

Story #116
Tape 18, 1961-1962

Narrator: Neriman Şahin, 14
Location: Damlama village,
kaza of Tarsus;
foothills of Taurus
Date: March 1962

CRAZY BROTHER

The Crazy Man and His Wise Brother

There was a time in the past when there was in a village a crazy man and his wise brother. The villagers did not like the crazy man because his children defecated in the streets in front of other people's houses. The villagers picked up the excrement and threw it on the roof of the crazy one, but he did not mind this at all; he simply dried it, put it into bags, and then one day loaded it all on his donkey. He started to the nearest town with his load.¹

On the way to the town he came to a well, and there he stopped to rest. As he sat resting, he saw a caravan coming along. He unloaded his bags from the donkey, and then lay down and pretended that he was asleep. When the caravan drivers arrived at the well, their leader said, "Let us take this man's sacks and leave two of our own instead."

After the caravan had taken water from the well it departed. Then the crazy man got up and took the two sacks left by the caravan. He found that they were filled with gold. When he got home with them, he said to his wife, "Go and borrow the scales from my brother, and we shall measure the gold that we have gotten."

She went to her brother-in-law's house and said, "Let us borrow scales

¹There are countless Turkish folktales in which either a trickster or a dummer parlays bags of dung into wealth; usually it is a köse whose neighbors abuse him by defecating down his chimney.

"What are you going to do with them?" asked her brother-in-law.

"Weigh flour," she said

The brother of the crazy man was suspicious of this, and so he stuck some tar to the bottom of the scales and then he let the woman borrow them. She took the scales home and they weighed all the gold from the two bags. When she took the scales back to her brother-in-law, the woman did not notice that two small pieces of gold had stuck in the bottom.²

The next day, the wise brother came to the crazy man and said me with you when you go after more gold." So that day they searched the countryside around the well for the place where the caravan went. found a cave in a grove of trees, and there they found the treasures of the caravan owners. They took home a bag of gold apiece.

The next day the wise brother wanted still more gold, and this time he went alone. He went to the cave again, and he was still there when the caravan returned. He hid in the cave.

One of the caravan drivers said, "I smell a human being around here somewhere."³ Finally they found the wise brother, and the leader of the caravan drivers said to him, "Where are you from?" But the wise brother said nothing. They fed him for a week, and every day they asked him this same question, but still he kept quiet. Then they killed him and hung his body over a fence and went away with their camels again.

Blood detection

²It is virtually inevitable that borrowed scales will reveal to the lender that the borrower has been weighing gold or other precious material; pitch, pekmez, or some other sticky substance is applied to the scoop; the borrower never detects this, nor does he see the gold that has stuck to it.

³The caravan drivers here take on the role of ogres or giants; they are not human beings, for they can smell human blood. This is clearly a running together of two different tales.

Story #116

After his brother had been missing for several days, the crazy man became worried about him. He went to the cave of the caravan owners and said, "Open shop!"⁴ The cave door opened, and then he saw the body of his brother, all mutilated, hanging over a fence. He gathered up the pieces of his brother's body, put them all in a saddlebag, and took them to a shoemaker. He gave the shoemaker some money and said to him, "Sew all these limbs together again." Then he gave his brother a decent burial.

When the caravan came back to the cave that night, the leader said, "We had some human flesh here hanging on the fence. What happened to it?" When they could not find the body, they all went to the village coffee house and tried to discover who had been in their cave. They heard there about the body that had been sewn together by the shoemaker. They gave the shoemaker money to tell them whose body it was, and they learned that the body was that of the brother of the crazy man.

After they returned to the cave, the leader said to his forty caravan drivers, "I shall put each of you in a deerskin and load you on the camels. I will say that I am peddling 40 deerskins of pekmez.⁵ We shall go to the home of the crazy man at sunset, and he will invite me to dinner. After dinner, when it is dark, I shall come out and release you from the deerskins, and then we shall kill that crazy man."

⁴This "Open Sesame" type of magic password is identified with the familiar take of the Arabian Nights entitled "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves." This password was not used earlier in the tale, though clearly the tale ends with a Turkish variant of the conclusion of the Ali Baba story. The child narrator of this tale seems to have assembled here a potpourri of motifs from several different types of tales.

⁵Pekmez (boiled-down, condensed grape juice) is often carried in goat skins on beasts of burden.

Story #116

They went to the home of the crazy man, and the leader was invited into his house for dinner. The crazy man had his wife cook a good meal. As her husband and his guest were eating their dinner, she went into the courtyard and there she heard someone talking. She heard a voice coming from one of the bags on the camels of the stranger, "Shall we come out now?"

"Not yet," she said.

She then went into the house again and heated all the skewers she owned. She heated them until they were red hot, and then she went to the yard and stuck a red-hot skewer into each of the deerskin bags. After she had killed all forty of the caravan drivers in this way, she came up behind the caravan leader, as he was talking with her crazy husband, and she stuck a red-hot skewer into him, too.

The next day the crazy man took the camels and went to the cave of the caravan owners. There he loaded all their gold on the camels. He took it to the village and distributed it to all the people there. They dug a large hole and buried all the bodies that same day.