

Story #359 (Not on tape)

Informants: Children at Ayşe Abla İlkokulu

Narrator: Neriman Hızır (Ayşe Abla)

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Nasreddin Hodja and the Third Shot

One day as Nasreddin Hodja was chatting with the Emperor Tamerlane, he chanced to see archers practicing in a nearby field. "Ha! So those are your archers!" he exclaimed. And a reminiscent gleam came into his eye. "Not an archer in that whole field can shoot as well as I," he boasted. "In my youth, I was champion archer of this whole area of Turkey."

"Hmm," murmured Tamerlane. "Champion, eh? Well, if you were champion, you can certainly teach my men something. Come along. I was just about to ride out and inspect the practice."

At this, the Hodja began to tremble. In truth, he was no archer at all, and never had been. But to boast before the great Tamerlane and then fail to make good on one's boast could be a very expensive mistake. Deeply regretting his rash statement, the Hodja mounted his little gray donkey and trotted out after the Emperor to the field.

Calling his men to him, Tamerlane bade them attend closely, for they were to receive an archery lesson from a real champion. The Hodja was then given a bow and three arrows, and motioned to position.

In an effort to gain time, the Hodja gravely studied the target. By Allah, he could barely see it! He shook his head thoughtfully.

"If I had only remembered to practice what I so often preach to my students:

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