

Story 951 1977 Tape 29)

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all
Hunter Mehmet and the Fox *all*

*Helpful
see all
all*

Once there was and once there was not, back in the old days, a man named Hunter Mehmet. He lived with his mother in a small cottage in unsettled country in the forest. It was such a desolate place that hardly anyone knew that they lived there

Hunter Mehmet went hunting every day. He brought home whatever game he killed, and his mother cooked it for the two of them to eat. That was the way their days passed along.

Then one day Hunter Mehmet found in the forest a fox which was almost dead from hunger. He took the fox home with him and gave it something to eat, and in this way he saved it from starvation. On another day, Hunter Mehmet brought a bear home from the forest. He next brought a wolf, then a panther, and finally an eagle. He cleaned up these animals and gave them food to eat.

Time passed along, and one day the animals said to one another, "This Hunter Mehmet has helped us all greatly. He

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has given us food and water, and he has done many favors for us. Since we are among the largest of the animals here, we should be able to do something to repay those favors. Let us think of some favor that we can do for Hunter Mehmet." The rest of the animals all considered the fox the smartest one among them, and so they said to him, "Brother Fox, you decide what we should do for Hunter Mehmet."

After gathering all the other animals together, the fox said, "All right. Let us have Hunter Mehmet married, and let us get the padişah's daughter for his wife."

The other animals then said, "Brother Fox, all of us have agreed to be under your command. Whatever you tell us to do we shall do."

"The daughter of the padişah never leaves the palace," said the fox. "In order to catch her and bring her here, we must find a way to draw her out of the palace. Let us, therefore, plow the hillside across from the palace." The fox then harnessed the bear and the wolf to the plow. He placed the panther on the bear's back and the eagle on the wolf's back, and then they began plowing all together

People from the city observed these animals at work, and soon a crowd gathered to watch them. Most of the people were puzzled, and some were quite amazed. After a while the

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daughter of the padişah noticed that a crowd had formed across the way from the palace. Curious about why a crowd should meet there, she stepped out on the doorstep where she could see the people better. Just as soon as she stepped outside, the eagle put his strong claws on the girl's head, caught her hair, and flew away with her. Just as soon as the other animals saw that the eagle had caught the daughter of the padişah, they stopped plowing and returned to the cottage in the forest. By then the eagle had arrived at the house also, carrying the daughter of the padişah

As soon as it was discovered that the girl was missing from the palace, the padişah ordered all his men to go out and find his daughter. They looked for her here and they looked for her there, but they could not find her anywhere

There was in that country another hunter, one known as Hunter Ahmet. The padişah called Hunter Ahmet to his presence and said to him, "Hunter Ahmet, if you can find my daughter, I shall give you more than enough gold, silver, and jewelry."

Hunter Ahmet said, "All right, my Padişah. I shall try to find her

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magic objects

Hunter Ahmet had a very large magic earthenware jar and a magic whip.¹ Whenever he wanted to go anywhere, he would fly on this magic jar and strike it with his whip. He now mounted the jar, struck it with his whip, and began to fly around the country looking for the padişah's daughter. He flew to many places without finding her. Then he saw the cottage in the middle of a forest, and he landed there. Walking up to that small house, he looked into one of the windows and saw the daughter of the padişah sitting inside alone. "What are you doing in this house all alone?" he asked the girl

The girl replied, "I am the daughter of the padişah. I was captured and brought here against my wishes."

Hunter Ahmet said, "My poor girl, I shall take you to your father."

But since the girl was frightened, and since she did not know whether or not to depend upon Hunter Ahmet's words, she refused to leave the cottage. Then Hunter Ahmet used a different strategy with her. He said, "Well, then, daughter,

¹ Although witches and other supernaturally endowed beings may ride on broomsticks in Western Europe and the U.S., their counterparts in the Middle East ride on large earthenware vases, vessels commonly used for storing water, oil, and wine. Such huge vases, as tall as 6-8 feet and having a diameter of 3 or more feet, are similar to the large amphora of ancient times. They are superior to broomsticks in that they have ample storage space for the owner's booty!

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I shall show you around this area a little. One must learn to live in such a lonely place as this forest." This time the girl believed his words and went outside. Hunter Ahmet her to where he had left the magic jar, and there he said, "Aha, what do you suppose is inside that jar?" When the naive girl bent down to look inside the jar, Hunter Ahmet pushed her right into it headfirst and then flew her back to her father's palace. There the padişah paid Hunter Ahmet the gold and silver and jewelry that he had promised him.

in jar
trip

When Hunter Mehmet and his animal friends returned from hunting, they discovered that the cottage was empty and the was gone. They realized that the padişah must have had daughter rescued from the cottage. The fox asked, "How we going to get the padişah's daughter back again? Now will never come out of the palace again. Certainly her father will take very serious measures now to preserve his daughter's safety." After thinking about the problem for a few minutes, the fox reached a decision on the best way to proceed. He said to his animal companions, "All right, I have a plan. Listen to me very carefully. We shall attack the city with all available forces. Let the eagle gather all of his eagle friends for this purpose. They will then fly together above the city, shutting out the sunlight and making the day as dark as night. While the eagles are doing

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that, let the bear and the wolf gather all their kinsmen and attack all the sheep and cows in all the barns of the city. Inasmuch as nobody will be able to worry about the padişah's daughter during this time of crisis, we shall be able to steal her away again very easily."

All the animals did exactly as the fox had told them to do, and in this way they were again able to carry off the padişah's daughter. They took her back to Hunter Mehmet's house again. There she and Hunter Mehmet were married.

After another short space of time had passed, the other animals said to the fox, "Our job here has been completed. We are leaving to return to our former homes in the forest."

But the fox said, "No, not I. I shall not leave Hunter Mehmet. Furthermore, I want to test his honesty and sincerity. After all, I have helped him in many ways."

One day shortly after that, the fox pretended that he had died. When Hunter Mehmet saw that the fox was dead, he said, "Oh, that dirty fox! He will make my house smell bad. Saying this, he grabbed the fox's body by one leg and threw it over a cliff.

The poor fox got up injured and moaning. He said, "A human being is nourished with savage milk.² See what this

² This is a traditional Turkish statement attesting to the basic savagery that lies beneath the thin veneer of civilization.

In gratitude

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one has done to me after all of the favors I did for him!

The fox then left Hunter Mehmet's house, and he too returned to his former home in the forest.