

Story #363 (Not on Tape)

Informants: Children at Ayşe Abla İlkokulu

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It Is All in Knowing How

One day the ^{NH}Hodja went with a group of friends for a picnic along a little river near the village. While some of the group set out the food for the meal, the Hodja and three or five others removed their outer clothing and splashed about in the cool water. Suddenly a great splash was heard, followed by a loud cry and then an ominous silence.

"It's the tax collector!" shouted the Hodja. "He has fallen into the water."

"But he cannot swim!" Quickly the beckche, the village watchman, swam toward the spot where the tax collector had last been seen. As soon as the tax collector's head appeared again above the water, the beckche called, "Give me your hand, and I'll pull you out."

"Kuk-kuk-kuk," gurgled the tax collector, and under the water he sank.

Once more, as the tax collector's head appeared, the beckche cried, "Quick, quick, give me your hand so that I may save you!"

"Kuk-kuk-kuk," gurgled the tax collector weakly, and down he sank.

For the third time the head appeared above the water, with a "Kuk-kuk-kuk!" Just as the drowning man began to sink again, the Hodja cried, "Take my hand!" Immediately the tax collector reached out, and the Hodja pulled him ashore.

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As soon as the tax collector had gasped and recovered his breath, the others crowded around the Hodja. "Tell us, Hodja. How could you manage to save him when the beckche couldn't?"

"It's all in knowing how," the Hodja said gravely. "The tax collector is a man who has taken all his life; he would not willingly give anything, even his hand to save himself from drowning!"