

Story 711 (1970 Tape 12)

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Hasan Plucks Three Geese

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In the days of the sultanate, many young men from Anatolia did their military service in Istanbul acting as guards of the property of the padişah of their time. A young man from Anatolia named Hasan was about to be discharged from the army after having served for five or six years. He wondered how he could convince the people of his village when he returned there that he had actually spent so much time as a palace guard in Istanbul. "I know what they will say to me: 'Hasan, you say that you served for many years at the palace of the padişah, but did you ever actually see our padişah?'" He decided that he must somehow manage to see the padişah before he left. At first the attendants at the palace gate refused to admit him into the ruler's presence, but he insisted so long that they finally asked the padişah if he would admit this soldier into his presence. The padişah was willing, and Hasan was admitted.

"Why do you wish to see me?" asked the padişah.

"Sir, I have served at your door for several years. Now that I have completed my military duty, I am about to

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return to my village in Anatolia. If I tell the people there that I served at the palace of the padişah, they may think I am lying. They will probably say, 'You say that you served at the palace of the padişah, but did you ever actually see the padişah?' The fact is, your majesty, that in all the years of service I performed, it was not until now that I ever saw you. That is why I wanted to see you."

"Well, have you seen me now, Hasan?"

"Yes, your majesty."

"Take a seat there while I ask you a question. If you can answer it, that will be fine, but if you cannot answer it, I shall have you arrested." Then the padişah asked, "What is the distance between day and night?"

After thinking about this question for a short while, Hasan answered, "Your majesty, there is really no distance at all between day and night, for they are connected to each other."

"Here is my second question," said the padişah.

"Hasan, are you able to pluck a goose?"

course I can."

"Then sit over there at that side," said the padişah. He then ordered one of his servants, "Have my first and second and third viziers come in here." After these officials had entered the room and bowed before the padişah

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he said to them, "I am going to ask you a question. If you can answer it, that will be satisfactory. If you cannot answer it, I shall have you arrested, placed in jail, and given a week to discover the answer. If you still cannot give me the correct answer, I shall then have you executed. He then put to them the same question he had asked Hasan: "What is the distance between day and night?" When they could not answer this question, he ordered, "Take them away!" They were sent to a special prison, and Hasan was sent along with them.

In prison the viziers thought and thought in an effort to calculate the distance between day and night while Hasan sat watching them. On the morning when their time was up and they were to return to the padişah with the correct answer, Hasan said to them, "Ağas, you have been thinking very deeply and intently. I may possibly be of some use to you. What is your problem?"

One of the viziers answered, "Hasan, we have been trying unsuccessfully to determine the distance between day and night."

"Oh, that is a very easy question to answer," said Hasan. "I can solve that problem for you quickly, but I shall charge you 100 golden liras apiece to do so." The viziers ordered that 100 golden liras be brought for each

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of them. When Hasan received this money, he said, "Ağas, there is no distance at all between day and night, for they are joined to one another

The viziers found this answer entirely convincing. They then went to the palace, and Hasan went with them. When the proper time arrived, all four of them went upstairs to enter the presence of the padişah. He said to the viziers, "Well, have you solved the problem?"

"Yes, sir, we have. We found that there was no distance whatsoever between day and night. They are connected."

"All right. Be seated." Then turning to Hasan, he said, "I told you that I would send you three geese to be plucked. Did you pluck them, Hasan?"

"Yes, sir, I did."

"Where are the feathers?"

Holding up the scarf he had filled with 300 gold coins, Hasan replied, "Right here, sir

The three viziers were very much embarrassed by all of this, but, on the other hand, they were also very pleased to have saved their necks.