

Story 882 (1964 Tape 2)

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Location: Görele, a kaza town
in Giresun Province

Date: August 1964

Three Foolish Hunters

There were three of us foolish hunters and we were named Ese, Musa, and Köse.¹ One day we went out hunting, all of us carrying old-fashioned guns, breechless, flintless muzzle-loaders. We went out, and while we were hunting, we saw an unborn rabbit by an ungrown poison plant.² These three famous hunters grabbed their muzzle-loading guns, saying, "Please let me shoot first!" In fact, they argued among themselves about which would shoot first, but Köse interfered and solved the problem. It was agreed that Ese should shoot first. He missed the unborn rabbit, and then Musa shot, and he missed it too. Next it was Köse's turn, and he shot the unborn rabbit with his breechless, flintless gun.

¹ The köse is a vicious trickster type in Turkish folk-tales, a beardless man of shrewdness and ruthlessness. There are many tales told about the type. In this tale Köse seems to be simply a name that rhymes with Ese and Musa. He has none of the characteristics of the köse type.

² The narrator called it simply an ağu plant--that is, a poison plant. What species it is is in no way suggested.

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We took the rabbit and continued on our way. Just before we reached a plain, we came to a village in which there were only three houses. Two of them lay completely in ruins, and the third one had no roof. We entered the house without a roof. We found three old women in that house, two of them dead and the third with no life. We asked the one without life for a pan in which to cook our rabbit. She said, "Young men, I have three pans here. Look at them, see which you like best, and take that one." We examined the three pans and found that two of them had their sides stove in and the third had no bottom. After discussing the matter, we finally decided to take the third one.

Taking the bottomless pan, we continued on our way, descending to the plain, where we came upon three streams, two of which were dry, and the third had no water. The hunters said, "We are tired, and this is a good place to rest. Let us stay here and cook our rabbit." We filled our bottomless pan with water from the waterless stream. Then we cleaned our unborn rabbit, and after lighting a fire, we put it on to cook. When it had cooked thoroughly, we started eating it. We ate and ate and ate, but we were unable to eat anything, and we couldn't ask, "Is there any more?" Neither could our eyes see it nor our stomachs get enough of it.

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Then Köse stood up and said, "Did you see your friend when before was before, and when before was the time when the hen was the imam³ and the cock a town crier?"

I was the hunter who shot the unborn rabbit with the breechless, flintless gun by the ungrown poison plant, and that was the end of the trip

³ The imam is the man who conducts the prayer services in the mosque. The fact that no female, hen or other female creature, would be an imam is in keeping with the overall absurdity of the tale.