

Story 1106 (1966 Tape 4)

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Location: Örencik village
Çekerek Kaza
Yozgat Province

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My ^{all} Arab Is Awake

TEK.

Once there was and once there wasn't, when God's days were more numerous than snow, when it was a virtue to love much and a sin to love little,² back in that time there was a very poor man who suffered much as a result of his poverty. He wandered about barefooted. But one day he said, "My Arab is asleep. I have suffered enough." Having said that, he left his village and began to travel farther than he had ever gone before. After a while he encountered a lion^{98-99, 103-104} along the road

"Where are you going?" asked the lion.

¹ There is nothing Arabian about the person or thing referred to here as an Arab. Very often in Turkish tales the helpful genie or jinn is pictured as an Arab. Usually such a being can be conjured or called up. The Arab who appears is not, however, like any stereotype of the Arab figure. He is often said to be black, and his blackness in negroid. He is described as having huge lips, so huge that one drags on the ground while the other sweeps the sky. The jinn that the protagonist seeks and finds in this tale is black, but he is more prophetic than helpful.

² This is a tekerleme, a nonsense jingle which quite often precedes a Turkish folktale. It is rimed and quite ridiculous in content. It pleases listeners for its ingenuity and sound, and it also prepares them for the fact that a tale is to follow. Sometimes a tekerleme will be longer than this one.

Language, Duman
- taken by
Binnat

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"I am going to awaken my Arab. He is asleep, and I am suffering as a result

"If I tell you something, will you tell it to your Arab?" asked the lion.

"Yes."

seven years I have been all alone here. During that entire time I have lain on one flank until it has now deteriorated to the point where it is useless. Ask your Arab what can be done to cure my difficulty."

"Very well. But farewell for now," said the man, and he started walking again

man walked and walked, and after he had gone some distance, he saw ahead of him a beautiful green house. In that house there lived all by herself a rich girl. When the girl saw the poor man approaching, she called out, "Hey, brother, where are you going? Do you have any problem? Perhaps I can help you solve it."

"I am alone and without any family. In my own country I have been very poor. That is so because my Arab must be sleeping. I am going now to find him and wake him up."

"Give your Arab my regards. Ask him what will become of me. Tell him that I am left alone in this forest with this fine house, with fertile fields, with a flock of sheep, and

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with great wealth. Ask him what will become of me."

"Very well. I shall do that," said the man, and again he began to walk

After the poor man had walked some distance, he came to a place like the Bolu Mountain.³ There were many tall fir trees there. Clouds gathered while he was there, and soon it began to rain. He sat beneath a tree to wait for the shower to pass. As he was sitting there, he noticed that half of the tree above him was green and the other half was dry and brown.

Just then a voice spoke from the tree: "Hey, friend, where you going?"

"My Arab is asleep. I am going to find him and awaken him."

"Give my regards to your Arab and ask him a question for Ask him what will become of me. Tell him that one side of of me is green but the other side is completely dried out."

"Very well," said the man, and then he continued his journey

After a while the man came to a huge black rock as big as the Hacettepe building.⁴ The man recognized this rock at once and going to it, he said, "Come on, get up! You are my

³ Bolu Mountain in Bolu Province, northwestern Turkey, is heavily forested with large trees. It is an important source of prime timber. Like many of the forests in Turkey, this one is owned by the central government, and the lumbering business there is state operated.

⁴ The only Hacettepe Building known to us is on the campus of Hacettepe University in Ankara.

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Arab. I am suffering from poverty, and yet you lie there doing nothing. Come on, get up!"

right I have risen. Now what do you want?"

"Thank God you have at last awakened! My wish is that you give me the answers to several problems. As I was coming here, I saw a lion lying beside the road. It has been lying there on the same flank of its body for seven years until now that side has decayed. What is the cure for this?"

"Give him my regards," said the Arab, "and tell him that he can be cured only by eating the flesh of a human being who is stupid. If he does that, then he will become well."

"All right. I shall tell him that. After leaving the lion I met another person who had a problem. This was a beautiful girl living in a seven-storied green building. She had fertile fields, a flock of sheep, and great wealth, but she lived alone. She sent her regards to you and requested you to declare what was to become of her."

"Tell her to marry a bachelor. Then she will attain all of her wishes"

right. I shall tell her that. I next came to a forest where I saw a pine tree that was fresh and green on one side but dry and brown on the other side. The tree sent you its regards and requested that you indicate how it could

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be saved."

Treasure buried

"The tree is in that condition because beneath its dry side there is buried in the ground a cauldron so large that it has four handles. That cauldron is filled with liras.⁵ That cauldron is so large that the tree's roots cannot reach around it to the earth in order to get the nourishment it needs. That cauldron lies beneath the dry side of the tree. If the cauldron is removed, the tree will recover and become entirely green."

"Very well My Arab is awake now. I shall tell the tree what you have just said."

The poor man began his return trip. As he came to the pine tree, the pine tree asked him, "What did your Arab say about my condition?"

"My Arab said that there was beneath your roots on the dry side a large four-handled cauldron filled with liras. If the cauldron is removed, the roots will be able to reach the soil below, and then you will recover and your brown side will turn green."

⁵ At an earlier time when the lira was a gold coin, the money in the cauldron would have been an immense treasure. Now (1989) that the lira has been greatly devaluated--there are currently about 2,000 liras to the American dollar--it would be of small worth.

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"Well, dig the cauldron out and take the liras for yourself. Wait! Where are you going?"

"My Arab is awake, and I cannot stay here any longer."

"Could you ever find a better opportunity than this to make your fortune? Dig out the cauldron and take the liras. Then I shall become entirely green."

my Arab is awake!" said the man. Instead of digging out the cauldron and taking out the wealth it held, he left and continued on his way.

After walking for some distance, he came to the green house. Again the girl called out to him, "Where are you going?"

Arab is awake, and so I cannot stop for long. My Arab told me to tell you that if you married a young bachelor, you would attain all of your wishes."

"Well, come, then, and let us be married at once. Then all of this wealth will be yours."

"I can't! My Arab is awake, and I am returning to my own country."

After traveling a great distance, he once again reached the place where the lion lay beside the road. "What did you find out about healing my decayed flank?" asked the lion.

"My Arab said that your disability will be cured if you eat the flesh of a stupid human being."

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"Very well," said the lion. "You are a human being, and you are stupid. If you had taken the cauldron from beneath the pine tree, you would have become rich. You found a wealthy girl with extensive property, and she was willing to marry you, thus making all of her property yours. But you did not take advantage of that offer either. You are stupid, and you are the stupid human being I am going to eat." The lion then ate the man