shepherd."

They called the shepherd and asked him, "What was that sheep you sold to the butcher? It is said to be a dog."

"No, sir, it was not a dog."

"What was it, then?" the kadı asked.

its mother was eaten by a wolf, and this lamb was left without a mother. I had her suckled by a female dog with pups."

The kadı then went to his own mother. "Mother, who is my father?"

"Son, your father was such and such a paşa," she said.

"No, no, I do not know him as such. Who sowed my seed? I want to know from whom you conceived me, or else I shall kill you."

She said, "Your father was sterile, and lest he have no heir, I conceived you from an orderly who served us."

He said, "Very well," and returned to where the guessing children were.

"Oh, Guessing Children, you had the bread and knew its source. You had the meat and knew its origin, too. But how did you know I was a bastard?"

"Sir, we knew you were a bastard from the way you shut us in this dining room and listened to us through the door."