

Story 1273 (1969 Tape 3)

Narrator: Zekeriya Abvu /Ābdu/

Location: Aliçlık village, Bayburt kaza, Gümüşhane Province

NOTE: Tale taped before Bayburt city became capital of newly created Bayburt Province (c. 1990)

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Why the Money-Keeper Danced

In the old days in İstanbul there used to be money-keepers with whom you could place your money for safekeeping. It was to such a money-keeper that a villager went one day. He was a laborer who had come to İstanbul to earn some money, after which he intended to return to his own village. He thought to himself, "What should I do with this money I am accumulating? I had better leave it with a money-keeper until I am ready to go home again."

The money-keeper to whom he went listened to his request. Then he said to the villager, "My son, here is where your key will be kept. Take the key now and deposit your money in the box over on that wall that has the same number as your key has. When you return, you will use the same key to get your money out of that box." The villager followed the money-keep-

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er's directions and deposited his money in the wall box

After he had worked for some time longer in Istanbul, the villager was at last ready to return to his home area. Going to the money-keeper, he said, "Father, give me back my money now, for I intend to return to my home village."

"What money are you talking about?" asked the money-keeper.

"You did not leave any money or anything else with me." Saying this, the money-keeper drove the villager out of his shop.

The villager left the shop in despair, went to a bridge, stood there staring down into the water below. Observing him standing there for some time, a well-to-do woman came to a place opposite him on the bridge and asked, "Brother, what you thinking about?"

"Mind your own business!"

"No! Tell me!"

"Well, I left some of my earnings with a money-keeper, but when I went to get it back, the money-keeper refused to return it to me. He said that I had never left any money with

"I understand," said the woman. "Are you hungry?"

"Yes, I am."

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She took him to her home and fed him well. Then she said to him, "You became involved with a bad man, and as a result you lost your money. Now let us go to that money-keeper's shop, and I shall get your money back for you. I shall take some money and pretend that I wish to leave it with him. You stay outside of the shop until I have taken out my money and put it on the counter. Then you are to come in and ask for the return of your money."

"All right

The woman took him to the money-keeper's shop and left him outside the door. Going in alone, she took out a number of gold coins and said, "Father, my husband has gone on a pilgrimage to Mecca. If I keep all of this money at home, burglars may take it away from me. You keep it safe for me here until he returns."

"Ah, yes, daughter. We shall keep it safe for you.

At that point the villager entered the shop and asked, "Money-keeper father, will you give me back my money now?"

The money-keeper replied, "My son, here are the keys Go to the box in which you left your money and get it." Earlier he had refused to return the villager's money, but now as he eyed the good quantity of gold coins, he quickly gave

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laborer his small deposit. The villager took his money and stood aside.

The woman's gold liras still remained on the counter, before the money-keeper could pick them up, the woman's maid-servant rushed into the shop. This servant had been instructed exactly what to do and what to say by the employer. She said "My lady, I bring you good news! Our pilgrim has just arrived back home!" Hearing this, the woman gathered up her money from the counter.

Once they were outside the shop, the lady, her servant and the villager held hands and began to dance. To their surprise, the money-keeper came out and joined them. As they were dancing, the lady spoke to the money-keeper said, "This young man dances because he got his money back. I am dancing because my pilgrim has returned from Mecca. This servant girl dances because she expects to receive a gift for bringing me good news.¹ But why are you dancing?"

"I am dancing to console myself for having worked without any profit for my efforts."

¹When messengers brought good news to rulers or wealthy people, they were often given a "tip" or some present. The reward for bearing good news became an expected return after a while--so much so that messengers would demand, "How much are you going to pay me for good news?" before they actually conveyed it to the intended recipient.