

Story 1231 (Dictated)

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Location: Cumra, kaza town of  
Konya Province

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The Maddening Water<sup>1</sup> of Karatepe<sup>2</sup>

There was once a celebrated governor in Turkey known as Kozanoğlu. He was known far and wide both for his ability as a leader and for his great knowledge. He was known so well, in fact, that even the people of Karatepe heard about him. Talking among themselves, the Karatepeans said, "This Kozanoğlu is a very distinguished man. All the other people seem to be going to visit him and pay their respects to him. We should do the same, but before we go, we should find some extraordinary gift to take to him." They debated this matter among themselves, and they finally decided to take him a vulture as a present. They set a trap in a field, and they baited the trap with the carcass of a dead sheep. Within a few days they had caught a large vulture in this trap

Placing the vulture in a large cage, they went to the

<sup>1</sup>Regardless of where they are told, many Karatepe anecdotes attribute the irrational behavior of Karatepeans to the damaging effect of a spring of "crazy water" (deli su) in their village. --See, for example, ATON tale 623.

<sup>2</sup>Karatepe is a remote village in the northeast corner of Adana Province. Its people are alleged to be stupid, and their misadventures are the subjects of numerous anecdotes. A resident of Karatepe is called in Turkish a Karatepeli.

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city where Kozanoğlu lived and presented the bird to him as a gift from Karatepe. The governor was amazed by this gift he wondered what had caused the Karatepeans to give it to him. "Who ever heard of giving a vulture to anyone as a gift?" he thought. "Are these people crazy, or are they in some way testing me?" After thinking about this for a moment, Kozanoğlu decided to test them in turn, and he secretly ordered his men to place before the Karatepeans a large plate of black grapes mixed with dung beetles.

The governor's men placed this plate before the guests, saying, "Won't you please take some refreshment?"

At first the dung beetles did not move, but when the Karatepeans reached toward the plate, the beetles began to scurry about. The Karatepeans were surprised at this, but one of their elders said, "All of these grapes are ours, and so we should catch first and eat the ones which are trying to get away." They therefore ate the dung beetles first and then later the grapes. From this, Kozanoğlu realized that these people were mentally disturbed.

Curious to know what could cause all the residents of a whole village to behave in such a foolish fashion, Kozanoğlu sent two of his men to investigate the matter. One of these

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was a bey<sup>3</sup> who rode on his horse to Karatepe, and the other was a peasant who walked there alongside the horse. Each of these men took along, among his other things, a drinking cup. Whenever they came upon a spring or a fountain along the road, the peasant would dip up a cupful of water himself and then he would fill the bey's cup and hand it up to him. When they entered the outskirts of Karatepe, they came to the spring that supplied all of the water for that village. The peasant, as usual, drank a cup of that water, but he made no move to hand any up to the bey. When the horseman asked for some water, the peasant responded, "Dismount get some for yourself! Who do you think you are--a bey or a pasha?"<sup>4</sup> When the bey realized how unreasonable the peasant had suddenly become, he guessed that it must have been the water of that spring that had affected him so badly. After questioning people in the surrounding villages, he became certain that it was the "crazy water" of Karatepe that made its residents so mentally deficient.

<sup>3</sup>A bey was formerly the equivalent of an English baron or lord. He was an aristocrat, often a landholder, and usually a prominent man both politically and socially. Today there are no such beys in Turkey, and the word bey is used as an honorific, a term of respect.

<sup>4</sup>Pasha now means simply general. During the Ottoman era, however, it could refer to the military governor responsible for administering an area sometimes as large as a province.

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When the bey reported his findings to Kozanoğlu, the governor caused the "crazy water" spring to dry up by pouring mercury into it.<sup>5</sup> When they could no longer draw water from that spring, the Karatepeans were forced to pipe water from a nearby hillside. After drinking the water from that new source for a while, the people of Karatepe regained their sanity.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup>There is no explanation of just how mercury could cause a spring to dry up.

<sup>6</sup>Up to this point in ATON holdings, this is the only tale to indicate that the "crazy water" spring ever disappeared or that the Karatepeans ever recovered from its malign influence.