

Story #441 (Tape #2, 1972)

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Ürgüp, Province of
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The Sheik of Baghdad and His Disciple

Once there lived a sheik at Baghdad. A disciple wished to win the favor of this man, and so he set out on foot to visit this sheik.

"Selâmünaleyküm," said the sheik.

"Aleykümselâm," replied the disciple.¹

"What is it that you want?" asked the sheik.

"I should like to work here near you," said the disciple.

"All right," said the sheik. "Where are you from?"

Now, let us suppose that he answers, "I am from Ürgüp."

"Well what are the things that are grown there?"

"Grapes, -----, and ----- grow there."²

"Well, should you not have brought a gift when coming to visit Flower Hasan? Get out of here!"

The disciple set out again on the road in order to return to his home. When he came to a river, he decided to stop there and eat. While sitting there eating, he saw a green frog jump out of the water. The frog began singing, and the disciple fell in love with his song. The disciple waited for a long time to hear the frog sing again, but the

¹ Usually the person arriving says Selâmünaleyküm.

² There are two lost words in this line.

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frog never came out of the water again. A fire consumed him from within, and he decided to return to the sheik, burning within, and greeted him again.

"What is your trouble?" asked the sheik.

"Efendim, I do not want your favor or anything else. Such-and-such a thing has happened to me. While I was sitting eating, a green frog jumped out of the water and started singing. I fell in love with its voice. Help me to get rid of this problem."

now you have brought me a gift," said the sheik. "Now you are able to do work within."

He worked near the sheik for about six months, and at the end of that time, he asked, "Now that I have worked here so long, will you give me permission to leave?"

"Very well," said the sheik. "Your grandmother has cooked mantı.³ Take it to the underground tavern in Istanbul and give it to them [presumably the people who operate the tavern]."

the love of Allah I cannot do this, Efendim. There is a sea in the way, and there are this and that obstacle."

"Take this piece of paper," said the sheik, "and when you come to a river or a sea, take it out of your purse. Everything in your trip will be made smooth for you."⁴

The disciple went to the site of the underground tavern and descended into it. He saw a drunk sleeping between two barrels, his one eye not

³ Mantı is a pastry containing meat.

⁴ Is this a muska or some other amulet?

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knowing where the other one looked.⁵ He approached and greeted him.

"Efendim, Flower Hasan sends his greetings to you from Baghdad."

"Oh-h-h, aleykûmselâm!"

"He sends this as a gift to you. Here--take it."

"Allright," said the man. To his servants he said, "Fill some wine bottles for him."

"I do not drink wine. It is a sin for us to do that."

"Drink," said the man, but the disciple did not drink anything.

"All right, then," said the man, and he emptied the bohça⁶ and gave it back to the disciple.

The disciple returned to Baghdad. When he arrived there, the sheik asked him, "Well, what happened to you?"

"I went where you sent me, and I delivered the gift," said the disciple.

"And did you drink wine there?" asked the sheik.⁷

⁵ This is an expression to characterize a drunken person. He is pictured as being wall-eyed.

⁶ A bohça is a large, square piece of cloth used to wrap up bundles. People going to the bath, for example, wrap their clogs, towels, and bathrobes in a bohça.

⁷ Unfortunately the punch line of this account is missing. There was some slippage of the tape at this critical point. Laughter among the audience would suggest that there was some witticism of the type for which the Bektashis are famous. If such is the case, then this may be an anticlerical tale.