

Story 789 (1970 Tape 15)

Narrator: Mehmet Ece (alias Topal Ahmet), one-legged auto mechanic

Location: Ece is from Erzurum but tale was taped in Bursa

Date: July 1970

Behlül Dane Consults the Turds in the Toilet

Behlül Dane kept aloof from people and would not go to visit even his brother, Harun Reşit.¹ This saddened Harun Reşit very much. One day Harun Reşit sent some men to bring Behlül to the palace so that he could talk with him. He came to the palace, all right, but before he sat with his brother and said, "How are you?" and other such things, he said that he wished to go to the toilet

After Behlül had spent a long while there, Harun Reşit sent his men to see if his brother was all right. "Perhaps he fell into the toilet," the Caliph said.

When these men returned, they said, "My padişah, your brother is lying comfortably on the floor of toilet and seems to be listening to noises there. He paid no attention whatsoever to what we were saying to

¹ Harun Reşit, greatest of the Abbasid Caliphs, flourished c.800. There is no real evidence that he had an eccentric, strongly religious half-brother as legend avers.

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Harun Reşit himself now went to see what ailed his brother. He called out, "What are you doing there, Brother?"

"Sir, I am talking with the turds here.

"What are you talking about with them?"

"I asked one, 'Were you always a turd?' and he said, I was once baklava² and börek.³ I asked another, and it said, 'I was pilav.'⁴ Another said, 'I was Adana kebab.'⁵ Then I asked all of them, 'What are you doing here?' They said, 'Well, we went among mankind, and this is what happened to us.' Brother, that is why I live alone do not come to visit even you."

Well, one was deli and the other was veli, though their contemporaries were mistaken about which one deserved

² Baklava is a pastry made of many layers of very thin dough which, after being baked, is allowed to absorb honey. It may also contain finely ground nuts.

³ Biscuit made with many layers of fine dough and filled with cheese, meat, or some vegetable.

⁴ Pilav is a buttered rice dish containing small flecks of meat and sometimes also a few pine nuts and small currants. It is a staple of Turkish cuisine.

⁵ Adana kebab is made of ground lamb and very finely ground red peppers. These are pressed around a skewer and broiled over an open fire. It is sometimes flavored with ground flowers and seeds of sumac. It is often eaten with pide, a slightly leavened pizza-like bread.

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which label.⁶

⁶ This short anecdote is a nükte, a brief story that ends with a play on words. Their contemporaries thought Behlül deli--crazy; and they thought the great caliph saintly, veli. Time has reversed that judgment. Harun Reşit was deli in the sense that reckless warriors who feared nothing were deli: thoughtlessly and madly brave, for he was a great military leader as well as Caliph. Behlül was thought to be deli in the sense of demented, but more recent observers see him as God's fool, both schlemiel and saint--veli.