

Story 1914 (Dictated)

Narrator: Ayşe Saldız, 11

Location: Karacabey, kaza town
of Bursa Province

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Nasreddin Hoca's¹ View of His Mother-in-Law

Many people in Turkey do not like their mothers-in-law. Sometimes a son-in-law cannot agree with his mother-in-law, and sometimes a daughter-in-law cannot easily get along with her mother-in-law. They think that their mothers-in-law talk too much and say too many things that are unpleasant. There is a thornbush that people call "Mother-in-Law's Tongue."²

Nasreddin Hoca thought that his mother-in-law was a very contrary person. His feeling became known to others one day when his mother-in-law went to the river to wash clothes. While she was working, she somehow slipped and fell into the water. People who saw this happen tried

¹A hoca is a preacher and religious leader of a community. In pre-Republican times the hoca was also the teacher, for then education was the responsibility of the clergy. Separation of "church" and state in the Republic required that teachers have secular rather than religious training. Nasreddin Hoca was for centuries Turkey's most beloved comic folk character.

²The young narrator's botany is faulty here. Mother-in-Law's Tongue is a tropical African herbaceous plant with rosettes of swordlike leaves bearing white and yellow markings. It is often cultivated as a house plant.

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to reach her to pull her out, but they were unable to do that. They then ran to Nasreddin Hoca and told him what had happened.

The Hoca went to the bank of the river, but he could not see his mother-in-law anywhere. He said to those with him, "Perhaps she will be caught in some of the brush or small trees that grow along the river bank." He began moving upstream and searching in all the bushes and small trees along the edge of the water.

"No, no, Hoca!" the people shouted. "She must be somewhere downstream from the place where she fell in!"

"You may think that," answered the Hoca, "but you do not know what kind of a woman my mother-in-law is!"