

Story #101 (Tape #19, 1961-1962)

Narrator: Mehmet Ali Çetin

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The Köse Miller Loses the Tale-Telling Contest

One day a man sent his son to take a donkey load of wheat to be ground at a mill. Before the son left home, he made it a point that he should not go to the Köse's mill, because the Köse had a reputation for being dishonest. The younger man stopped at a mill and asked, "Whose mill is this?"

"The Köse's mill."

"Oh, I should not have come here. I should have gone to the mill farther on."

But before he reached the second mill, the Köse walked rapidly by a short cut and reached the mill before him. The young man asked, "Whose mill is this?"

The Köse said, "It is the Köse's mill."

The young man said, "Oh, I should have walked farther and reached another mill."

But the Köse again reached the next mill before the young man and told him it also was the Köse's mill.

The young man finally returned to the first mill and decided to have the wheat ground there, no matter what happened.

The Köse planned to play a trick on the young man. The Köse said, "Young man, let us bake some bread. I shall provide the water and the salt, and you provide the flour."

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"All right," the young man said, and he agreed to this and put some flour into a kettle. The Köse poured too much water on the flour. The young man said, "What did you do, Köse?"

"Well, son," the Köse said, "put in some more flour to make it thicker."

The young man put some more flour in. This time, it was too thick. To thin it, the Köse poured in water, but again he poured in too much. In this way the young man's flour was all used up. After kneading the dough, they began to bake it. They baked a loaf of bread, but the Köse suggested that before they ate it, they should have a contest. Whoever could tell the best tale would eat it. The young man agreed to this, and the Köse began his tale.

"Once I planted watermelons on an acre of land by the sea. In time, the watermelons came up, and the vine of one of them grew so much that it stretched right into the middle of the sea. A huge melon grew on the end of the vine. I went to get it one day, but when I cut it, my knife slipped and dropped inside the melon and was lost. So I dived into that melon after my knife. There I met an old man with a white beard who asked me, 'What are you looking for, son?'

"'I am looking for the knife I lost here,' I said.

"The old man said, 'I have lost a whole caravan here. If I cannot find that, how could you possibly find a little knife?'"

The Köse ended his tale there and said, "Now let us hear your story."

The young man began, "Once we had a lame bee. It became lost one day. I looked everywhere for it, but I could not find it. Then I climbed up to the top of a needle and looked from there and saw my lame bee put to work pulling a threshing board [döğen, normally pulled by oxen or

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horses] in a faraway village. I put the saddle on my cock and rode to that village. I took my lame bee back to my house, but when I reached home and took the saddle off the cock, I noticed it had rubbed the cock's back sore.

"Someone said, 'Rub its back with walnuts.'

"When I rubbed the cock's back with walnuts, a walnut tree started growing there. School children threw so much earth and so many stones at the tree [to get the walnuts down] that there was soon a field several acres wide on top of the walnut tree. Then I decided to plow the field and sow barley in it. I took my oxen up there, plowed it, and sowed barley, which in time grew and became ripe. I saw a wild boar in the field. I threw my sickle at the boar and it caught in the boar's hoof and as the boar ran, it reaped all the barley in the field."

The Kóse said, "That is enough. You have won."