

Story 791 (1970 Tape 15)

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The <sup>1</sup>Kadı and the Stolen Honey

Once in the past there was a coffeehouse keeper named Crazy Mehmet. Who would patronize a coffeehouse like his? Other people as crazy as he, of course! One night the regular patrons who were assembled there wondered what they might do for fun. They decided that they would steal the honey from one of the beehives of Hacı<sup>2</sup> Ahmet.

*They went*  
It was snowing hard when they went to take the combs of honey from one of Hacı Ahmet's hives. When they were about to load the honey buckets on their backs, however, the snow had stopped.

In the morning they went to Crazy Mehmet's coffeehouse as usual and started their amusements. That morning when Hacı Ahmet arose, he found the honey missing from one of his hives. Looking around briefly, he put on his fur coat.

<sup>1</sup> A kadı was a judge of şeriat (canonical) law before the time of the Turkish Republic. In folktales they are almost always pictured as being corrupt.

<sup>2</sup> The word hacı means pilgrim. After one has completed the pilgrimage to Mecca, he/she is given the honorific title Pilgrim (Hacı) to precede his/her name.

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went straight to Crazy Mehmet's coffeehouse. "Selâmuna-  
leyküm,"<sup>3</sup> he said. He then looked around the coffeehouse  
and departed without saying another word.

After he had gone, Crazy Mehmet said, "Friends, I did  
like the way in which Hacı Ahmet came here, looked  
about the coffeehouse, and then suddenly left."

Others were also disturbed by the behavior of Hacı  
Ahmet. One of them asked, "What shall we do?"

Crazy Mehmet said, "You will each give me one-fourth  
of a silver lira." After he had collected one-fourth of a  
silver lira from each of them, he went right to the kadı 54-55  
of that town. The kadı had only just arrived at his office.  
Crazy Mehmet said to him, "Selâmüna~~leyküm~~---one!"

The kadı looked him over from crown to toe, guessing  
that something would come out of this. He felt that there  
was something underlying this situation. He therefore  
responded, "Aleyküselâm~~---~~you!"<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Moslems greet each other with this expression: Peace  
be with you. They are then answered with the complementary  
greeting Aleyküselâm--And may peace be with you too.  
Although there is not given here any response from the  
coffeehouse habitues, it can be assumed that it was given.  
If one doubted the integrity or Moslem faith of a stranger  
saying, "Selâmünaleyküm," then one would refuse to respond  
"Aleyküselâm." Such a refusal would be an indication of  
rejection and a warning to the stranger. Here Hacı Ahmet  
is a fellow townsman and would automatically be answered in  
the conventional manner.

<sup>4</sup> There seems to be no logical meaning to the words one

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Crazy Mehmet said, "The bees of Hacı Ahmet buzz. When it snowed, footprints were covered up. When it did snow, footprints were not covered up

The kadı stroked his beard and guessed that someone had stolen either Hacı Ahmet's bees or his honey. He asked, "How many of you were there?"

"We were five."

*B. Berg* "In that case," said the kadı, "you should line up five quarter-liras beneath my mat and leave by that side. If Hacı Ahmet comes to the court, we shall see to his affair, too."

Shortly after Crazy Mehmet had left, Hacı Ahmet, wearing his fur coat, rushed into the kadı's office without even knocking on the door. He shouted, "Your honor! Your honor! Do you know what that fellow called Crazy Mehmet did last night?"

The kadı said, "Look at this man! See how he enters a courtroom! Throw him out!"

The kadı's attendants did throw out Hacı Ahmet, and the matter ended there.<sup>5</sup>

and you after the initial greeting and its response respectively. This is just nonsense banter to indicate that the matter is not an ordinary one.

<sup>5</sup> In their verbal exchange both Hacı and kadı use several words ending with such suffixes as -viz, -siz, -diz, and -biz to imitate the buzz of bees. This verbal play is lost in the translation.