

Story #548 (1973 Tape #6)

Narrator: Emine Coşkun, in 70s

Location: Taped in Ankara but narrator is from Bayburt, a kaza town of Gümüşhane Province

Date: 1973

Why Emanetçi Baba Danced

A poor man worked for two or three years in order to amass enough money to take a trip to İstanbul. "What a beautiful city İstanbul is," he said, "but what shall I do to protect this money of mine? I am afraid to carry it around with me."

An acquaintance pointed out a sign to him. "Look, there is a baggage-checking place over there."

I cannot read or write," the man said.

His acquaintance took him to the place and said, "Here is Emanetçi Baba's place."¹

They walked through the door saying, "Salâmünaleyküm."

"Aleykümselâm."

"Emanetçi Baba, they say that you are a very virtuous man. I have found İstanbul a very pleasant city. I have some money with me, and I want to know if you will take care of it for me."

"Of course, my son, of course--right away. Leave it with your own hand and pick it up with your own hand. Just leave it over there. You do not even have to count it."

"May Allah bless you, hoca efendi!² What a good man you are!"

¹ Emanet is anything entrusted; emanetmek means to entrust. An Emanetçi keeps a storage shop for baggage and other small items.

² Hoca means either priest or teacher, and efendi is a mild honorific equivalent to Sir. But a baggage keeper is not a hoca in any sense of that word. The peasant, confused, is simply trying to say something complimentary.

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He took out enough money to last for three days--whether ten liras a day or not I do not know. Then he went out and wandered about İstanbul for two or three days. By then he had run out of money, and so he returned to Emanetçi Baba and said, "Hoca efendi, Emanetçi Baba!"

"What is the matter?"

"Emanetçi Baba, will you give me back my deposit?"

"Are you out of your mind? Go away, son. Are you crazy? This is İstanbul. What do I have to do with your money? Off you go!"

"Please do not do this, Emanetçi Baba; please do not!"

"I shall report you to the police! Get out!"

The poor man left and going to the wall of a house nearby, he sat down and began to cry, "Höngür, ^{woman} höngür,"³ loudly. His arms were locked before him on his chest.

The lady of that mansion looked out the window. She asked, "What is the matter with you?"

"Do not ask, woman. My trouble is deep."

"Well, let us hear about your trouble so that we may find a remedy for it," she said.

"Well, it is such-and-such. They took me to a man named Emanetçi Baba, but now he will not give it back to me."

"If I can get that money back for you, would you stay here like this [crying] for twenty-four hours?"

"Lady, I would not stay even twenty minutes, let alone twenty-four hours."

³ Onomatopoeia for sobbing.

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She called her maid servant to her and spoke to her and to the poor man. "Look here. I shall now go to Emanetçi Baba's place. Five minutes after I get there you [the man] come there in order to get your money. Then you, girl, come in a few minutes later."

She then changed her clothes, Tying up all of her gold [jewels] in a handkerchief, she went to Emanetçi Baba's and knocked gently on the door, "Tik, tik!" She said, "Emanetçi Baba, my husband has gone on a long journey. I cannot trust anyone but you. Will you keep my jewels for me while he is gone?"

"Oh, of course, my daughter. Please come in and put them wherever you wish."

She opened the handkerchief and started counting her jewels slowly. Just as she had finished counting them, the poor man came in saying, "Emanetçi Baba!"

"Yes, son?"

"Emanetçi Baba, I left my money here. Will you return it to me now?"

"Oh, of course, son. Here it is. I have not even touched it. Just take it back again."

The man took the money, very pleased, and put it inside his shirt. The lady had just stopped counting her jewels again when her maid entered saying, "Mother, good news! Your husband has returned."

"Oh, Emanetçi Baba, there is no need now for me to leave my jewelry. My husband has returned."

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The Emanetçi Baba was surprised at this, but he said, "Do not go away yet. We shall all dance here before you go."

"All right," she said.

The lady stood first in the line of dancers, then her maid, next the poor man, and last Emanetçi Baba. They began dancing and jumping up and down. The lady said, "Emanetçi Baba, I am dancing because I am pleased at the return of my husband. This hamal⁴ is dancing because of the return of his lost money. This maid is dancing because she will receive a reward of one golden lira. But why are you dancing?"

Emanetçi Baba answered, "I am dancing because though I am seventy-five years old, I have never before in my life seen such a piece of business!"

⁴ Hamal means porter, but since porters in Turkey are usually the poorest and hardest-working laborers, the term is sometimes used loosely to indicate any poor urban peasant.