

Story #552 (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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Sultan Mahmut Rewards the Poor and Inquires About Their Mysterious Behavior

Sultan Mahmut was in the habit of disguising himself as a dervish and going about the city looking for poor people, toward whom he was very sympathetic. In one of his outings of this kind he met several people whom he had taken to his palace in his carriage.

On the way to the palace he observed in the street a man who kept saying, "Tıkandı, tıkandı." He said to a servant, "Take him along, too." He then saw another man ascending and descending a minaret, laughing as he went up and crying as he came down. He climbed laughing and clapping his hands, but he came down weeping. Mahmut ordered that he be taken along too.

When they reached the palace, the sultan's astrologers saw to it that their tongues were unlocked.¹ They questioned the man who kept saying "Tıkandı" all the time: "You continue to say 'Tıkandı.' What do you mean by that?" Inasmuch as he had now ceased being otherwise mute, he was asked to explain this.

"I used to be a great merchant," he began, "but I lost all of my fortune. Although I resorted to thousands of ways to regain my wealth --visiting rich agas and searching for treasure--it was all in vain. Then I started sleeping for dreams."² In one of my dreams I saw myself

¹ There is no indication as to how astrologers made people loquacious. These "star-gazers" were, of course, reputed to have supernatural powers.

² In the Islamic world people seek answers to their problems in dreams. Answers may be rather general, as the one in this tale is, or they may be very specific, as are those which identify the sites of buried treasures.

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what can Mahmut do?"⁵

The man who climbed the minaret laughing and descended it crying had once had a very good voice. It was so good that birds and insects would alight on his shoulder when they heard it. Also, the daughter of Padişah of Fairies had fallen in love with his voice. She gave a bird a message to take to the molla⁶ on the minaret, inviting him to come and visit her. One day when this man had finished chanting the call to prayer, the bird sent to bring him said, "Mount my back." When the man did so, the bird flew to the palace of the Padişah of Fairies, landing by a pool in the garden. When the man saw the daughter of the Padişah of Fairies, he was so enraptured by her beauty that he fainted.

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She wished him to sing a few songs for her. When he came close to her, he embraced her, but she responded, "No! Everything in good time. I do not like such impatient fellows."

"What shall we do then?"

"Be patient!" she said. But the man could not forbear trying again to embrace her. "Such fellows are no good to us!" and she ordered the bird, "Take him back to the minaret and leave him there as you found him."

The bird took him back and left him on the minaret. When this man

⁵ This is a Turkish couplet that is in daily use as a proverb:

"Vermedi mabut,
Ne eylesin Mahmut!"

Mabut is a word used often for an idol or pagan god.

⁶ A molla was a theology student in pre-Republican Turkey. This particular student is serving as muezzin, the man who chants the call to prayer from a minaret.

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found himself alone on the minaret, with both girl and bird gone, he descended weeping and weeping. From that time on, whenever he saw a bird in the sky, he would climb the minaret, clapping his hands and saying, "Hurrah! Hurrah! The bird is coming for me again!" But when he would reach the top and discover that the bird was no longer there, he would come down weeping. --They concluded that this was a man who had pursued pleasure.

At another time the padişah saw a blacksmith working in his shop at night. He had given his wife some money with which to buy a chicken. "Cook it and bring it to me," he said.

The wife cooked the chicken and placed it before him. Then a cat came along and started meowing. It meowed and meowed and meowed, but the man would not give it even a small piece of chicken.

Then the cat started speaking, "Look at that treasure!" The man looked in that direction, and the cat continued, "I shall give you that treasure, which is mine, if you will give me a morsel of meat."

But the man dismissed the cat, saying, "I cannot give you any."

[Professor Uysal ran out of tape at this point, but he planned to return at a later date to complete taping of this tale. As it turned out, unfortunately, the narrator died before arrangements could be made for this second session.]