

Story 1265 (1972 Tape 10)

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Location: Alamaslı village,
Alaca kaza, Çorum
Province

Date: June 1972

Pears for the Padişah

One day when the padişah was traveling about his land in disguise,¹ he came across an old man sitting beneath a pear tree. This tree, which belonged to the old man, bore unusually delicious pears. After they had talked for a few minutes, the old man gave the disguised padişah a pear. The padişah was very favorably impressed with the quality of that pear, and he therefore said to the old man, "Oh, friend, could you bring me some pears from this tree every year at harvesttime? If you will do so, I shall give you some valuable gifts." Saying this, the padişah gave the old man a piece of paper with his address written upon it. He did not reveal, however, who he

Time passed, and again the pear tree bore its delicious fruit. By then the old man had forgotten about the stranger who had liked his pears and had asked that some be delivered

¹In folktales rulers often make tours of inspection of their territories, and when they do so, they often go in disguise. The disguise is not used as protection but as a means of getting an accurate, unposed view of life in their domains.

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to him. But his wife remembered that stranger and reminded her husband: "Efendi,² don't forget that stranger to whom you are supposed to take some pears."

So the old man picked some pears, put them in a basket, and started searching for the house at the address which the stranger had given him. After asking several people along the way for directions, the old man at last arrived at the palace. He happened to get there on a day when the padişah was beginning to pass judgment upon people accused of various crimes. He had to determine which of the accused people were guilty and which were innocent. In the confusion and disorder of the day, the old man was mistakenly thought to be one of the accused, and so, like most of the others, he was taken to prison to await trial.

Days passed, and then it was the turn of the old man to have a hearing. When he was brought into the presence of the padişah, he was asked by the ruler, "What was your crime?"

²A mild honorific, comparable to Sir, it usually follows a first name: Hasan Efendi. At one time it was used to show respect to distinguished people, but it has become so devaluated in the twentieth century that it now is used only for servants and children.

"Oh, my padişah, don't ask me about my situation! My crime was great, very great!"

"But just what was your crime? Tell us about it."

The old man then began to report what had happened to him.

"Do you remember the time that you met me by my pear tree?"

Well, my crime was giving you a pear from that tree."

The padişah now realized the whole difficulty that had befallen the old man. He thought to himself, "What can I do to save myself from the responsibility for the way in which this good man has been treated? The problem is not any sin of his but one of mine, for he was here wrongly accused of committing some crime." To the old man he said, "Wish from me anything that you want!"

"No, my padişah. I do not have any wishes."³ But when the padişah insisted, the old man said, "In that case I should like you to give me an axe, a length of rope, and a copy of the Koran."

The padişah ordered some of his retainers to get these objects, and when they had been given to the old man, the padişah asked him a question. "What are you going to do with these things?"

Turkish folktales when a ruler asks a person what he/

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The old man answered, "When I get home, I shall cut down the pear tree with this axe. I shall take this rope and hang my wife from another tree. Then I shall show my gratitude to Allah by reading daily from this Koran."

she wants as a gift, the person traditionally responds, "I wish only for your good health." Sometimes this demurrer is made twice and sometimes thrice before the person requests what he/she really wishes to have.