

Story #260 (Tape #8, Summer 1970) Narrator: Ibrahim Gürsoy

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The Carpenter and the Silversmith

(Narrator: What can we tell you? We are not educated, and if we do know a few things, we cannot remember what it was.

Ahmet Uysal: We do not want anything from educated people.

There were also other passing comments not caught in translation.)

Once there was and once there was not, once there were a silversmith and a carpenter in the city [sic] of Azerbaijan. These two were on very good terms and visited each other informally. But one day a drought started in their city and life became very difficult. They wondered where they could go and finally decided to go to the land of Rum [Anatolia]. These two men knew Bible knowledge. They dressed as Rum people [i.e., as Christian Greeks]. The carpenter made idols of wood which the silversmith decorated with metal. They sold these and set up a business in these things

In Istanbul they went to the church of Aya Sofia and there saw an idol made of gold. It was a magnificently beautiful idol. They wondered how they could steal that idol. They thought it would be good capital for them. They tried to find a way of stealing it. They worked day and night in a spiritual state of mind i.e., worked hard to look spiritual. The (other) priests who saw them there had great respect for them. One day the Kaiser, the Byzantine Emperor, gave a banquet on the Çirpici Çayırı.* The banquet was to last for three days. The priests came and told the silversmith and the carpenter of this banquet and invited them to go there

*Çirpici Çayırı --grassy meadow, literally, is a park along the Golden Horn, a fashionable place for holiday promenading.

They said that they would have nothing to do with the Emperor's banquet. Their only object was to worship in the church and to reach God. The other priests took leave of them and went to the banquet while they remained in the church. When everyone was gone, the silversmith and the carpenter stole the idol and took it and buried it somewhere and later returned to the church and kept at their usual work and worship. When the priests returned from the banquet three days later, they saw that the idol was missing. They said, "Our idol is missing. I wonder where it has gone?"

The two friends said to the priest, "You have forgotten your spiritual duties and have gone to take pleasure and so the idol took leave of you. We believe that one day it will return in great anger. When it does return, nobody will be able to stand its fury, and so we do not want to stay here longer. We fear the anger of the idol."

They left the church. Then they dug up the idol and took it. Finally one day they reached Azerbaijan. They agreed to store the golden idol in the shop of the silversmith and then come there and cut off a piece of it whenever they needed money. But the silversmith, in whose shop the idol was being kept, thought to himself, "This idol was not given me after being weighed. I can tell the carpenter one day that it is finished."

The carpenter came one day after that and said, "Let us sell some more of that golden idol. I have run out of money."

"The idol is finished," said the silversmith.

The carpenter knew that the silversmith was lying and that the idol was not used up. But he said, "Well, let us hope God will give us another one," and left the shop. The carpenter was thinking of a plan to get even with the silversmith. He went into the forest and caught two bear cubs.

Story #260

He had a deep cellar dug in his back yard. He built a statue exactly in the likeness of the silversmith and put it against the wall in the bottom of the cellar and tied the bear cubs near by. He trained the bear cubs to come and get their food from where the statue was. He then hid the bear cubs in a room and, just like old times, he invited the silversmith to his house. As they were on very familiar terms, the silversmith brought along his two children. They ate and drank together, and then the silversmith said, "I must go to my shop. See that my children get home safely."

"All right," said the carpenter.

When the silversmith had gone, the carpenter hid the children in a room--locked them in. When the silversmith reached home, he waited for his children, but they had not come. He went out and began to walk toward the carpenter's house hoping to meet the children on the way. When he could not find them, he wondered if they had taken a different road, and so he returned by way of another road. He was very angry with his carpenter friend, who had not kept his word. The children were lost. He went to the court and sued the carpenter.

The judge said to the carpenter, "What did you do with this man's children?"

The carpenter explained "Sir, his two children were turned into bear cubs and they are at home in my house. Such things do happen.

The judge said, "I am surprised. How can human beings turn into animals? Let me go and take a look

[One sentence unintelligible at this point]

The judge and the two men went to look at the bear cubs. When the cubs saw the silversmith, they ran to him. "It is amazing! They ran to none of us but to the silversmith. There must be your children," the carpenter said to the silversmith.

Segue

The judge gave the verdict: "Death for the silversmith [or, the case is ended]. They are your children."

After the judge had gone, the silversmith begged the carpenter, "Please do not ridicule me before the public in this way. The idol is with me, intact. Return my children and you may have the idol as it is

He went and brought the idol and took the children back to the carpenter.