

Story 1905 (Dictated)

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of Bursa Province

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Mustafa and Fate

Once there was and once there wasn't a poor woman named Emine who lived in such and such a country. She had a son named Mustafa, who was eighteen years old, but he was too lazy to work. Emine worked every day in order to make enough money to feed Mustafa and herself.

She finally grew tired of this situation and decided to put an end to it. One day Emine baked a loaf of bread. She broke that bread into a great many small pieces and scattered those pieces on the ground in front of her door. Then she went to her son and said, "Get up, Mustafa, get up! Bread has been raining down from heaven in small pieces. Get up and see for yourself!" When Mustafa went outside, she locked the door and closed all of the windows. Mustafa begged his mother to let him come back into the house, but Emine said, "Every man works for a living, and now that you are a man, you too must work!"

Mustafa did not know anyone who would help him, and he did not know how to work. After thinking about this for awhile, he said to himself, "I shall go and find Fate. Perhaps Fate will help me." He left

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the town where he had lived and began walking. He went little; he went far. He walked over mountains and through valleys. He walked among people; he walked among wild animals. He walked in the great heat of the day; he walked in the cool of the night.¹ After all of that traveling, he reached another town. Being very tired by then, he wandered into a large garden, where he sat down beneath a grape arbor and fell asleep. He did not sleep for long, however, for this was the garden of a padishah, and guards soon awakened him and took him into the presence of the ruler.

The padishah asked Mustafa, "Who are you? Where did you come from? Where are you going?"

"I am Mustafa from such and such a town. I am searching for Fate."

The padishah said, "Son, if you find Fate, I want you to ask him a question for me. The grapevine in my garden has grown well, but it has never borne any fruit. Ask Fate why that is so. If you bring back his answer to me, I shall make you rich."

¹This is a formulaic description of a lengthy trip. Omitted from it is the traditional closing clause: ". . . but when he looked back, he discovered that he had gone no farther than the length of a grain of barley."

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Mustafa answered, "Efendi,² I shall do my best to get this information for you." Then he continued on his journey.

Mustafa walked days and nights, and after awhile he came to the shore of a sea. There he heard a pained voice crying out. He looked around and then realized that the voice was that of a large fish which had thrust its head above the water. Seeing Mustafa, the fish said, "I know where you are going. If you do find Fate, tell him that the head of the Padishah of Fishes has been aching severely for ten years. Ask him to give you a cure for my headache." After promising to do this, Mustafa continued on his way.

After Mustafa had traveled for a few days longer, he came to a forest, and there he sat down beneath a tree to rest. A few minutes later there appeared from nowhere a very old man. That old man asked Mustafa, "Where have you come from and where are you going?"

"I am searching for Fate, for I hope that he will help me."

The old man smiled and said, "I am the one you are looking for. I am Fate."

At first Mustafa did not want to believe this, but the old man insisted that he was indeed Fate. Mustafa then told him about his own

²In earlier times the word efendi was a term of respect used in speaking to distinguished men. By the mid-20th century, however, its prestige had so eroded that it was used only while speaking to children and servants.

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need for help first. Then he told Fate about the requests made by the padishah of such and such a town and by the Padishah of Fishes. Fate said, "When you return to the fish, take a stick and strike his head with it very hard. When you do that, it will jar loose a large emerald in his head, and this will come out of his mouth. His headache will cease at once. That emerald is yours, and it will make you rich. The grapevine does not bear fruit because there is at its roots a chest of gold which prevents those roots from entering the soil deeply. Remove that chest, and the vine will begin bearing grapes. The gold in that chest is yours."

After thanking the old man, Mustafa started homeward. Along the way he first stopped at the place along the seashore where he had seen the Padishah of Fishes. When that fish rose to the surface again, Mustafa struck its head with a stick and then took the emerald that fell from its mouth.

As he was approaching the palace of the padishah of such and such a town, Mustafa was stopped by a giant. That giant said to him, "I am in love with the daughter of the padishah you are going to visit. If you do not bring that girl to me, I shall kill you."

When Mustafa reached the palace, he saw the princess for the first time, and he himself fell in love with her. At the same time the princess fell in love with him. But Mustafa told her that the giant wanted her. After she heard this, the girl said, "I do not want you to

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die because of me. You had better take me to him.” But on the way there, Mustafa kept praying that Fate might again help him. When they reached the place where the giant was waiting, they told him that they were in love. After thinking about that for a minute, the giant decided to permit the two of them to go their way.

When they returned to the palace, Mustafa dug into the earth and removed the chest of gold from the roots of the grapevine. As soon as this had been done, hundreds of grapes burst forth on the vine. The padishah was so pleased with this result that he gave Mustafa permission to marry his daughter.

A wedding celebration was prepared for them, and the music and dancing and feasting lasted for forty days and forty nights. The bride and bridegroom were very happy, and the padishah was also very happy. He was so pleased with his son-in-law that he arranged to have Mustafa one day succeed him as the ruler of that land.

One morning when Mustafa was in the garden, he saw a poor woman standing at the palace door. It was Emine, his mother. He took her into the palace and ordered the servants to bathe her and feed her well. He decided to have her move into the palace where he could take care of her for the rest of her life. After all, had she not taken care of him for many years?

May Fate do as well for all of us!