

Story 1656 (1993 Tape 2)

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The Palace Built by Conscience

There was once a farmer who had been plowing his fields all day. He started to return home just as dusk arriving. Suddenly a snake appeared before him and blocked his path. The farmer knew that many people believed killing a snake at night would bring one bad luck. He therefore tried to persuade the snake to move out of the way so that he would not have to use force against it. He said to the snake three times, "In the name of Allah, get out of my way!" When the snake did not move, farmer crushed the snake's head and continued on his way home.

Soon after he had arrived home, the farmer bathed himself and then went to bed. Around midnight his door was knocked upon: tak, tak! He thought to himself, "Who can it be at this time of night?"

When he answered the door, the farmer found two gendarmes¹ standing outside. They said, "Get dressed.

¹There are no police forces per se in rural Turkey. Law and order are maintained by army units that have been turned over to the Ministry of Interior for that purpose. They are called gendarmes. They are, therefore, "police-soldiers" in a sense.

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You must go with us to the police station

When he returned to his bedroom to get dressed, his wife said to the farmer, "What have you done? Why are two gendarmes here to take you to the police station?"

The farmer answered, "I do not know, Wife." He then dressed himself and went down again to the front door where the gendarmes were waiting for him.

gendarme held him by the right arm, and the other held the farmer by his left arm to march him to the police station. As they were going along, the farmer was amazed to see a large palace standing where no such building had been formerly. "Oh, how strange this is," he said to himself. "When I was going home from my field just three or four hours ago, there was nothing standing here but a few cherry trees. How could such a great change have come about?" He could not believe his own eyes.

The gendarmes led him into that palace, where he noticed lawyers and judges sitting at various places. When the snake was brought in with a bandage on its head, one of the judges asked the farmer, "Why did you try to kill this snake?"

The farmer remained silent for a moment or two, quite

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confused by this situation. Then he answered, "I did not try to kill the snake. I said to it 'In the name of Allah, get out of my way.' I then repeated this two more times, but the snake did not move, and so I struck it."

Turning to the snake, the judge asked it, "Is he telling the truth?"

The snake responded, "Yes, he is telling the truth."

"Very well," said the judge. "Release the farmer and permit him to leave

The farmer returned to his home and went back to bed again. But he did not go back to sleep right away, because he kept thinking about the palace he had been in. He said to himself, "How very strange! A day ago there was nothing at that place but a few cherry trees, but now there is a palace there. How could that have happened?"

When morning arrived, he arose and dressed. Then he went at once to the place where the palace had stood. He wanted to know whether such a palace had really existed or whether he had seen it only in a dream. When he reached the spot, he found no palace there at all. Instead, there were the cherry trees with the snake lying beneath them.