

Story #245 (Tape #7, Summer 1970)

Narrator: Hacı Gönen

Location: Yukarı Kise Köy, Güvem nahiye,  
Kızılcahamam kaza, Ankara Province

Date: July 1970

Behlül Dane and the Grape Seller

His Reverence Behlül Dane was once traveling in a foreign country. He was returning home from that land, and on the way he met a grape seller. He said, "Pleasant journey to you, oh father."

"The same to you," answered the man.

He then asked the grape seller, "Where are you from?"

"From such-and-such a country, the son of such-and-such a man." He gave him no more information than that.

Bir Dane kept quiet, and the grape seller did, too. That was all the conversation that they had then.

On the way, the grape seller said to Bir Dane, "You are not talking at all."

"What do you want me to say? We have already talked enough," he said.

"But we must talk."

"If I told you something, you would understand it as something else. You would probably say that I fancied your grapes."

"No, no, no," said the seller. "I am listening to you."

"When you meet a fellow," said Bir Dane, "ask his name, <sup>Advice</sup> the name of his village, and what his origins were [i.e., his people]."

Then the grape seller gave him a bunch of grapes for this advice. Bir Dane ate the grapes, and they again remained silent.

After a while, the grape seller said, "Why do you not talk?"

"We already talked. I talked for a bunch of grapes."

"Well, if you say something else, I shall give you another bunch of grapes," said the man.

Bir Dane said, "Do not get into water the bottom of which cannot be seen." On the way after this, there was silence again.

After a while, the man gave Bir Dane another bunch of grapes, and Bir Dane said, "Do not sit in a place from which you will have to rise and move [because a more important guest comes and is given your seat]."

The grape seller gave him another bunch of grapes, and Bir Dane said, "Do not give anyone anything without being asked."

They walked a little longer and Bir Dane said, "Do not say anything about something that does not concern you."

They moved on, and finally reached a road junction. There Bir Dane asked the grape seller, "In which direction will you go?"

"I am going to such-and-such a place," the man said.

Bir Dane said, "And I am going to such-and-such a place."

They bade each other goodbye. Bir Dane noticed that there was a river on the road that the grape seller took. When the grape seller reached the river, he let his donkey go into it to cross it, but the donkey was carried away by the current. He caught the donkey's rope, but feared that he too would be swept away.

He shouted back for help, "O friend--something, something [sic]."

Bir Dane saw his companion in trouble. He went and dragged him from the river. He then invited the man to his house in the village and asked him to be his guest. "You can also sell your grapes there."

They started together again and finally reached a village. After putting down his load, they went to the house where they were to spend

the night as guests. The grape seller went and sat at the most comfortable part of the room--the head corner of the room,\* and Bir Dane sat in a place quite a way below that. The people of that village were quite civilized, like plainsmen [not hill people, which they considered themselves--"We are rough here," Hacı Gönen had said earlier]. Visitors started arriving, and they themselves sat at a low position while guests were placed in prominent positions in the room. [When new visitors arrived, the older guests made room for the newcomers.] Finally the grape seller found himself in the coal cellar, whereas Bir Dane, who had sat by the door, had not had to move at all.

The next morning, they started their journey again and finally reached Bir Dane's village. Bir Dane took the grape seller to his guest house. He was living in a mansion, of course, with his brother, Harun Reşid. He left him in a guest room and took care of his animals for him [unharnessed them] and said, "You will stay here." He brought him food and this and that, and left the grape seller in a room all by himself, after serving him.

In the next room, however, there were important guests of Harun Reşid, and between the rooms there was a window. When Bir Dane was out, the grape seller watched, through the window, the important guests dining. Finally a melon was brought and placed in the middle of the table. As none of the guests had a knife to cut the melon, they started searching for one. When a knife could not be found, the grape seller drew his knife and threw it through the window to the important guests in the room. It stuck into the knee of one of them.

\*In the men's parlor of a Turkish home there is usually one large, well-upholstered and amply cushioned sofa or divan that is the best seat. It is the center of attention, quite often across the room from the entrance. Other seats, chairs, and cushions are grouped around it or faced toward it.

"There is someone over there," they said. "This is a strange knife."

"Exactly! Remember the robbing of the treasury some time ago? This knife was in the treasury. Let us convict the owner of this knife. Search for him."

They came and found the man in the room. Bir Dane was not there at the moment. They ordered the man, "Sit down."

He did. They started taking evidence.

"Where did you get this knife?"

Bir Dane came and saw what was happening. They told Bir Dane about it.

"No, you cannot do this to him. He is my guest," said Bir Dane.

Finally they decided that Bir Dane should teach the grape seller how to behave, and they delivered him to Bir Dane. Bir Dane took him to his quarters and said, "Grape seller, we shall go to the stable with you."

They went to the stable, and Bir Dane took a stick in his hand.

"Oh, grape seller, you donkey! Once we traveled together. You asked me to talk, and I gave you a lot of advice in return for grapes. You completely forgot the things I told you. Now you have experienced all the things I warned you about. You big donkey, did I not tell you that when you met a man you should ask his name, his village, and the names of his people? When I met you, I asked your name, the name of your village, and your trade, and I stopped. But why did you not ask me such questions? Then you became stuck in the water, without even mentioning my name--just calling me 'Man!' You big donkey!" and he struck the man. "Then, you big donkey, you came to the village where you were accepted as a guest, and I had told you not to sit in a position from which you would have to arise, but you sat at the place for most prominent guests, and when other guests arrived, you had to keep changing your place until you finally ended in the coal cellar. Did I not tell you not to sit in a place from which you would have to

rise? You big donkey! Did I not tell you not to give anything in your possession unless someone asked for it? You threw your knife from where you were without being asked for it. Now, they say, this is one of the missing items from the treasury which was broken into some time ago. What will you tell them now? Here is what you will tell them: 'My father used to be a bezirgan, and one day he was robbed by thieves. When my father resisted them, he was stabbed, and when his body was found, this knife was stuck in his belly. When I heard the news, I went and removed the knife from my father's corpse, and in such a gathering, whoever claims this knife must be the murderer of my father. I demand the price of my father's death from him.' You big donkey!"

In the morning, the court met. After many questions, the man gave the account taught to him by Bir Dane, and he was acquitted.

*acquitted*