

Story 2063 (Transcribed from his field tape by Ahmet Ali Arslan and used later in his unpublished dissertation.)

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Arpaçay kaza,
Kars Province

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The Clever Peasant Girl Weds the Padishah

Once in the past a padishah gave one of his viziers a puzzle to solve. He said, "My vizier, I am going to ask you a question."

"Go ahead, my padishah."

"What did the cezve¹ say to the fire, and what did the fire say to the cezve?"

The vizier considered this for some time but was neither able to give an answer nor even able to understand the basis for the question. He finally said, "I do not know any answer. What do you mean by this question?"

The padishah said, "You have been my vizier for ever so long, but I should execute any vizier who does not have an answer to my question

"In that case, my padishah, give me five or ten days to ponder this question. Allow me to think about it and then give you my answer."

¹A small pot with a long handle and a short spout used for making Turkish coffee.

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"Very well. Take fifteen days to discover the answer."

The vizier left the palace and walked home very thoughtfully. When he arrived at his own house, his appearance worried his wife. "What are you thinking about so deeply?" she asked him.

"The padishah asked me a difficult question about such and such. I do not know any answer to that question, but unless I discover an answer within fifteen days, I shall be executed. Prepare some food for fifteen days' travel around the country in search of an answer."

As soon as she had prepared a packet of food for him, they said farewell, and the vizier set out in search of an answer. After he had left the city and walked some distance, he came toward evening to a mill which was occupied at that hour only by the miller himself. He asked the miller, "Brother, will you accept me as a guest of Allah for the night?"²

"Of course I shall," answered the miller. He then locked the door of the mill, and the two started walking

²Few strangers are refused accommodation when they request overnight housing in the name of Allah. It would have to be some unusual, perhaps threatening, circumstance which would cause a householder to deny hospitality.

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to the miller's home, which was in a village quite a way from the mill. They walked and walked in silence. Then the vizier said, "Brother miller, let us make a stair on this road." The miller had no idea what his traveling companion meant by this remark, and so he said nothing. A little later as they were approaching an area of thick brush and trees, the vizier suggested, "Brother miller, although we are two now, let us become four as we pass through this rough territory." But again the vizier's remark meant nothing to the miller.

When they reached the miller's home, he opened the door and said to his guest, "Welcome, brother! Come in!"

Upon entering the house, the vizier saw a girl who was very pretty except for the fact that one of her eyes was turned slightly outward. The guest said, "Brother miller, this is a very attractive room except that one of the corners is crooked." The girl understood what was meant by this remark, but the miller did not

When the guest had been comfortably seated on a cushion, the miller left the room and said to the girl, "Daughter, prepare some food for our guest."

"All right, Father. When our guest entered the main room, he made an interesting remark. Did you understand

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what he meant by it?"

"Believe me, Daughter, I haven't understood half of what he has said since I met him."

"What did he say?"

"He said, 'This room is very attractive except that one of its corners is crooked.' I swear that I was unable to make any sense of that comment."

"He meant," she said, "that your daughter is beautiful but has one eye turned aside." As they were talking in this way, the vizier was able to overhear everything that they said.

The miller said, "He made other strange remarks as we were walking here from the mill, but they meant nothing to me

"What did he say?"

"Well, after we had been walking along silently for some time, he said, 'Brother miller, let us make stairs on this road.' What could such a remark mean?"

"Couldn't you guess what he might have been suggesting?"

"By Allah, it seemed to be only nonsense."

The girl answered, "As you were walking along

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silently, you had nothing to think about except your weariness. He meant, 'Let us talk, for that will lift our spirits and make the journey easier

"Later he made another strange comment," said the miller. "As we were approaching a forested and brushy area, he said, 'We are now two, but let us become four as we enter the thicket ahead.' What a confusing thing to say!"

"He meant, 'Let us each pick up a club so that we can in that way double our strength against any animal that might attack us in the wild place we are approaching.'"

Having listened to this conversation, the vizier went to the kitchen and said, "Allah be praised! My daughter, you are probably the one who can solve the problem which is threatening my life!"

"What is that problem, brother?" asked the miller.

"There is a conundrum which I must solve. Your daughter was clever enough to interpret the remarks I made to you, and so she will probably be clever enough to provide an answer for the conundrum."

The girl brought tea for the men, and while they were drinking it, she set the table for dinner. A short while later she served the meal, which was plain but very tastily

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prepared. Out of courtesy to his host, the vizier said nothing further about his problem until after they had finished eating. He then asked the miller, "May I your permission to explain my trouble to your daughter? She is so clever that she may be able to give me some good advice."

"Yes, of course you may discuss this with her."

"What is the exact nature of your problem?" asked the girl.

"Our padishah has threatened to have me executed unless I can provide answers to these two questions: 'What did the cezve say to the fire, and what did the fire respond to the cezve?'"

"Didn't you know what he meant?"

"No, I didn't. In fact, I could not even make a guess at the meaning."

"The cezve said, 'Fire, the coffee inside of me could overflow so much that it could cause you to down.' The fire answered, 'Cezve, I can boil your coffee hard enough to be so reduced that you yourself would be scorched.'"

"Thank you," said the vizier, "and may Allah be

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pleased with you." After he and his host had made helal³ any obligations they had to each other, they said farewell, and the vizier returned to the

As soon as he arrived there, he went directly to the palace and greeted the padishah exactly fifteen days since they had last met: "Selamünaleyküm."

"Aleykümselam,"⁴ answered the padishah

"Your Majesty, I have found the answers to your questions."

"What are those answers?" asked the ruler.

³Helal/Haram is a Muslim religious concept. That which is helal is that which is permissible according to canonical law. That which is haram is forbidden. There is no obligation or restriction or penalty for taking whatever is helal, but there will inevitably be imposed a penalty of some kind on Judgment Day for doing or taking what is forbidden. To accept something from a donor is helal; to take it or steal it is haram. To do anything morally or religiously improper is haram. Dying or endangering people often declare helal anything they have given to or done for another person, so that No. 2 will not go to Judgment indebted to another (which is haram unless declared helal by the benefactor).

⁴Selamünaleyküm/Aleykümselam--traditional exchange of greetings between Muslims not well acquainted with each other. It means roughly May peace be unto you/And may peace be unto you too. If Selamünaleyküm is not responded to, the speaker should be wary of the one so addressed.

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"The cezve said, 'Fire, I could make the coffee within me overflow and cause you to die down.' The fire then answered, 'Cezve, I could boil your coffee hard enough to be so reduced that you yourself would be scorched.

The padishah asked, "Where did you learn these answers?"

"I learned them, but does it make any difference where I learned them?"

"But I am ordering you to tell me where you learned them

The vizier then answered, "I learned them from the daughter of a miller at such and such a place."

The padishah then said, "No later than early tomorrow morning you are to go and ask for the hand of that girl in marriage to me. Take a group of soldiers with you when you go."

Just as soon as the sun rose the next morning, the vizier set out for the home of that miller, accompanied by several soldiers. He said to the miller, "The padishah has asked for the hand of your daughter in marriage. There was no way in which the miller could refuse, for

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a request from the padishah was in fact an order.

They soon all set off for the palace, where the padishah had had a wedding celebration prepared. After they were married, the padishah said to the miller's daughter, "From now on, you will be my wife and I shall be your husband. Very soon I shall have to depart on a journey which will keep me away from home for a year. In my stable are two horses of the same color, one male and the other female. The female horse will stay with you, and the male will go with me. I also have two dogs of the same color, one male and the other female. The female dog will remain with you, and the male dog will go with me. By the time I return a year from now, the mare must have a colt, the female dog must have a puppy, and you must have borne my first child."⁵

⁵Up to the last paragraph this tale is a variant of Aarne-Thompson type 875 The Clever Peasant Girl, and of Eberhard and Boratav type 235 Der Padishah und das Bauermädchen. In the last paragraph, the narrator confusedly introduces (but does not develop) Aarne-Thompson type 891 The Man Who Deserts His Wife and Sets Her the Task of Bearing Him a Child. See ATON 851 for a variant of this second type.