

Story 1365 (1989 Tape 3) Narrator: Perihan Artıburun, c.

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Nasreddin Hoca and the Bigger Fish

One day when Nasreddin Hoca was still a boy, his father brought home a packet of fish from the marketplace. His mother separated these fish, putting all of the larger ones in a cupboard and keeping the smaller ones at hand to be eaten first. She cooked a couple of these smaller fish for Nasreddin's lunch.

While he was eating his lunch, Nasreddin picked up one of the small fish and pretended to be saying something into its ear.² Then he held the mouth of the fish close to his own ear, as if he were listening to something that the fish was saying to him.

His mother observed what he was doing, and she was curious about it. She asked, "Nasreddin, what are you doing?"

¹The narrator was the widow of one of Turkey's most prominent political figures of the 1960's, General Tekin Artıburun. After his retirement from the military, Tekin Artıburun became President of the Turkish Senate and later Acting President of the Republic of Turkey.

²In Turkey fish are often cooked and served with the heads and tails still in place. Thus it would be possible to pretend that a dead fish could still speak and hear.

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What did you tell the fish, and what did it say to you?"

Nasreddin answered, "Mother, I asked the fish what kind of fish it was that swallowed Prophet Jonah. Then it said to me, 'Don't ask me that, for I am still too small to know about such things. Ask one of the larger fish which your mother has hidden in the cupboard.'"