

Story 1391 (1989 Tape 6)

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~~Saintliness~~ in Context

There were once two saints who lived in a certain town.
of them decided to run away from society and spend the
rest of his life in a desolate place in the nearby mountains.
The other remained in that town and worked as a stoker for
the furnaces that heated water for a women's bathhouse. *be a father*

The saint who lived alone in the mountains one day
started thinking about his own virtue. He asked himself,
"Is there anyone in this world more virtuous than I am?"

The saint working in the bathhouse sensed immediately
his friend was thinking,¹ and he decided that it was
time he went to the mountains to visit his fellow saint.
Wishing to show off some of his miraculous power, the stoker
some fire in his pocket and thought, "I'll take him
some fire. He must be cold in those mountains in this bad

¹In Turkish tales (and perhaps in others) saints are
often endowed with the power of mind reading and/or the
power of mental telepathy. The narrator does not bother to
explain that, for it is a well-known tradition of saint
lore.

Story 1391

weather." The stoker proceeded to the place where his friend lived in the mountains and he delivered the fire he had brought. The two of them sat beside the fire for some time talking, and then toward evening the stoker returned to his job in the town.

A few days later the mountain saint decided to return his friend's visit. To impress the stoker, his friend decided to take a basket of snow to the bathhouse. When he reached the bathhouse, he went to the furnace room and there found his friend, the stoker. The mountain saint hung the basket on a peg in the furnace room, and even though it was very hot there, the snow did not melt a bit during their lengthy conversation. After a while, however, a half-naked woman accidentally opened the door of the furnace room. The mountain saint stared at the woman and had some improper thoughts about her before she could shut the door again. As soon as he had these thoughts, the snow in the basket began to melt, and water flowed from it onto the floor.

Observing this, the stoker said, "Ah, yes, it is easy to be virtuous when you are alone in the desolate mountains. But now you can understand how much talent is required for one to remain virtuous while living here in town!"