

Story #403 (Tape #4, 1972)

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Napoleon¹ and a French Private Suffer Together

There was once a great military commander of France named Napoleon. Once during wartime he was inspecting the front lines when he found a private asleep when he was on guard duty. Napoleon took the soldier's rifle while he was asleep and hid it behind a tree. Then he awakened the private, who was greatly disturbed at not being able to find his rifle.

Napoleon said, "I have a proposal for you."

"Yes, sir," the private said.

"I will pardon you for this failure of duty only if you defecate and then eat your own excrement."

"Please, sir, do not give me that order."

But Napoleon was firm about it, and so the soldier had to carry out the order. "You really should be punished much more severely," said Napoleon.

When Napoleon gave him back his rifle, the soldier grabbed it

¹The narrator pronounced Napoleon throughout as Naparlon. At an earlier time in Turkish history, there was a very great influence from France and French culture, just as, subsequently, German and then American cultures became influential. Peasants have a few very vague ideas about the French.

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and pointed it at the commander. "Now," he said, "you are going to do just what you have made me do." What could Napoleon do under those circumstances but obey?

Afterwards Napoleon thought to himself, "That private must really be a very courageous man. He should probably be promoted." So, he wrote a letter to the officer in command of the soldier's company recommending promotion.

There was a great deal of excitement in the soldier's unit over this recommendation. "What did you do for Napoleon that he should reward you in this way?" they asked.

"Do not meddle with things that are none of your business," the soldier replied. "Let us say simply that Napoleon and I are old friends who have eaten a lot of dirt together."

Emphatic