Once upon a time there was an old woman who had a son by the name of Ahmet. The old woman knitted socks every day, and her son sold them for forty paras\(^1\) a pair. Ahmet sold the socks every day. One day, on his way to the village market Ahmet ran across an old man with a dog. The old man was beating the poor animal.

"Why are you beating this helpless animal? What harm has he done to you?" Ahmet asked.

"He's a mischievous animal, my son," answered the old man. "He doesn't obey me. I chase him out of my house; I beat him, but he insists on staying."

"Would you sell him to me if you don't want him?" asked Ahmet.

"I would," replied the old man. "I don't care how much money you can pay me."

"All I have is forty paras. Is it enough?"

"Yes, it is," was the old man's answer.

So Ahmet bought the dog and took him home to his mother. His mother had been anxiously waiting for him; she was hungry ("Aç, susuz etmeyordu," which, literally, means she had been sitting without food and water).

"Did you sell the socks, Ahmet?" she asked.

\(^1\)The **para**, 1/40 of a **kurus**, has long been too small a unit of money to be used in modern inflation. It survives in the language, however. **Kaç para?** (literally, **how many paras?**) means "How much does it cost?"
"Yes, I did."

"Then what did you do with the money?"

"I bought this dog with it," answered Ahmet.

"What am I to do with a dog? We don't have enough food to feed ourselves. How can we feed this dog?"

Ahmet answered, "We'll find a way. I pitied the poor animal, so I bought him."

The next day the old woman knitted another pair of socks. She forewarned her son: "When you sell these socks, bring the money directly to me. Don't buy anything with it." This time Ahmet sold the socks for two kurus.\(^2\) He bought bread and food with the money but had forty paras left over. On his way back home he again met the old man. This time he was beating a cat.

"Why are you beating the poor animal?" Ahmet asked.

"I don't want him in my house. I tried chasing him out and scaring him away from my house without any success. I can hardly feed myself. I don't want this mischievous animal in my house," answered the old man. Feeling sorry for the cat, Ahmet bought him from the old man for forty paras.

The following day his mother again sent Ahmet to the market to sell the socks she had knitted. Ahmet, however, did not go directly to the market. Instead, he started loitering [in the forest or the fields,\(^3\)]

He saw a huge rock which had two holes big enough for a snake to hide in.

\(^2\)The kurus is a unit of coinage still used in Turkey. There are one hundred kurus to the Turkish lira.

\(^3\)The location of the rock is not given; we have supplied "in the forest or in the fields."
in. Suddenly he saw two snakes come out of the holes. They talked to each other for a while; they parted and each started to go its own way. One of the snakes, the white one, was the wife of the Padishah of Snakes, and the other, the black one, was the padishah's enemy and the lover of his wife. Ahmet aimed his arrow at the black snake, but it also wounded the white snake. She dragged her wounded body through the hole in the rock and disappeared.

The next day the Padishah of Snakes assigned criers to announce the news and to determine who had done this deed. "Whoever has done this deed will be rewarded by the Padishah of Snakes," they shouted.

In the meantime Ahmet went home and gave the forty paras to his mother. By this time he had heard the announcement. He said to his mother, "I'll go and confess the truth. I have nothing to fear. If they decide to execute me, it won't make any difference. A poor man's life is worthless."

Two snakes came to Ahmet's house and took him to the Padishah of Snakes.

"Are you the man who wounded the white snake?" asked the padishah.

"Yes, I am," replied Ahmet. "You may kill [or wound] me if you like. As I was walking, I saw two snakes come out of the holes in the black rock. When I saw them courting, I didn't find the black snake worthy of the white snake, so I wanted to shoot him down with my arrow."

"What is your wish? How can I reward you?" asked the padishah.

Ahmet remembered what the two snakes that brought him to the padishah had told him to do if the padishah asked this question: to ask for his

4The announcement actually reads thus: "Her kim bu işi yaparsa gelsin bana söylesin. Dünyalığını vereyim ahiterine karşımayım." --Literally this means "I want the man who has done this deed to come and see me. I want to settle worldly matters with him, though I can do nothing concerning matters of the afterlife."
seal (mühür). Therefore, he asked for the seal.

The padishah was reluctant to give his seal to a human being, since he had promised to grant Ahmet's wish, he gave the seal, saying, "Take this. It will deliver you out of trouble when you need it."

Ahmet put the seal in his pocket and returned home. His mother began to complain, "You haven’t sold the socks today; so we don’t have any food to eat."

Ahmet answered calmly, "I had my own business to take care of."

He then licked the seal which the Padishah of Snakes had given him, and a huge Arab appeared. Ahmet and his mother were both terrified at the sight of this black giant.

"Shall I create or destroy?" asked the Arab.

Ahmet told his wish: "My mother and I are hungry. Bring us some food." The Arab disappeared and came back with food fit for a king. On the table he set for them, all the platters, plates, knives, forks, spoons, and cups were gold. The splendor of the table was beyond human imagination.

After the feast, Ahmet’s mother said, "God bless you, son. How did this miracle happen?"

Ahmet replied, "Enjoy the grapes. Don’t ask about the vineyard they come from."

From that day on, the Arab brought food to Ahmet and his mother whenever Ahmet licked the seal. Whatever they wanted was granted. One day

5 Peasant narrators commonly use here the expression "Yapak mı, yikak mı?" instead of the more formal "Yapalım mı, yikalım mı?"

6 This is a literal translation of the Turkish saying "Üzümünü ye, bağını sorma."
Ahmet licked the seal, and the Arab appeared to wait on him. As usual, the giant asked, "Shall we create or destroy?"

Ahmet said, "I want you to build for me a palace which will surpass padishah's palace in beauty and splendor."

His wish was granted immediately. The palace which the Arab built for Ahmet was indescribable in its beauty and grandeur. People flocked to it to admire its beauty.

One day Ahmet said to his mother, "I want to marry the padishah's daughter. I won't marry any other girl. Go tell the padishah that I want to marry his daughter."

"How can I dare do such a thing!" exclaimed the mother. "I don't even know whether or not the padishah has a single daughter at a marriageable age."

"He does," Ahmet answered.

The old woman went to the padishah's palace, put down the chair she had with her in front of the door, and started waiting. One of the attendants came to her and said, "I don't think you really want to sit here. This is the padishah's palace."

"I know where I am," answered the old woman. "I came to tell the padishah that my son wants to marry his daughter."

The attendant informed the padishah about his strange visitor and about the purpose of the visit. The padishah said, "Show her in."

When the old woman found herself in the padishah's presence, she said, "Through the will of God and the permission of the Prophet I have come to ask for the hand of your daughter in marriage to my son."

The padishah consulted his wife. He said, "This young man, Ahmet, 

The mother here uses the conventional expression of the düner or matchmaker in Turkey: "Allah n emri, Peygamberin kavliyle."
seems to be a good person. I have inquired about him. I understand he is very wealthy. Would you approve of our daughter's marrying him?

The sultana answered, "If you find the match suitable, I shall not object to it."

The young sultana, the padishah's daughter, did not seem to have an interest in earthly possessions. Her most cherished possession, however, was a chest, which she always kept in her room and guarded carefully. When her father asked, "Now that you are going to marry Ahmet, what would you like to have as a wedding gift, besides your dowry? Anything you want shall be granted," the girl answered, "All I want is the chest in my room. I don't want anything else."

[At this point, the narrator relates the ceremonies that took place before the wedding. She describes these ceremonies in two sentences; however, we missed too many words out of this hurried account to be able to give a close translation. We believe, the padishah has, in his daughter's honor, festivities which last for forty days and nights before his daughter's dowry is moved to Ahmet's palace.]

It took two strong men to lift the chest and put it in a cart drawn by oxen. The chest was so big and heavy that nothing else could be put on that cart. It was placed in the bridal chamber in Ahmet's palace.

Then the wedding, which lasted for forty days and forty nights, took place. Not only were multitudes of people entertained, but the poor were fed and dressed. The wedding occasioned a general celebration in the whole country.

The chest that the padishah's daughter treasured was actually the hiding place of her lover [ownas]. Shortly after the wedding, the young
sultana and her lover, who was a köse, were discussing the mystery about
Ahmet's incredible wealth. She said, "Whenever he wants something, he
makes a strange gesture, and has his wish granted. I believe he possesses
a magic object. Let us steal this magic object from him and go away from
this place."

The sultana was determined to learn Ahmet's secret. When he came
home that night, she said, "Ahmet, I hope you love me as much as I love
you. If you do love me, you must tell me all your secrets. What is the
secret of your wealth?"

"Well, padishah's daughter," answered Ahmet, "enjoy the grapes, and
don't ask about the vineyard they come from. I am sly, undependable.
Therefore, I do not trust my secrets with anybody, though you are my
wife and I am your husband."

"You can trust me," said the padishah's daughter.

"In that case," said Ahmet, "the secret of my wealth is this seal." He
took the seal out of his pocket and showed it to his wife. "See this
seal. Whenever I lick it an Arab appears to wait on me. He gives me
whatever I want." After Ahmet left for work the next day, the padishah's
daughter opened her chest and let out the köse. She told him Ahmet's
secret.

"How can we get the seal from him?" asked the köse.

"I don't know. But it won't be easy, for it is sewed onto the gold
button in his shirt pocket."

One day when Ahmet changed his shirt to have it laundered, he forgot
to get the magic seal out of his pocket. Thus his wife finally got her
hands on the seal. She ran to her chest and said, "Köse, Köse, I've got
good news for you. I've finally got the seal."
Then the köse licked the seal, and an Arab appeared to wait on him. He asked the usual question, "Shall we create or destroy?" The köse answered, "I want you to transport this palace to an island in the middle of the seven seas."

When the padishah's daughter and the köse found themselves on the island, she said, "Now that we have escaped from Ahmet, you should think of a way to kill him."

When their palace was transported, Ahmet and his mother found themselves in the poverty of their old cottage. It was like the old days when the mother had to knit socks for a living—cold, barren, and dilapidated. They did not have any food to eat.

"This is my wife's doing," said Ahmet. "I foolishly told her the secret of the seal."

"Didn't I tell you not to trust anybody with your secrets, son?" reprimanded his mother. "Man is sly, undependable."

The cat and the dog Ahmet had bought from the old man wanted to return their master's kindness. They could speak the human tongue. The dog said to the cat, "Do you know what happened to our master? He trusted his wife with his secret, and as soon as she got her hands on the seal, she and her lover had themselves carried to an island in the middle of the seven seas. Do you know where this island is?"

"I did not know about our master's misfortune, but I know where the island is," answered the cat.

"Can we go there?"

"Yes, we can."

"However, there is a problem," said the dog. "Although I can swim,
you cannot. Maybe we can both get there if I carried you. You can get
in the palace easily, but they will not let me in.8

When the animals explained their plan to Ahmet, he decided to go
with them. He told his mother, "I am going away with the cat and the dog.
Do not neglect to knit socks. I shall sell them when I come back."

Ahmet and the two animals traveled over hill, over dale, for six
months and throughout the season of fall,9 and finally reached the shores
of the sea in which the island was located. From where they stood they
could see the palace on the island. The dog got in the water, and the
cat sat on his head. After hours of swimming, they reached the island
while the dog stayed on the shore to rest, the cat went to the palace
and started looking for an entrance into the building. She managed to
get in without being detected.

when the köse saw the cat in the palace, however, he said to the
padishah's daughter, "Where did this cat come from? Let us get rid of
it."

"No, let us keep it," she answered. "It won't do us any harm. It
will entertain us." Thus the cat stayed at the palace for several days.

One day the köse put the seal on a table and admired it, saying,
"This little seal has done great wonders. I am sure it will continue
serving us in the future." Soon afterwards guests arrived10 at the

8Few Turks keep a dog in the house. Although cats are favorite pets,
dogs are considered to be filthy animals and are not kept in the house.
Therefore, Ahmet's dog rightly thinks that it will be easier for the cat
to steal into the palace without being noticed.

9This is the literal translation of the conventional expression in Turkish
which most story tellers use, "Az gitti, uz gitti, dere tepe düz gitti,
altı ay bir güz gitti."

10In a highly gregarious society where social calls are a frequent cause of
interruption, the narrator overlooks the unlikelihood of having guests
drop in at a palace on an island in the sea.
palace, and the köse forgot the seal on the table. While the daughter of the padishah and the köse were entertaining their company, the cat got the seal and sneaked out of the palace. When the cat reached the shore where the dog had been waiting, he said, "My friend, let us get immediately. You get in the water, and I'll get on your back."

However, the dog said, "All right, you get on my back, but give the to me. I want to be the one to return it to Ahmet. I want him to pat my head as a reward."

"That is not a very good idea," the cat replied. "You are extremely talkative; you cannot help barking all the time. You cannot keep the seal in your mouth. It will fall in the water when you open your mouth to bark."

"If you do not give me the seal," the dog said, "I'll leave you in the middle of the water to drown."

"In that case, you may carry the seal," the cat agreed.

In the meantime, Ahmet had been waiting for them anxiously. He had an old coat to keep him warm in the cold of the night. As the animals were approaching the shore where Ahmet was waiting for them, a fish came to the surface of the water. Being amazed to see the fish swimming so close to the surface of the water, the dog opened his mouth to make a comment. The seal fell out of his mouth, and the fish swallowed it.

Ahmet later hired some men to dive and catch the fish. When he recovered the seal, he got the cat under one arm and the dog under the other, and patted both of them on the head. He then said, "Mother, the cat and the dog served us well. An act of humanity finds its reward someday."
Then he licked the seal, and the Arab appeared and asked the question, Shall we create or destroy?"

"I want you to carry back the palace on the island to where it belongs," Ahmet demanded.

At once they found themselves in the palace back in Ahmet's village. The daughter of the padishah and the köse were discovered to be sleeping in the same bed. When Ahmet awakened them, the wife said, "Have mercy on us, Ahmet. I would rather die than give up my köse."

Ahmet sent messengers to the padishah and requested him to come to the palace. Ahmet offered to provide carriages or do whatever the padishah wanted so that he would take the trouble of coming to Ahmet's palace.

The padishah said good-naturedly to the messengers, "Why does Ahmet worry about my failing to come? After all, he is my son-in-law and it will give me great pleasure to go to his palace.

When the padishah arrived, Ahmet took him to the bedroom where his wife and the köse were found sleeping together. Ahmet told the padishah how the young sultana had betrayed him. Then he said, "Now, you be the judge. You may punish your daughter if you wish, or you may punish me."

The padishah chose to execute the köse first. Then he said to Ahmet, "I give you leave to kill your wife." Ahmet refused and even begged the padishah to spare her life. The padishah, however, was injured and felt disgraced. He said, "Now I understand why she insisted on taking the chest with her." Afterwards, he had his own daughter executed. Before he left he said to Ahmet, "I wish you happiness with another woman. Farewell."

After their troubles were over, Ahmet and his mother continued to live the comfortable life they had enjoyed before Ahmet's marriage.