

Story #551 (1974 Tape #10)

Narrator: Talibî Coşkun, 76, folk poet and former heavy-weight wrestler

Location: Taped in Ankara, but narrator is from Tonus village, kaza of Şarkışla, Province of Sivas

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The Student Carries Three Livers

In the fifteenth or sixteenth century there was a wealthy man who valued learning highly. He took his son to Istanbul to be educated. The teachers and the mufti¹ in Istanbul asked the boy's age, and they then said that they could not accept him.

"But I shall pay you whatever you ask," said the man.

They then said, "All right." But they sent the boy to the market with directions to buy three livers and carry them back without letting them touch each other.

The boy at the market took a liver in each hand, but how was he to carry the third? He could not put it on top of his head or in his bosom, for he was supposed to carry the three without letting them touch. Had it not been for that, he would have put the three in a basket and taken them back like that. Finally, the boy carried the third liver in his mouth. While he was walking along thus with three livers--one in his mouth and one in each hand--people shouted, "Look, look! A dog!" They started chasing him, shouting, "Hay, hay, hay, hay!"

The boy heard them, but he ignored them, delivering the livers where he was supposed to. He told his examiners that he had been stoned along the way. They were impressed with his performance, said he would one day be a great man, and admitted him to the medrese.² He grew up

¹ A senior Moslem priest in any area.

² A Moslem theological school in pre-Republican Turkey.

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to assume a very high position.

Our old masters used to say, "An educated man must have a humble heart." Even if a teacher or hoca³ addresses him harshly, he should be silent and behave like the boy who carried the livers. He should have no pride in him. We had an old teacher by the name of Hasan Efendi at Sivas who used to give us such advice all the time.

³ A Moslem priest and/or teacher. In pre-Republican Turkey, the same person filled both positions.