

Story 1362 (1986 Tape 1

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The Poor Boy and the Of-f-f Jinn¹

All Ali Cengiz game

Once in the past there was a very poor man who had an intelligent son. That son wished to learn everything he possibly could, but the family was so poor that he was unable to go to school. One day as this boy was walking along in deep thought, he struck his foot against a rock. The pain from that blow caused him to say, "Of-f-f!"

At that sound an old man appeared and asked, "What do you want? You called my name."²

Surprised, the boy answered, "I didn't want anything. All I said was 'Of-f-f!' and I said that only because I hit

¹The word jinn suggests two very different kinds of supernatural creatures. The first is the huge supernatural being who comes forth from a bottle or appears in response to some signal, such as the rubbing of a magic lamp or ring. This creature then proceeds to give the caller supernatural or magic aid to achieve what he wishes. The other kind of jinn is never seen. It is a spiritual force referred to in some Sufi belief and in other mystical systems.

The Of-f-f Jinn appears in a person's life initially when that person seems to be calling its name but actually is simply expressing fatigue or dismay.

²Sometimes the old magician who teaches the art of transformation is called the Of-f-f Jinn, and sometimes he is referred to as Ali Cengiz (Jenghis). Whatever he is called, the contest in transformations is generally known in Turkey as the Ali Cengiz game.

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my foot accidentally and hurt it. But since you have asked what I want, I shall tell you. I want to learn everything there is to know

"Come with me, then," said the old man, "for I can teach you everything that you want to know."

The boy went to the old man's house intending to learn everything he possibly could. But before he actually began to receive any instructions, the boy was given a warning by one of the old man's neighbors. This neighbor said, "This old man is very dangerous. Whenever he teaches you anything, be sure to say to him, 'I cannot understand that. I have been unable to learn it.' If you admit that you have learned any of his tricks, he will cut your throat before you can leave

The young man studied with the old man for three years, and during that time he learned everything that the old man showed him. Never once, however, did he ever admit that he had learned a single thing.

One day after the young man was certain that he had learned everything that the old man had to teach, he turned himself into a pigeon and flew away out through an open window. When the old man saw this, he turned himself into a

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hawk and began to pursue the pigeon. The pigeon landed upon a woman's hand, and then when the eagle swooped down to seize it, it turned into a handful of wheat grains that fell upon the floor. The eagle then turned into a chicken and began to peck the grains of wheat from the floor. The wheat then turned into a wolf and quickly gobbled up the chicken

The young man then restored himself to his natural form. With the knowledge that he had learned from the old man, he was able to live comfortably for the rest of his life.³

³In some variants of this tale, the transformations are more numerous and the situations developing from them are more complex.