

Story 2037 (1997 Tape 2)

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The Boy Nasreddin Guards the Door

One day while Nasreddin Hoca¹ was still a small boy, his mother decided to go down to the river to wash clothes. She said to the child, "My son, play here in front of the house, but do not go away. I have not locked the door, and I want you to guard it while I am gone

Nasreddin Hoca said, "All right, Mother. I shall watch the door for you."

While the boy was playing in the front yard, the son of a neighbor called to him, "Nasreddin! Nasreddin!"

"What do you want?"

"My mother said that you should tell your mother that our family is going to visit your house this evening.

¹A hoca is the preacher and religious leader of a community. In the pre-Republican era the hoca was also the community's teacher, for education was then the responsibility of the clergy. Separation of "church" and state in the Republic required that teachers be people with secular rather than religious training. Nasreddin Hoca belonged to the earlier period. For centuries he has been Turkey's most beloved comic folk character.

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The child Nasreddin was at first confused. How could he guard the door and at the same time go to his mother and give her the message from the neighbor? Nasreddin considered this problem for a few minutes, and then he thought of a way to perform both tasks at the same time. He lifted the door off its hinges, put it on his back, and went to the river.

The mother saw walking toward her a small boy with a door on his back. She was surprised, but she was even more surprised when she realized that the boy was her own son. She asked, "Oh, my son, why are you carrying our door on your back?"

"Mother, you told me not to leave the door unattended, but our neighbor ordered me to come and tell you that she and her family would be coming to visit our house this evening. I am carrying the door so that I can guard it at the same time that I am delivering the message to you."

"Oh, my son, I meant that you were to stay right there and watch the door so that thieves would not enter the house and steal things from it!"