Stuck to Some Great Door

Once there were three brothers. Since they were tired of working in their village, they decided to go to the city to work. On their way, they came across a dervish who asked them, "Where are you going, my sons?"

"We are going to the city to work. We are tired of working in the village," the brothers answered.

Then the dervish gave them some advice: "When you reach the city, each of you choose a different road. Go in three separate directions. Always adhere to the rich, and avoid the poor." Mehmet interpreted the advice as "Stick to the doors of the rich and avoid the doors of the poor."

When they reached the city, the brothers went in separate directions. After having walked for some time, Mehmet stopped at a house. Deciding the house belonged to rich people, he rubbed tar on his back and stuck himself to the door of the house. A sergeant and his wife lived in that house. The sergeant would come home from his duties only twice a week, and that day he happened to be home. He was taking leave of his wife.

The narrator knew this tale as "Aptal Mehmet" (Foolish Mehmet). Because our variants, collected earlier, were entitled "Stuck to Some Great Door," we have retained that title here.

In former times a sergeant in the Turkish army had more affluence than a soldier of similar rank has today.
when strange sounds at the door were heard. He and his wife debated as to what could cause the sounds, and they decided it was the wind at the door. When it was time for the sergeant to go, he opened the door and found a man stuck to his door. He asked, 'What are you doing here like this?'

Mehmet explained, 'My brothers and I came across a dervish on our way to the city. The dervish advised us to stick to the doors of the rich people, so I stuck to yours.'

The sergeant asked, 'Would you be interested in working for us? You can wait on my wife while I'm gone.'

Mehmet accepted the offer and started working for the sergeant. The sergeant's wife was in the habit of taking afternoon naps. That day she said to Mehmet, 'I'm going to take my nap now. Be good and do not make any noise.'

Mehmet waited patiently as his mistress slept. When the clock struck the hour, he tried to stop it so that the noise would not awaken the sleeping woman. He said to the clock, 'Be quiet now. The sergeant's wife is sleeping.' Seeing the clock would not obey his orders, he smashed it.

The breaking sound woke up the woman, and she asked Mehmet, 'What happened?'

'Well,' Mehmet answered sheepishly, 'I told this thing on the wall to stop making noise, but it didn't. So I broke it.'

'All right,' his mistress answered. 'Be good next time.'

The next day while the sergeant's wife was taking her afternoon nap, Mehmet saw a black cat walking up the stairs. He threatened the cat.
"You black boy over there, the mistress is sleeping upstairs, so don't go up there." But the cat continued walking up the stairs. Mehmet became furious, grabbed a stick, and started chasing the cat. The frightened animal took refuge on a shelf in the kitchen and knocked down the plates on the shelf. The noise again wakened the sergeant's wife.

When Mehmet explained what had happened, she scolded him: "Stupid boy! How could the poor cat know what you were talking about?"

The third day when the sergeant's wife was taking a nap, Mehmet became bored and decided to make some coffee for his mistress. He made the coffee, and as he was taking it upstairs on a tray, he saw his image in a mirror. He warned the man in the mirror, "Don't take any coffee to the mistress because I am taking it." When his warning was unheeded, he took a club and struck the head of the man in the mirror. The breaking of the mirror woke up the sergeant's wife from her nap. Once more Mehmet gave a poor excuse for having interrupted her nap.

The following day the sergeant came home. He arranged with his wife to have a mevlût3 at their house and employed Mehmet to invite the guests. The sergeant told Mehmet to extend the invitation with half a mouth.4 Mehmet went to the houses of the sergeant's friends and invited 81f18.

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1. The Turkish expression "with half a mouth" is equivalent to the English "half heartedly." Mehmet takes the expression literally.

2. Mevlût, written by Suleyman Çelebi (buried at Bursa) is a long poetic work in honor of the birth of Mohammed. It is sung and performed by a group of singers and instrumentalists. Although it may be performed for other purposes, it is primarily a ceremony in honor of someone who has died. Loosely comparable to a requiem mass. It used to be performed forty days after the death of the person so honored, but it may be performed at any time one can afford it. Since it requires the services of several performers, usually including a hodja or imam, and since it is customary to treat the audience to sweets and sherbert, a mevlût service is expensive and cannot be afforded very often by most people.
them to attend the mevlût to be held the next day. As he spoke, he covered half of his mouth with his hand, explaining that he was supposed to invite them "half-mouthedly."

About one o'clock in the afternoon of the following day the guests began to arrive. The sergeant told Mehmet to turn the guests' shoes. Mehmet obediently started to turn the shoes inside out. He, of course, had to work extremely hard to do so. He succeeded in turning inside out all the regular shoes, but did not have much luck with a pair of boots. In the meantime the sergeant called Mehmet to ask whether his orders had been obeyed. Mehmet replied, "I turned all the shoes, Sir, except one."

"What kind of shoes are those?" the sergeant asked curiously. When he came out and saw what Mehmet had done, he was astounded: "I did not ask you to turn the shoes this way. I should have believed my wife when she told me what a foolish boy you are." The sergeant had the guests' shoes repaired so that they could return to their homes after the mevlût.

The day after the mevlût the sergeant fell sick and called Mehmet to his bedside: "Mehmet, I am sick in my stomach. Go to the market and get me some kilermeni." Mehmet went to the market place and began removing the hats of the men there. Each time he did this he would ask, "Are you an Armenian?" He finally found a bald man and asked him, "Are you an

5In most homes in rural Turkey shoes are not worn. They are left at the door. A courteous host usually sees to it that the shoes are turned around to face outward, so that the departing guests can slip their feet into them more easily. Mehmet, who should know better, interprets the expression literally and, by great force, turns the shoes inside out.

6kilermeni—a folk medicine for digestive ailments made from an oily clay. The word kil means clay; Armeni means Armenian. So, the sergeant sent Mehmet for some "Armenian clay," or "clay of Armenia." Mehmet thinks he says kilermeni. The word kel means bald. Foolish Mehmet therefore searches for a bald Armenian. There is a dimension to this episode that non-Turkish listeners might not appreciate. The Armenians are an ethnic group about which Turks tell many humorous tales. The Armenian is one of the standard types in the Karagöz plays.
Armenian?" When the man said he was, Mehmet ordered, "Let's go; the sergeant needs you."

When the sergeant heard Mehmet return, he asked, "Have you got my kilarman, Mehmet?"

"Yes, I have," Mehmet answered.

"In that case, first pound it, then soak it in water and bring it to me." Foolish Mehmet pounded the Armenian as hard as he could, and then he dumped the poor man in a tub of water and took him to the sergeant.

When the sergeant saw the mess Mehmet had caused, he became furious and said, "Get out of here, you fool! You have given me nothing but trouble."