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Story #272 (Tape #13, 1961-62

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Thirty-Nine Spits and a Goose

A wealthy merchant of Damascus used to send his goods to Baghdad by caravan, and there were forty lesser merchants who traveled with his caravans for the protection they provided. Once the caravan was plundered by a large band of ^{thieve} robbers, and the owner, suspecting it was the fault of his caravan leader, bought a huge slave in the marketplace and made him the new leader. He paid 5000 liras for this brave man and armed him well and made him the chief driver of all the camels and horses and mules.

On the next trip, two or three days' journey toward Baghdad, the caravan was attacked by thieves, and many of them began to plunder the merchandise. Much to the surprise of the forty merchants, the caravan leader did nothing about this but appeared quite unperturbed. When they saw their goods being carried off with no effort on the part of the leader to save any of it, these merchants passed in front of this man and spat in his face. Still the slave did not move, until the fortieth merchant not only spat in his face but also goosed him. When this happened, the caravan leader started up, drew his sword, and rushed upon the bandits. He killed many of them and the rest fled, dropping their loot as they went. Almost all of the goods were recovered.

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When they returned to Damascus, one of the lesser merchants went to the owner of the caravan and said to him, "By God, that caravan leader you bought is worth not only the 5,000 liras you paid for him but even 10,000 liras!"

"Why do you say that?" asked the owner

Then the merchant told the owner the whole story in every detail and ended by saying, "He rescued almost all of your goods and ours too

Early the next morning the caravan owner called the chief driver to him and had him handcuffed. He then took him to the marketplace and there sold him at auction. One of the lesser merchants from the caravan happened along and was amazed "Why are you selling this fine slave?" he asked. "Hasn't anyone told you what wonderful service he gave you--dispersing a whole band of thieves, killing many of them, and thus saving your entire caravan?"

"I know, I know," answered the owner, "but how can I depend on always having along thirty-nine who will spit in his face and a fortieth who will also goose him?"