

Story 1761 (1994 Tape 4)

Narrator: Remzi Ece, 35

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Shoes for a Shortcut by Nasreddin Hoca¹

One day when Nasreddin Hoca was going to a local marketplace, there were some boys ahead of him who saw him coming. One of them said, "How can we trick Hoca so that we can steal his shoes for a short while?"

Another said, "Let us trick Hoca into climbing a tree. He will, of course, take off his shoes before climbing the tree. Then when he is up in the tree branches, we can run off with his shoes." They all agreed to this plan.

When Nasreddin Hoca came up to the place where they had gathered, they asked, "Hoca, could you climb this tree? We can all climb it, but we think that you cannot do it. Can you?"

"Certainly. I can climb it very easily," answered Hoca.

¹Nasreddin Hoca is the most popular comic folk character in the Turkish oral tradition. He is often very wise but he is just as often equally foolish. In modern Turkey a hoca is a preacher and religious leader. In pre-Republican times he was also a teacher, education then being the responsibility of the clergy.

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"Come on, then! Let us see you do it. Don't disappoint us by refusing."

Nasreddin Hoca was, of course, a very clever man. He realized that the boys were trying to play some kind of trick on him. He took off his shoes and slipped them inside the sash around his waist. Then he climbed the tree.

After that, he continued on his way to the marketplace, and the boys walked along with him. One of them said, "Hoca, why did you take your shoes up into the tree with you? What were you going to do with them up there?"

"I thought that if I found a shortcut to the marketplace from the treetop, I'd go there that way."