

Story 682 (1976, Tape 9)

Narrator: Lütfive Göbelez, 47

Location: Yakıcık village  
Soğut kaza  
Bilecik Province

Date: August 1976

Tape name

#682

Crazy Mehmet<sup>1</sup>

Once there was and once there was not a man called Crazy Mehmet. Every day he went into the forest to chop wood, and every evening he brought back a load of wood. He was not at all interested in money, for he did not even know what it could be used for. His mother was very concerned about him. One day she said to him, "My son, you chop and carry wood every day, but you get nothing for yourself from

<sup>1</sup>This is not a tale in the ordinary sense. The narrator (possibly mentally deficient) had no awareness of what constitutes a tale. This chaotic jumble is included in the Archive holdings largely as a testimonial to the oral ambience in which the narrator lived. With apologies to Shakespeare's Moth, "She has been at a great feast of folktales and taken away a few motifs."

It is obvious that she has heard many folktales, for what she tells here on tape is an illogical collage of themes and motifs from several well-known Turkish tales. There are tales about a character called "Mehmet the Mad" or "Crazy Mehmet," but that character has some method to his madness. He is actually a clever young man who, though previously unsuccessful, exploits every opportunity that comes his way in the tale and, as a result, becomes rich.

Several tales in the Archive contain clever men who... the owner in order to dispose of the body secretly and thus prevent any scandal or prosecution by the law.

Borrowings from other tales, in a catch-as-catch-can fashion, will be pointed out in Notes as they occur.

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of this work. I think that you should at least buy yourself a horse."

Trickster -- mad -- ~~rich~~ <sup>richer</sup> Later Crazy Mehmet went to work in a rich household. One day he dug the body of a dead child from its grave, took Child - dead -- <sup>exhumed from grave</sup> cupboard <sup>Later</sup> <sup>by trickster -- who</sup> <sup>is then paid well</sup> <sup>secretly</sup> <sup>to dispose of it</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>corpse</sup> <sup>secretly</sup> <sup>to earn money</sup> <sup>wealthy have --</sup> <sup>hide a body in</sup> <sup>dead child and</sup> it to that wealthy house, and put it in a cupboard. Later that day the people of the house called, "Mehmet, bring such-and-such food from the cupboard."

Mehmet went to the cupboard, opened the door, and started to scream, "Come here! There is something here!"

They came and looked, and when they saw what it was, they said, "Mehmet, take this child away from here. Put it anywhere you wish, but do not tell anyone about it. If you will do this, we shall give you all of the geese in the coop." <sup>Original</sup> <sup>sound geese make</sup> <sup>on a step --</sup>

After he had disposed of the dead baby, Mehmet went to coop, and he heard all the geese crying, "Gigil, gigil, gigil." He said to them, "Have you been waiting for me

<sup>Simplotan -- delouses</sup> <sup>you</sup> <sup>geese by dipping</sup> <sup>them in boiling</sup> <sup>water -- and</sup> <sup>killing them</sup> until now? Never mind! Now I shall wash all the lice off you so that you will be comfortable." He boiled a large pot of water and thrust each goose headfirst into it. Then he laid them all in a row, and they did not move at all,

because they were dead. Mehmet asked them, "Are you sleeping well now?" The owner of that house and his wife

<sup>Geese -- deloused -- by simplotan --</sup> <sup>who dip them</sup> <sup>in boiling water</sup> <sup>and kills them</sup> later went to see what Mehmet had done with the geese, and

<sup>Delousing -- at geese -- by simplotan --</sup> <sup>who dip them</sup> <sup>in boiling water -- and</sup> <sup>kills them</sup>

they found them all dead.

*- thinking furrows is  
road by vein are chapped*  
On the next day it rained hard, and the running water  
left little furrows in the soil. Mehmet saw these lines  
*- covers rain all*  
and thought that they were the chapped hands of people.  
*kinda  
with  
man*  
Taking his sister-in-law's trousseau, he covered all of

the muddy cracks with her clothes. When people discovered these two things that Mehmet had done, they asked him, "Oh Mehmet, Crazy Mehmet, what did you think you were doing?"

Mehmet answered, "Well, the geese could not sleep because the lice were bothering them so much. Therefore, I washed their heads and spread them on the ground to dry. I also covered these people here. Their hands were chapped from the cold and the rain, and so I covered them."<sup>2</sup>

Mehmet's mother had now become so poor that she and the other members of the family had become beggars. They picked up the clothes that Mehmet had spread on the ground. The members of the family talked together about Mehmet and about what they should do with him. Some said that they should take him to a lonely place and kill him. Others

<sup>2</sup>These are two of the escapades of various pairs of fools in Turkish silly tales. One such pair, known as Hıllılı and Dıllılı, scald to death a whole henhouse full of chickens to relieve them of their lice. Later they are given bolts of fine cloth as gifts. En route home with this cloth, they hear trees creaking in the wind, and they conclude that the trees are moaning from the bitter cold weather. Accordingly, they use their hundreds of yards of fine cloth to wrap the trees to protect them against the cold.

-- fence  
2 never this <sup>of Mehmet</sup> there to chop wood  
near to house H

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said that they should take him to some lonely place and just abandon him there. Finally, they took Crazy Mehmet to a mountain and gave him an axe. They said to him, "Mehmet, this is your skill. Stay here and chop wood all the time." Then they left him there, and Crazy Mehmet did nothing all the time but chop wood and pile it up.<sup>3</sup>

One day a wealthy man went to that mountain and he found Mehmet there. He said to him, "My son, what are you doing here? What happened to you?"

Crazy Mehmet answered, "Well, this is what happened and that is what happened. Then they brought me here and said, 'This is your skill. Chop wood all the time

That man took Mehmet home with him to his palace. They entered the palace together. That man had three daughters, all of them very beautiful. The man said to him, "My son, if you improve, I shall marry you to one of these girls."<sup>4</sup>

daught -- three -- beautiful  
three daughters -- beautiful

<sup>3</sup>Children are often abandoned in folk tales--often by their parents, often in a deep, dark forest. It does not make much sense, however, to have a full-grown man abandoned and unable to find his way back to civilization

<sup>4</sup>Numerous folktales in Turkey (and in many other areas) have a king or wealthy man with three daughters, one of whom the protagonist wishes to marry, or one of whom the protagonist is given in marriage for some achievement of his. --If the narrator had been more intelligent, one would have had to suspect that this "tale," with the ignominious death of its "hero," was a parody on the traditional folktale!

After Crazy Mehmet heard this, he was so excited that he could not sleep any that night. The next day while he was thinking about which of the girls he should marry, he fell into a deep well and died. That is the end of the story

plota daydream of marrying beaut daughter  
A patron falls into well and drowns