

Story 2049 (Transcribed from
Atatürk İlkokulu tape.)

Narrator: Fatma Yurt

Location: Karacabey, kaza
town of Bursa
Province

Date: Spring 1966

The Gold-Giving Dragon

Once there was and once there was not a man named Uncle¹ Ali. After his wife died, there was only his son, Mehmet, to live with him.

There was a mountain just outside of their village, and on the southeast slope of that mountain there was a cave in which a dragon lived. Uncle Ali became a close friend of that dragon. Every morning after milking his cow, Uncle Ali took some of the milk to the dragon. After drinking the milk, the grateful dragon always left a piece of gold in the bowl for Uncle Ali. This relationship between the man and the dragon went on for many years.

When Mehmet had become fifteen or sixteen years old, his father said to him one day, "Son, I have long wished to take a trip that would last for several days, but until now, you were too young to be left alone. Now you

¹There is no indication why this character is so named. He has no avuncular function in the tale. Sometimes, however, older men are called uncle as a gesture of deference or affection.

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are old enough to take care of yourself during my absence. While I am gone, there are two daily chores which I want you to perform. Milk our cow in the early morning and the late afternoon every day. After the morning milking, take a bowl of milk to the dragon that lives in a cave on the southeast side of our mountain. Don't be afraid, for he will not harm you. I have already told him about you. When you reach the mouth of his cave, call 'Şağmerdan'² three times. Then he will come to you, drink the milk, and leave a gold coin in the bowl. But, Son, never tell anyone about this.³ Continue doing this chore every day until I return."

Mehmet answered, "All right, Father, I shall do as you have instructed me." After his father had departed, Mehmet began doing the chores that his father had assigned

²What does Şağmerdan mean? The narrator may be confusing the dragon with Şahmeran, King of Snakes.

³The secret which Uncle Ali enjoins upon Mehmet strengthens the possibility that the young narrator is confusing the dragon with Şahmeran. The king of snakes lived continuously in hiding lest human beings kill him for the valuable medicinal qualities of parts of his body. Any person who accidentally came upon Şahmeran's underground dwelling was permitted to leave only after he/she had taken an oath not to reveal his whereabouts to anyone. Finally a young visitor whom he permitted to return to the upper world broke his vow of secrecy, an act which cost Şahmeran his life.

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to him. After time had passed one day, three days, five days, Mehmet began to wonder where the dragon's gold came from. He was not carrying any coin when he came out of his cave. He did not return to the cave for a coin after he had drunk the milk. After thinking about this for awhile, Mehmet concluded that the coins must be coming from within the dragon itself. "The only possible source of those coins," Mehmet thought, "must be the stomach of the dragon."

After thinking about this matter for a day or two, Mehmet decided to kill the dragon and take from its body the whole treasure of gold at once instead of walking back and forth day after day to get it one coin at a time. The next morning he went to the dragon's cave as usual, but this time he concealed an axe within his clothing. While the dragon was drinking its milk, Mehmet intended to kill it with the axe. But the dragon, somehow sensing the boy's intention, lashed out with his tail and killed Mehmet