

Story 1068 (1972 Tape 7) Narrator: Esma Koca

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Karacabey kaza,
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The Three ²¹¹Tricksters and the Robbers ^{I have ALL}

Death, shams
There were once three tricksters who thought of a plan to make some money. One of them would pretend to be dead. The other two would pretend that they had found a dead man and were trying to raise money to have him buried. They went along the street stopping everyone that they met and saying, "We are going to bury this poor dead man whom we found. Will you please give us some money to help cover his funeral expenses?"

As they were moving along gathering money in this way, they met a ^{ALL}hoca.¹ The hoca said, "I shall provide the religious services for this dead man." The hoca had just come from the market where for five paras² he had bought some figs, which he hung in the mosque window as he made preparations to wash the corpse³ on the stone slab in the

Abdullah, ritual
¹A Moslem preacher-teacher akin to a priest.

²A para was 1/40 of a kuruş, and a kuruş was 1/100 of a lira. By the middle of the 20th century devaluation of all Turkish money had reduced the para to worthlessness. Between that time and the late 1980s the lira was devaluated to 1/1500 of a U.S. dollar or 1/150 of an American cent, and so the kuruş also became meaningless.

³The washing of the corpse is a special ritual. In rural Turkey there are no undertakers, and so, on one level, this cleansing is just part of the preparation for burial. But because the washing is done in a prescribed way, it is a ritual.

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mosque yard.⁴ When he went to heat some water for the washing of the corpse, the supposedly dead man got up and ate the figs. Then he went back and lay down on the slab again.

When the water was hot, the hoca brought it to the slab and began to wash the corpse. When he poured some hot water on the corpse, the dead man ground his teeth to keep from crying out. As he did so, some fig seeds fell out of his mouth. Although the hoca observed this, he said nothing.

After the hoca had finished washing the dead man, he laid him out neatly again on the slab. Then he and the two friends of the deceased decided to watch by the side of the dead man for a while as a sign of respect. While they sat in a dark part of the mosque,⁵ three robbers entered with a large amount of gold that they had just stolen from the padişah's treasury. They said to each other, "This will be a good place for us to divide the gold." They shared the gold and other stolen goods in three equal parts until there was nothing left of their loot but a sword. Not knowing how to allot the sword, one of the robbers finally

⁴Many mosque yards have a stone or marble slab, raised about 30 inches above the ground, expressly for this purpose.

⁵In Turkish folktales robbers and bandits often meet in cemeteries or mosques, especially at night, when those places are normally deserted.

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said, "I'll tell you which of us will get this sword
Whichever of us can cut farthest through this corpse with
it will win the sword."

The three robbers approached the corpse, but when the
first lifted the sword to strike at it, the dead man sat
up and shouted, "Help!" This so terrified the three rob-
bers that they rushed from the mosque, leaving behind them
all of the gold.

When the robbers had gone, the hoca and the trickster
sat down and divided the treasure. When it was all divided,
however, the hoca said to the man who had pretended to be
dead, "You still owe me five paras for those figs of mine
that you ate!"

By this time one of the robbers had found courage to
return to the mosque. After he and his companions had
fled in terror, they finally recovered their senses. One
of them said, "Let me go back and take a look at what the
situation is there." He arrived at the mosque and stuck
his head in through a window just as the hoca said, "You
still owe me five paras for those figs of mine that you
ate!"

Looking around, the supposedly dead man saw the rob-
ber's head in the window. He quickly walked over, snatched
the fez from the robber's head, and said to the hoca, "Here!

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this! It is worth even more than the five paras you for the figs!"

When the robber had rushed back to his friends, they asked him, "Well, what happened?"

He answered, "Quick! Let us flee past seven mountains, and then I shall tell you what happened."

They walked and walked until they had passed seven mountains. Then the robber who had returned to the mosque said, "All of our gold was not enough to satisfy that dead He took my fez, too!"