

Story #75 (Tape 23. - 1961-1962)

Narrator: Kalaycı Mehmet  
(Mehmet the Tinsmith)

Location: Değirmendere, in Silifke  
Kaza, İçel Province

Date: February 1962

Revenge Against the Köse

A man named Ahmet warned his son one day, "Beware of the man who is short-legged, who is named Musa, and who is a köse."<sup>1</sup>

Shortly after the boy had received this warning from his father he went to town to sell an ox that Ahmet wanted to get rid of. After the boy had tried for a couple of hours to find a customer for his ox, he decided that no one was interested in buying it. He was about to start home when a man came up to him and said, "If this ox had had three legs, I would have bought it from you." He went away, but after a short while he came back, looked at the ox, and said to the boy again, "Yes, if this ox had had three legs, I would have bought him from you."

TRICKSTER

The boy thought about this for a while longer, and then, since there seemed to be no other customer interested, he decided to cut off one of the ox's legs. He did this, but when the man returned, he looked at the ox and shook his head. "I do not need a three-legged ox now, but if this ox had all four legs, I would have bought it from you. I will give you a bowl of pilav<sup>2</sup> for this useless ox."

By this time, the young man realized that this man was the köse, for he fitted the description that his father had given of him. He

<sup>1</sup>Musa is a name often given to a köse in tales. It satisfies the requirements of euphony, highly valued in the Turkish language. It is not true that köses are short-legged, but this too is an attribute they are given in tales.

<sup>2</sup>Rice cooked with pine nut kernels; sometimes meat is also added.

refused to sell Musa the ox for a bowl of pilav. Instead, he cut the throat of the ox, skinned it, and pushed the carcass into the river. He put the ox hide on a stick, put the stick over his shoulder, and carried it home in that manner.

When he reached home, his father asked him, "How did you fare at the market?"

"I met the man you had warned me against," said the boy. Then he told his father all that had happened.

"Don't worry, son," said his father, "for we shall get the value of the ox out of him yet."

Toward the end of the next day Ahmet got on his horse and rode to the home of the köse. He went there late enough so that he had to be invited to be an overnight guest. He stayed for the night with the köse, and the köse put his horse in his own barn and fed it. The next morning, when it was time for him to leave, Ahmet went to the barn ahead of the köse, and he shoved two gold coins into the horse's anus. After the köse arrived at the barn, the horse defecated, and, much to his amazement, he saw in the manure the two gold coins. Ahmet carefully picked out these coins but said nothing to the köse. The köse asked him, "Will you sell me this horse?"

Defecating gold

"Why should I sell a horse that produces gold coins in this way?" asked Ahmet.

"Well, I shall pay you whatever price you ask," said the köse.

After he had paid Ahmet four bags of gold for the horse, the köse asked, "Do you think that this horse could produce more than two pieces of gold a day?"

"Yes," answered Ahmet, "the better you feed him, the more he will produce."

The köse then tied the horse between a bag of barley, with the top rolled down, and a tub of water. The horse could eat all the barley it wanted and drink all the water it wanted. The result of this was the death of the horse.

The following day the köse decided to go to Ahmet's house to tell him what had happened. Knowing that the köse would be coming to see him, Ahmet sat along the route he must take. He had with him a rabbit. Previously, Ahmet had given his wife a rabbit exactly like the one he had, and he had told her that an hour later she should bring him that rabbit along with a meal for two consisting of köfte, pilav, and pekmez. When the köse saw Ahmet sitting by the side of the road, he stopped to talk with him. He saw that Ahmet was stroking a rabbit. Ahmet said to the rabbit, "Go home and tell my wife to bring us a meal of köfte, pilav, and pekmez." Then he released the rabbit. After a while, the wife of Ahmet appeared with the meal and with the second rabbit under her arm. The köse was amazed at this performance and he bought the rabbit from Ahmet at a great price.

The köse took the rabbit home, and the next day he wanted to impress some of his friends with the ability of the rabbit. He put the rabbit under his arm and walked with some of his friends to a nearby field. Then he said to the rabbit, "Go home and tell my wife to bring us some şiş kebab."<sup>3</sup> As soon as he released the rabbit, it

<sup>3</sup>Meat roasted on a skewer.

disappeared into the brush and never returned. And the food never arrived from his wife.

Very disappointed, the köse went next day to Ahmet's house to complain about the rabbit. Ahmet had previously bought a long piece of cleaned, dried intestine skin which he had filled with blood and wound around his wife's neck. He had instructed his wife to pretend to be ill-tempered when the köse came to call. After the köse had arrived and he and Ahmet were talking, Ahmet said to his wife, "Bring me some tea." She ignored him. Then he shouted at her, "Bring me some tea!" But again she ignored him. At that point, he got up, took a knife, and pretended to cut his wife's throat. Blood ran everywhere, and the köse was aghast. Ahmet then said that he regretted his rash act and that he would cure his wife. He took some white powder from his pocket, sprinkled it over his wife's bleeding throat, and, in a few minutes, she stood up on her feet again.

The köse was amazed at this, and he bought from Ahmet a quantity of the powder at a very high price. Shortly after this he invited some of his friends in to give them a demonstration of his new healing ability. He pretended to become impatient with his wife, and then he jumped up and really cut her throat from ear to ear. His friends were about to leave his house, but he asked them to remain, saying, "Wait, friends, I shall restore her to life." He sprinkled some of the white powder on her throat, but, of course, she did not revive. She was dead as a stone. Then he realized that he had been deceived again.