

Story 788 (1970 Tape 15)

Narrator: Mehmet Ece (alias Topal Ahmet), one-legged auto mechanic

Location: Ece is from Erzurum but tale taped at Bursa

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^{thought}
The Kadı¹ Cheats an Honest Traveler

One day a traveler found along the road a piece of tanned leather--a whole hide--which was of the quality used for making shoes. Being an honest man, the traveler took it to the kadı of the nearest town. He said, "Kadı Efendi² I have found this piece of tanned leather. Is this haram³ or helâl³ for me? I should like to make some çarıks⁴ out of it."

"The law concerning this is written in the book as follows:

Imamı-ha, helâl-ha. Bir gayri-ha haram.

¹The kadı was a judge of Islamic (şeriat) law in pre-Republican Turkey.

²Efendi is a term of respect equivalent to Sir in English.

³What is haram is forbidden, and use of it will bring Divine retribution. What is helâl is acceptable, religiously legal--approved. Sincere Moslems are very careful to establish the helâl or haram nature of everything they earn, find, or are given.

⁴Çarıks are sandal-like shoes which were worn by rural Turks until quite recently. They were made from either donkey or camel hide. Since the late 1950's peasants have worn rubber shoes made from melted-down automobile tires.

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"I beg your pardon, Efendi, but what does that mean?"

"It means this," said the kadı: "Any piece of leather has been found is helâl for a kadı or hoca⁵ but haram for anyone else

"Very well, then," said the traveler, "give me only leg parts of the hide with which to make çarıks, and you can have the body part of the hide for yourself

"But, son, there is something about that in the book The book says, Lemucek velumecek,⁶ which means 'the legs and other parts of an animal hide must not be separated.'⁷

"But Kadı Efendi, the hide that I found is tanned and

⁵A hoca (pronounced hodja) is a Moslem priest; in pre-Republican times he was also a schoolteacher.

⁶This is supposed to be Arabic. The kadı then gives the Turkish equivalent.

⁷The kadı is using words deceptively in order to cheat the traveler out of his animal hide. He makes his speech sound very impressive by means of repetition and rhyming. The Turkish text for the sentence preceding this note number reads, Ayrılmıyacak bacak macak. The macak is unnecessary and meaningless, but its -cak ending echoes the endings of the other two words.

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commercially ready for use.

"No, son, for there is also written in the margin of this page, 'This is written from the edge of this book.'"⁸

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⁸When the traveler says that the leather is tanned (mazılı), commercially ready for use (ticaret malı), the kadı responds with repetitive double talk: "There is written in the margin of this page, 'This is written from the edge of this book.'" But he uses yazılı (is written) at the end of his line to rhyme with mazılı (tanned) and ticaret malı (commercially ready) in the traveler's immediately previous speech, and thus he overwhelms with words the poor uneducated man.

It is really quite impossible to get the same effect in English that exists in the Turkish original. Word play and sound effects, such as rhyme, simply do not survive in translation.