

Story #610 (1966, Tape #2)

Narrator: Nilüfer Dereli, c. 60,  
housewife

Location: Narrator is from  
Isparta, Isparta Province; taped in Ankara

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The Peasant and the Minaret<sup>1</sup> Seeds

One day a peasant visited Istanbul for the first time. He was greatly surprised by the many minarets of this city. He said to himself, "What a lot of beautiful minarets there are here!"

A man who saw the peasant staring at the minarets with such fascination asked him, "Friend, why are you looking so much at those minarets?"

"Aren't they strange, with their sharp-pointed tops? I wonder why we do not have any of these in my village?"

"I suppose it is because you do not have the seeds for them," the man said.

"Do they grow from seeds?"

"Let us go together," said the man, "and buy some minaret seeds. Take these to your village and sow them, and then you too will have minarets, just like those you see everywhere here." He took the peasant to a seed store where he bought him some carrot seeds. He

<sup>1</sup>The minaret is the tall, tower-like structure alongside a mosque from whose top the call to prayer is made. Great mosques in cities have several tall minarets apiece, some more than 100 feet high. The small mosque in a village often has no minaret, partly because the prayer call does not have to carry to as many people in a small community.

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gave these to the peasant, who was greatly excited at the prospect of growing tall minarets in his own village.

As soon as he returned to his village, the peasant planted the seeds in his garden. He waited and waited for the minarets to grow. After a while some green leaves appeared but there was no sign of minarets. The man at Istanbul had told him the minarets should be fully grown within six months' time, but at the end of the summer they had not even started to grow. He decided to dig up the roots to see what was the matter with them. When he dug up one plant, he found in the ground a carrot half a metre in length. The peasant exclaimed, "Well, that Istanbul man wasn't a liar, after all. I must have planted the seeds upside down."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Although this story is sometimes told about just any naive peasant, as it is here, it is most often told about a Laz. The Lazes, who live along the Black Sea coast, have frequently migrated to Istanbul in search of a better livelihood than can be eked out from the narrow lip of land that runs along between the Black Sea and the coastal mountain range. And so the Laz is frequently the stereotyped country bumpkin who makes all sorts of embarrassing and ridiculous errors when he comes to the metropolis.