

Story 2175 (1999 Tape 13)

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The Unusual Will of a Padishah

There was once a padishah who had two sons. Shortly before his death the padishah called these two young men to his presence. He said to them, "Sons, after I die, I want you to have my grave constructed in the form of a small room. Hire a man to be present in that room when the Angels of Death¹ come to question me. Order that man to take note of the conversation between the angels and me, and then have him come here to the palace to report to you everything he had heard in that room. What is said during that conversation should teach you how to treat other people in a manner better than I did."²

After the padishah's death, his sons had constructed

¹In Muslim belief two angels appear at the grave of every newly buried corpse. Those angels are named Munkir and Nekir.

²The angels' function is to question closely the behavior of the corpse during his life on earth. They investigate all of the corpse's earthly actions, attitudes, and thoughts. They are, in effect, preparing a docket of charges to be filed against the corpse on the Day of Judgment. In order to extract the information they are seeking, the angels are often abusive in their treatment of corpses.

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a grave that was in fact a small room with a door at one end. They then searched for a man to eavesdrop on the conversation between their father and the angels. Finally they selected the poorest man of a nearby village to undertake this task. They said, "If you will secretly accompany our father into his roomy grave and later report to us everything said in the conversation between our father and two angels who will come there, we shall give you a fortune."

The poor man agreed to undertake this job and went at once to the cemetery. He then stood waiting by the graveside for the arrival of the questioning angels.

After awhile those two angels appeared. One of them said, "We came here to question one person, but there are two men here. Which one shall we question first?"

The padishah then spoke up, saying, "Question that other man first. He is standing up, and he might run away."

The angels questioned the poor man first. One of them asked, "What do you do for a living?"

The poor man answered, "I am a woodcutter."

The angel asked, "How do you carry the wood you have

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cut?"

"With a rope.

The angel then asked, "Where did you get that rope?"

"From a hardware dealer."

The angel then said, "Where did that hardware dealer get it?"

"How should I know that?" answered the poor man. For making such a remark, the poor man was dealt a hard blow.

One of the angels then asked, "What implement do you use while cutting wood?"

"An axe.

"Where did you get that axe?"

"From a blacksmith," said the poor man.

"Where did the blacksmith get it?"

"How can I be expected to know that?" asked the poor man. Both angels struck him hard for that response, and then they released the poor man.

That villager began to run away, but the sons of the padishah refused to allow him to escape. "Stop, uncle, stop! Don't leave until after you have told us what questions the angels asked our father."

The poor man answered, "I couldn't answer even their

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questions about such simple things as a rope and an axe. I do not know what kinds of things the angels will ask father about, but considering the complex life he he will have a great burden accounting for all of them!"