

Story #646 (1974, Tape #50)

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Location: Limonlu village, kaza of  
Mersin, Province of İçel

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Behlül Dane Sells Skulls

*hobby - horse*

Behlül Dane played horsey with the children in the street. The on-lookers, seeing such unseemly behavior, went to the Caliph<sup>1</sup> and told him that his brother spent his time playing horsey on the street, and they suggested he should buy his brother a shop. There, at least, he would be required to sit all day, and thus he would not be seen in the streets playing with children.

The Caliph called his brother, and said, "Behlül Dane, take this money and go buy yourself a shop and sit henceforth in the shop tending to your business."

Behlül Dane took the money and hired some workers. He took them to the cemetery and had them dig out the skulls of the dead. Then he had the graves closed and took the skulls to town where he bought a shop, as his brother had told him to do. He lined up all the skulls on the shop window. His brother, the Caliph, came to see how his brother was faring. He walked around in the shop and saw nothing but skulls in it. He asked, "Behlül Dane, what is this?"

<sup>1</sup>The legendary saintly fool Behlül Dane was supposedly a half brother of the great Abbassid caliph, Harun al-Raschid, who flourished c. 800.

Behlül Dane answered, "They are skulls. I am selling skulls."

The Caliph asked him, "Well, how much is this skull?"

And the brother replied, "That one is 5 liras."

Then the Caliph asked, "How much is this one?"

And Behlül Dane promptly replied, "That one is 100 liras."

The Caliph stood there perplexed, and finally he asked, "What do you mean one is 5 and the other is 100 liras? They are both skulls."

Behlül Dane replied, "Oh, but there is a difference. The first one is like your head, worth 5 liras, whereas the second one is like mine, worth 100 liras!"