

Story 901 (Faculty Reel
2--Dil ve Tarih-
Coğrafya Fakul-
tesi, English
Department)

Narrator: Ali Çuga, odacı at
Hacettepe University

Location: Ulutepe village,
Turhal kaza, Tokat
Province

Date: 1966

The Prophetic Dream

TEK Once there was and once there was not, when God's people were many, and it was a sin to talk too much but a virtue to say little. Well, back then, when the sieve was in the straw,¹ there was a woodcutter with an only son whom he had named Mulla Mehmet. One day when Mulla Mehmet was in school, his teacher said to the class, "If you should have a dream, do not tell it to anyone unless that person first says, 'May it be auspicious!'"

One night shortly after that, Mulla Mehmet had a dream. After he had arisen on the following morning, he sat thinking deeply about this dream. Noticing this, his mother asked, "What are you thinking about, Son?"

"Mother, I had a dream last night, and that is what I am thinking about."

¹This tale opens with parts of a well-known tekerleme, a nonsense jingle used to introduce a folktale in Turkish. In threshing the ground-up wheat, stalks are separated from the wheat grains by means of a wide-mesh sieve. The sieve would not be in the straw; the straw would be in the sieve. The tekerleme is made up of such absurdities in order to stimulate the listeners to alertness and thus readiness to hear the forthcoming tale.

for
under
31:134
14

Story 901

"Well, why don't you tell me about your dream?"

"No, I cannot tell it to you, Mother."

"Tell me what you dreamed, Son. Why don't you?" When he refused to do so, his mother whipped him for his disobedience.

He went outside crying, and there he met his father, was just returning from the forest with a load of firewood that he had cut. His father asked him, "Why are you crying, Son?"

"Because my mother whipped me. That's why."

"Why did she whip you?"

"I had a dream last night, Father, and she asked me to tell it to her. When I refused to do so, she whipped me."

"You did not tell it to your mother, but you will tell it to your father," said the woodcutter.

"No, Father, I shall not tell it to you, either." The father became angry at this and gave the boy a second whipping.

Mulla Mehmet then went off to school, crying. He was sobbing when he entered the classroom, and when the nine-o'clock bell rang to start the lesson, he was still sobbing. He just couldn't stop. All the students were looking at him, and the teacher noticed this. "Son, why are you crying?" he asked.

"Well, both my mother and my father whipped me. That is

why I am crying."

"Why did they whip you?"

"I had a dream which I refused to tell them, and so they whipped me for that."

"You didn't tell them your dream, but you will tell it to me--won't you?"

"No, Teacher, I shall not tell you, either."

"Why won't you tell me?" demanded the teacher, and without waiting for an answer, he started to beat the boy. The boy started crying again. When recess time came, he went outside and sat in a corner of the school garden, still crying.

A ^{.33-134}gendarme² passing along the street overheard his crying and asked him, "Why are you crying?"

"I am a poor orphan boy, and my teacher has beaten me. That is why I am crying."

The gendarme asked, "Would you like to go to Istanbul if I were to take you there?"

"Yes, I would."

The gendarme was actually on his way to Istanbul at that time,

²Most rural areas in Turkey do not have police organizations to maintain law and order. The Ministry of Interior assumes responsibility for doing that. A certain percentage of Turkey's very large standing army is assigned to the Ministry of Interior for that purpose. These troops are then known as gendarmes--a very clear token of the strong French influence of Turkey at the beginning of the 20th century.

Story 901

and so he took Mulla Mehmet along with him. The owner of a ¹³¹⁻¹³⁷ coffeehouse in Istanbul had asked this gendarme to bring him an orphan from a village to become his apprentice. So, now the gendarme took Mulla Mehmet to that coffeehouse and delivered him to the owner.

Mulla Mehmet began working there right away. He was a handsome boy, and his service pleased all the customers. He became so popular that it was not long before the coffeehouse became known as the "Mulla Mehmet Coffeehouse." Everyone used to stop there

Time came, time went, and the owner of the coffeehouse became ill and passed away. Before he died, he said to Mulla Mehmet, "There is a certain amount of gold hidden in such-and-such a column of this building. Find that money after I die, and then run this coffeehouse successfully." It was in this way that Mulla Mehmet inherited everything from his former employer.

One day the padişah of the land suggested to his chief vizier, "Let us go on a tour of inspection tonight. I want to find out how my subjects are faring, what they are doing, whether or not they are enjoying life, or whether they are suffering hardships." Accordingly, they left the palace shortly after sunset to make this tour of the city.

Let us now leave them touring the city, and let us come

Story 901

to see what Mulla Mehmet was doing at the same time. Mulla Mehmet had by this time developed a relationship with the daughter of the padişah. In order to carry on this relationship, he had had a tunnel[?] dug between his coffeehouse and the palace, and it was through this tunnel that he used to go to meet the girl. Late at night Mulla Mehmet would pass through this tunnel to the palace, where he would find his sweetheart. They would spend the night together at the palace, and in the morning Mulla Mehmet would return through the tunnel.

As the padişah and the vizier were making their tour, they decided to stop at Mulla Mehmet's Coffeehouse, about which they had heard so much recently. The padişah said, "Let us drink some tea or coffee there and then continue trip."

After they had entered the coffeehouse and sat down, Mulla Mehmet made coffee for them. He observed them as they were drinking their coffee, but he had no way of knowing that they were the padişah and vizier, for they were traveling in (disguise), dressed in tattered old clothes and looking very shabby, with the hair and beard of each all mixed together³ It was impossible to identify them. Since it was already

³Sometimes this expression is meant literally. At other times it is a metaphor to indicate a generally unkempt condition.

Story 901

late evening, he said to his two customers, "Be my guests and stay here at my house tonight." The two accepted his invitation.

A little later that evening, there was a knock on the door that closed off the underground corridor to the palace. The padişah's daughter had sent a servant to find out why Mulla Mehmet had not made his usual nightly visit to see her. When he opened the corridor door, Mulla Mehmet asked the servant what he wanted. The man said, "Since you have not yet come to the palace this evening, the princess⁴ sent me to call you there."

"You take her my greetings," said Mulla Mehmet, "and tell her that I cannot come tonight because I have guests."

A short while later the servant returned with another message: "The princess says that you are to come and bring your guests with you."

Mulla Mehmet sent back word that they would soon be there. He then took his guests with him to the palace through the tunnel. When they were shown into the dining room of the palace, the padişah looked around and everything seemed familiar to him. When the food was served, forks and spoons were placed on the table. Examining this silverware, the padişah knew that they came from his own kitchen, and yet he could hardly

⁴The narrator does not use the word princess, but Sultan-Hanım--literally, Sultan Lady, which could refer either to the sultan's wife or daughter.

Story

said, "If the Russian, in spite of being a Russian, gives his daughter to the Turk, why shouldn't I do the same? I am also giving my daughter to Mulla Mehmet. Let drums be beaten, and *Wedding* let there be a wedding celebration lasting for forty days and *celebration* forty nights

On the forty-first day the bride and groom were placed in their nuptial chamber. The following morning Mulla Mehmet arose from bed and, after rolling up his sleeves, sat in a chair. Then his Turkish bride took a pitcher and poured water over his hands, while the Russian bride held a hand basin to catch the water.⁶ At this, Mulla Mehmet started laughing. When they saw this, the two girls laid down their pitcher and basin and came to him, one standing on each side of him. "Why did you laugh?"

"It reminded me of something funny

"Please tell us why you laughed.

"Well, once a long time ago, I had a dream. Both my mother and my father asked me to tell them my dream, but neither said first, 'May it be auspicious,' and so I refused to tell them what I had dreamed. They both whipped me for my

⁶It is still a custom in rural Turkey for hosts to provide this handwashing service. One person pours water on the guest's hands from an ibrik, a pitcher with a long, thin, curved neck--like that of an old-fashioned coffeepot. Another person holds a basin beneath the guest's hands. The pourer of water also carries a towel with which the guest can dry his hands.

Story 901

why I am crying."

"Why did they whip you?"

"I had a dream which I refused to tell them, and so they whipped me for that."

"You didn't tell them your dream, but you will tell it to me--won't you?"

"No, Teacher, I shall not tell you, either."

"Why won't you tell me?" demanded the teacher, and without waiting for an answer, he started to beat the boy. The boy started crying again. When recess time came, he went outside and sat in a corner of the school garden, still crying.

A ³³⁻¹³⁴ gendarme² passing along the street overheard his crying and asked him, "Why are you crying?"

"I am a poor orphan boy, and my teacher has beaten me. That is why I am crying."

The gendarme asked, "Would you like to go to Istanbul if I were to take you there?"

"Yes, I would.

The gendarme was actually on his way to Istanbul at that time,

²Most rural areas in Turkey do not have police organizations to maintain law and order. The Ministry of Interior assumes responsibility for doing that. A certain percentage of Turkey's very large standing army is assigned to the Ministry of Interior for that purpose. These troops are then known as gendarmes--a very clear token of the strong French influence of Turkey at the beginning of the 20th century.

Story 901

were the same type of sword, and had been constructed in the same way, they could not determine which was gold, which was silver, and which was iron. When the time of the ultimatum was running out, the vizier said, "Let us call Mulla Mehmet to solve this puzzle. If he can find the answer, that will be fine. If he cannot, we shall chop off his head and in this way get rid of him."

When they called Mulla Mehmet to the palace and told him the problem, he said, "Make a pool of water here." When they had done this, he threw the swords into the pool, one at a time. After he had retrieved them from the water, he said, "Here, Your Majesty, this one is made of gold, this one of silver, and this one of iron." The padişah sent these answers to the European power and was thus saved from having a war.

Soon there came another letter from the European power with another problem to be solved. It said, "Keep the stallions of Turkey under control because our mares here are very restless." No one at the palace knew how to respond to such a message, but a response was required if war was to be averted. They then called Mulla Mehmet and told him the problem they faced. "We want you to provide a suitable answer to their riddling question. If you can do so, fine. If you cannot, we shall execute you."

Mulla Mehmet answered, "Your Majesty, to solve this

P. 33. 40
138- 46

Riddling question
38-140

Story 901

problem, I shall need a male ¹³⁹camel, a male ¹³⁹⁻¹⁴⁰goat with a long beard, and a company of soldiers." When these were provided, he took his camel, his goat, and his company of soldiers and entered the foreign country which had sent the challenges, and that country was Russia.

He said to his troops, "Kill all of the lying ¹³⁹⁻⁴⁰dogs that you see along the way." As they marched along in Russia, they hit every dog they saw, killing many of them. When a man asked them, "Why are you killing these innocent dogs? What is their fault?" they were so angry that they hit him, too, cutting his ear. Word of this was sent ahead to the palace of the Russian padişah in the city: "Your Majesty, Turkish soldiers have entered our country. They are hitting or killing all dogs along the way, and they have even struck several of the palace dogs. When I asked them why they were doing this, they struck me, too, cutting my ear."

When the Padişah of Russia heard this, he said to his "Go right away and bring them here!" When they were taken to the palace, they went upstairs⁵ to the presence of the padişah. This ruler said to Mulla Mehmet, "Son, why are you striking innocent dogs which are doing nothing but lie around?"

"Your Majesty, back in my country ¹³⁹⁻¹⁴⁰wolves have been very

⁵In many rural homes in Turkey the livestock are kept on the ground floor, people on the second floor. Peasant narrators transfer this pattern to sultans' palaces.

Story 901

active. They have eaten almost all of the sheep. Your dogs lie here idly and do nothing. Why are they so idle?"

"Why, Son, what could the dogs of Russia do to the wolves of Turkey?"

"Well, then, what can the stallions of Turkey do to harm the mares of Russia?"

The padişah then sent the troops from his presence and said to Mulla Mehmet, "Call your big man here." Mulla Mehmet called the camel. "No, no," said the padişah, "I mean your bearded man." Mulla Mehmet called the goat. "No, no," said the padişah, "I mean your wise man."

Mulla Mehmet then pointed towards himself and said, "I am our wise

"Is there no other?" asked the padişah.

"No."

The padişah then said, "All right, then, you may have one of my daughters." Saying this, the padişah gave up one of his daughters to the Turkish young man, Mulla Mehmet, and with her he gave a dowry that required forty mules to haul it away. Accompanied by his own troops and escorted by the Russian padişah with his troops, Mulla Mehmet reached the Turkish border.

When the Padişah of Turkey heard of Mulla Mehmet's return, he sent a company of Turkish troops to welcome him. The padişah

Story 901

refusal, and later my teacher whipped me for the same reason. In my dream I had seen the sun enter my right breast and the moon enter my left breast."

The Turkish girl said, "I am the sun!"

The Russian girl said, "I am the moon!" And in this way the girls interpreted his dream.

Mulla Mehmet and his two wives lived very happily together. May those of you who have no happiness become as happy as they. Three apples fell from the sky: one for the narrator of this tale and two for the listeners.⁷

Tale
Terminal
Series

⁷This is a terminal formula for many Turkish folktales. Sometimes there is a mild bit of humor in the distribution of the apples. The narrator may say, for example, "One for Ali Çuğa / the narrator's name /, one for the narrator of this tale, and one for the listener."