

Story 1461 1969 Tape 4)

Narrator: Yaşar Ateş, forest ranger

Location: Çamlıköy village, kaza not given, Ankara Province

Date: August 1969

Two Brothers: Clever Boy and Dull-Witted Boy

Once there was and once there was not a man and wife who had two sons. One of these sons was dull-witted, but the other was very clever. This was a farming family, and their farm was very productive.

Time passed, and after a while both the farmer and his wife died, leaving all of their property to their two sons. Much of the wealth of the farm was in livestock, and the sons decided to divide these animals between them. But they said to each other, "First we must build another barn so that we shall each have a building in which to keep our farm animals."

the new barn was finished, Clever Boy said, "This barn will be yours. Let us divide the oxen when they come in from the pasture today. We shall divide them by allowing them to go to whichever barn they choose."

right," said the dull-witted boy

the oxen returned from the pasture that day, however, all but one of them went into the old barn which they were accustomed to. That was the barn now owned by Clever Boy. Dull-Witted Boy was not upset by this unequal division of the oxen. He said, "It is all right. That was just my bad luck.

Story 1461

One ox is enough for me. The others belong to you

After a few days had passed, however, Dull-Witted Boy said, "Brother, I can no longer struggle along in my work with a single ox. I shall slaughter this single ox and then go to some foreign country to find work."

Clever Boy said, "Brother, that would not be a good thing to do. You should sell the ox and get at least something for

"Very well," answered Dull-Witted Boy, and that was what he decided to do. Tying a rope around the neck of the ox, he set out to find a buyer. After a while he reached a forest--just like the one we are working in here--and there he saw a woodpecker knocking on a tree--tak, tak! The boy said, "Selamünaleyküm, Uncle Tak Tak

He then answered himself, "Aleykümselam."¹

Dull-Witted Boy then said, "Look, Uncle Tak Tak! I have an ox to sell. Would you like to buy it?"

Again he provided the answer to his own question: "Yes, I should like to buy it."

¹Selamünaleyküm/Aleykümselam--traditional exchange of greetings between Moslems not well acquainted with each other. It means roughly May peace be unto you/And may peace be unto you, too. If Selamünaleyküm is not responded to, the speaker should be wary of the one so addressed.

Story 1461

"And how much will you give me for it?" asked Dull-Witted Boy.

"I shall give you five liras for this ox," he answered for the bird. He then took an armful of firewood from the forest and returned home.

There his clever brother asked him, "Did you sell your ox?"

"Yes, I did."

"To whom did you sell it?" asked Clever Boy.

"I sold it to Uncle Tak Tak. I shall go to him tomorrow to get the money he promised to pay for it.

"All right," said Clever Boy. "You go tomorrow and get your money." Of course, he understood the situation with the bird, for his brother had always been somewhat crazy.

The next day Dull-Witted Boy went to the same tree in the forest, and there he found the same bird pecking again--tak, tak! "Oh, friend, give me my money now!" But when the bird just kept on pecking, the boy realized that it was not going to pay him. Shouting, "You will never pay me my money, Dull-Witted Boy threw his staff at the bird. The bird just flew away and disappeared.

When he got home, his brother asked him, "Did you get your money?"

Story 1461

"No, I couldn't get it. Uncle Tak Tak just flew away." Then he added, "I just remember that I threw my staff at him. I had better return and get that staff." When he went back and found his staff, he discovered that it had fallen upon a pile of gold. He said to himself, "Hm-m-m! Uncle Tak Tak left money for me under my stick. I'll take from it only the amount he promised to pay for the ox." Counting out his five liras, he left the rest of the money lying there and returned home again.

There Clever Boy asked him, "Did you get your money this time, Brother? What did you do while you were gone? Were you still looking for him?"

"Yes, I got my money this time. I took just the five liras that he owed me, but there was much more money than that there.

"Why did you do that?" asked Clever Boy. "Let us go there at once and get the rest of the money." They went to that place in the forest and got several sacks of gold coins. After they had returned to their home with all of this gold, Clever Boy said, "Let us now divide this money by counting one for you, one for me until we have shared it all."

Dull-Witted Boy answered, "We would never get finished if we did it that way. Let us borrow a scale and measure out

Story 1461

kilo for you, one kilo for me until it is all divided."

"Well, if that is the way you want to do it, go and borrow the muhtar's² scale so that we can weigh it."

Dull-Witted Boy went to the muhtar's house and asked to borrow his scale. "What are you going to weigh?" asked the muhtar

"We shall weigh money with it."

The muhtar refused to believe this, and he said, "No, that cannot be true."

Dull-Witted Boy said, "I swear that it is true that we are going to weigh some money."

"Very well," said the muhtar, but before he gave the scale to the boy, he put some pitch in one corner of the pan of the scale and covered it with dust to make it less noticeable.

brothers proceeded to divide the money by weight, as they had planned to do, but when they were finished, there were a couple of gold coins stuck in the corner of the pan. Clever Boy noticed them and said, "Oh, we should take those gold coins from the corner of the pan!"

²The muhtar is the elected head man of a village or city ward. He may be the only elected official that some villagers ever see, for most of the officials with whom they normally have contact are usually appointees of the Ministry of Interior or some other federal ministry.

Story 1461

But his brother answered, "No, we should not! Let them be the rent that we pay the muhtar for the use of his scale."

"All right."

Dull-Witted Boy returned the scale to its owner. When the muhtar looked into the scale, he asked, "Do you have many gold coins like the two that remain in the scale?"

"Oh, yes, we have plenty of them--more than enough of them."

As soon as the boy had left, the muhtar went to the police station and reported that the two brothers had somehow suddenly come into possession of a great amount of gold. The police went at once to the brothers' home and took all of the gold away from them.

Clever Boy blamed his brother for the loss of their golden treasure, and he beat him several times for having revealed its existence to the muhtar. After they had stopped being angry at each other, the two brothers asked each other, "What shall we do now?"

Dull-Witted Boy said, "Let us leave our farm in the care of someone else, and let us go elsewhere for a while. All of our wealth is gone, but we may be able to get jobs and earn some more money."

They started on their journey, and they had not gone very

Story 1461

far when they came to a flour mill. When Dull-Witted Boy the millstone, he said, "This is my mother's spinning wheel, and he put it under his arm and walked on. He was a very strong young man.

After a while they came to a very tall pine tree that was growing right alongside the road. Being tired by then, they decided to climb into the top of that tree, where they would not be seen, and take a rest. As they were about to start up the tree, Clever Boy said, "Leave that millstone down here." But his brother paid no attention to him and took the stone with him to the treetop.

While they were sitting on a high branch, they saw two travelers stop at the foot of the tree to rest. One of them had been carrying a chest on his back, and the other had been carrying a large bag. They put down their burdens and sat down beneath the tree. A few minutes later, Dull-Witted Boy said, "Brother, I have to urinate."

"Well, if you have to urinate, then do so."

When the two men below were sprayed by the urine, one of them said, "Oh, silver water is falling from this blessed tree!"

A short while later Dull-Witted Boy said, "Brother, my arm is becoming very tired from holding this spinning wheel.

"Well, I told you not to bring it up here. Now just it back down to the ground."

Story 1461

When the millstone was released, it began smashing branches as it fell toward earth. The two men beneath the tree thought that the whole tree was falling over, and so they ran for their lives, leaving their chest and sack behind them

Climbing down from the tree, the two brothers picked up the chest and the sack and returned with them to their village. Inside these containers they found many kinds of expensive clothes and valuable objects. When their neighbors saw them wearing these clothes and using these objects, they asked, "Where did you get so many beautiful and very expensive things?"

The brothers answered, "We worked hard in order to buy these things."

The neighbors refused to believe this, and they reported to the police that the two brothers had just acquired a large supply of very expensive goods. Again the police went to their home and confiscated their wealth.

Clever Boy said, "They will not give us chance to succeed in this village. Let us leave it and go away a much greater distance this time."

"All right," said his brother, and they left that village.

Some distance from their village they saw a farmer plowing his field. "Stay back here," said Clever Boy. "I shall go and

Story 1461

this farmer for a job. If he needs any help, I can work, and with the money I earn, I can take care of you." He then went to the farmer and said, "Oh, farmer father, will you accept me as your helper?"

"Yes."

"How much will you pay me for my work?"

"I shall give you a red lira³ every month," said the farmer course, money was different from ours in those older times. "Come and begin work tomorrow morning."

Clever Boy returned to where he had left his brother, and there he built a brushwood hut⁴ in which Dull-Witted Boy could live while he himself worked on the farm. Early the following morning, Clever Boy went to the farmer's house.

There the farmer told him under what conditions he was to work. "Every day I shall give you a loaf of bread and a jar of yoghurt. You must eat the bread without breaking the crust on the ends of the loaf, and you must eat the yoghurt without breaking the skin of cream at the top of the jar. Also,

³Turkish peasants frequently have the misconception that the most precious gold is red gold. It appears frequently in folktales and songs. There is no such thing as red gold. Any metal supposedly gold that is red has been adulterated with copper. The alloy is not, of course, as valuable as pure gold.

⁴The Turkish word used here is cardak, which has several different meanings, but only the one used here is appropriate for this context.

Story 1461

while you are working here, neither of us must become angry at the other. If either of us admits that he is angry, then the other is to skin his back."

"All right."

The farmer had an excellent greyhound which he intended to send to the field each day to help Clever Boy with the plowing that he was to do. The boy, a team of oxen, and the greyhound went to work beginning that day. At noon the boy was hungry, but he could not find any way of eating the loaf of bread without breaking the crust of the corners of the loaf, and he could not discover any way of eating the yoghurt without breaking the skin of cream at the top of the jar. When the boy returned to the farmhouse that evening, the ağa⁵ asked

"What happened today? Why does your face look so sulky? you angry at me?"

Remembering that he would lose the skin from his back if he said that he was angry, Clever Boy answered, "No, I am not angry." On the following day, exactly the same thing happened,

⁵An ağa (English, agha) is a rural landowner, sometimes wealthy, often powerful. The word does not indicate an official title but describes an economic status. They are often the principal employers of farm workers, and they are often viewed by their employees as harsh, driving, and abusive. The term ağa is also used in a complimentary way, as an honorific, for a distinguished or just older person than the one using the term. Thus an older brother is called ağa bey by his younger siblings. Ağa bey may be used as a deferential term to one older or more prestigious than the speaker. A taxi driver may refer to his passenger as ağa bey; a salesman speaking to a male customer may call him ağa bey.

Story 1461

and the boy still did not admit that he was angry. On the third day, however, when he returned from the field, he said at once, "I am angry at you!"

The farmer immediately called several of his other servants and said, "Hold this man down on the ground and remove the skin from his back!"

After the skin had been removed from his back, Clever returned to the hut where his brother had been staying. Dull-Witted Boy said, "Don't worry, Brother. I shall take care you."

Of course, Dull-Witted Boy was hungry too, and the next day he went to the farmer's field where the farmer was plowing again. The farmer had not seen Dull-Witted Boy before, and so he did not know that he was the brother of Clever Boy, whose back he had skinned the day before. "Selamünaleyküm," said the boy.

"Aleykümselam," answered the farmer.

"Will you hire me as your servant?"

"Yes," answered the farmer.

"How much will you pay me?" asked Dull-Witted Boy.

"I shall pay you one red lira a month."

"All right," answered the boy. "I would even be willing to work for just my food."

Story 1461

On the following morning when he came to work, the farmer explained to him the conditions of the job, just as he had when Clever Boy had begun to work for him. The farmer handed the boy a loaf of bread and a jar of yoghurt. "Son, here is your lunch. You are to eat the bread without breaking the crust on the corners of the loaf, and you are to eat the yoghurt without breaking the skin of cream at the top of the jar. Also while you are working for me, neither of us must get angry at the other. If either of us admits that he is angry, the other is to skin his back."

"Don't worry! I shall do just as you want me to do," said Dull-Witted Boy. Then he took the team of oxen and the greyhound and went to the field to plow. When noon arrived, he ate the loaf of bread and the jar of yoghurt. When evening came, he took a stick and killed the greyhound with it. Then he returned to the farmhouse. "Well, what happened today?" asked the ağa.

"I was hungry at noon, and so I ate the bread and the yoghurt. Are you angry about that?"

"No, I am not angry," answered the farmer. "But where is the greyhound that you took to the field?"

The boy said, "All the time I was plowing, he was going along behind my back and walking on the earth I had turned up."

Story 1461

As he did this, he kept pushing the soil back into the furrow from which I had just plowed it. I told him to stay away from the furrow, but he didn't do that, and so I hit him with a stick. I didn't think I was hitting him very hard, but he died. Are you angry at me, ağa?"

"No, I am not," answered the ağa.

On the following day the ağa gave him bread and yoghurt again, and as he did so, he gave him the same advice he had given him before. When noon arrived, Dull-Witted Boy ate the bread, ate the yoghurt, and then took a long nap. It was such a long nap that he didn't plow the field any more that day. At evening he cut the head off one of the oxen and returned to the farmhouse with the other

Again the farmer asked him, "Well, what happened today?"

"At noon I was very hungry, and so I ate the bread and the yoghurt. Are you angry at me, ağa?"

"No, I am not angry, but where is the other ox?"

"While I was plowing today, the oxen began to contend with each other about which of them should step ahead first. I thought that your oxen were either stupid or crazy. When I could not force them to behave properly, I killed the one which was causing the more trouble. Are you angry at me?"

The ağa was very upset by this news, but he realized that

Story 1461

the skin of his back was in jeopardy, and so he said, "Oh, no!"

The next morning the ağa gave him the same food and again warned him about how it was to be eaten. Then he said, "Son, I shall go and borrow an ox from my neighbor Mehmet Ağa so that you will have a team of oxen for plowing. While I am gone, feed the ox that we have here now."

Dull-Witted Boy went to the barn and there he cut off the head of the ağa's remaining ox. Then he took the head to a nearby pasture and set it down in the grass. When the ağa returned and saw this, he said, "Aman!"⁶ What have you done?"

The boy answered, "You told me to feed the ox. Look! I put his head out there in the pasture so that it could graze. His body is still in the barn, but his head is in the pasture."

Very confused now, the ağa said, "Allah, O Allah! How did you feed the ox?"

"Look out there in the pasture, ağa! See how the ox is feeding on the grass there? Are you angry at me, ağa?"

With a thousand and one difficulties the ağa managed to say, "No." He was deeply disturbed and frightened now, and he wished that he could get out of the bargain he had made with Dull-Witted Boy, but there was no way that he could do that.

⁶ Aman is a common exclamation in Turkish. It may (negatively) mean alas or oh, dear! More positively, it may suggest, oh, my goodness, or the equivalent of wow! or golly!

Story 1461

He said, "Son, you stay here and get some sleep today. We can go to the fields together tomorrow." Then going to his wife, he said, "Aman, woman, quickly prepare all the food you can and pack it in a large porter's basket. When that crazy boy falls asleep, we shall run away. That is the only way I will be able to save the skin of my back."

But Dull-Witted Boy overheard all of their conversation. When the wife had cooked a great amount of food and packed it in the large basket, the boy crawled into the basket, too, covering himself with a cloth. When darkness arrived, the farmer put the basket on his back and his wife carried a bundle of small items.⁷ They left their home very quietly without knowing that they were taking Dull-Witted Boy with them. They thought that he was sound asleep in the house.

After a while Dull-Witted Boy had to urinate, and he did so right in the basket. Feeling the moisture on his back, the farmer asked, "Oh, Wife, how much butter did you put in the bread and other baked goods? It is oozing through the basket onto my back."

"Oh, my husband, I put all of the butter in the dough. I not want to leave any of it behind for that crazy boy."

After a while the ağa said, "Wife, I am tired! We should

⁷The Turkish term here in the text is ufaktefek.

Story

get some rest. This basket is very heavy." After they had rested for a while, they set out again. Soon, Dull-Witted Boy urinated again, and the ağa said to his wife, "All that butter is oozing out again. What shall we do?"

Then Dull-Witted Boy suddenly jumped out of the basket and shouted, "Hey, I am here! You cannot run away from me! You took the skin from my brother's back, and I shall follow you wherever you go

The ağa said, "All right, son. I am glad you are here."

As they renewed their journey, Dull-Witted Boy walked along some distance behind them. Soon they were attacked by a pack of wild dogs which would not let them pass. The ağa said, "Oh, Wife, if that crazy boy were here with us, he would drive off these dogs." And just as soon as Dull-Witted Boy caught up with them, he quickly scattered the pack of dogs.⁸

They then continued traveling. They went little; they went far. They traveled over hills and through dales. They went for six months and an autumn, but when they looked back they discovered that they had actually gone no farther than

⁸In some variants of this tale the boy remains in the bag until the episode with the dogs. It is much more dramatic to have the boy emerge from the bag just after the besieged man and his wife momentarily regret that Dull-Witted Boy is not on hand to save them.

Story 1461

the length of a canvas needle.⁹ That night they came to a rushing river that passed through a green meadow. There was a bridge over the river, and Dull-Witted Boy suggested that sleep on that bridge. But the farmer said, "No, let us sleep here on this soft grass by the river. It will be more comfortable here." The intention of the farmer and his wife was to push the boy into the river after he had gone to sleep. Dull-Witted Boy was not at all clever, but he sensed what the farmer and his wife were planning to do.

After they had gone to bed and the ağa and his wife were asleep, Dull-Witted Boy gently moved the woman to the place close to the river where he himself had been lying. Then he took his blanket and covered himself with it as he lay down beside the ağa. In the middle of the night, the ağa awoke and began rolling into the river the body lying close to the edge of the water. He supposed, of course, that it was the boy. After his wife had disappeared in the rushing water of the river, the ağa called out, "Wife, Wife, wake up! I have gotten rid of that crazy boy! Wake up! Wake up!"

Then Dull-Witted Boy said, "Hey, ağa, I am here! The person in the river is your wife, not me."

⁹This is a formula commonly used in Turkish folktales to indicate fairly lengthy travel.

Story

Shocked and confused, the farmer said, "Oh, you have emerged victorious in this, too!"

you angry at me, ağa?"

"Yes, I am angry at you. What shall we do now?"

"You skinned my brother's back, and now I shall skin your back!"

"All right."

He skinned the farmer's back, but he skinned it so deeply that the farmer died. He found a donkey in a nearby pasture and with it he took the body to a cornfield and left them both there. Soon the owner of the cornfield saw the donkey eating corn, and he saw someone lying near the donkey. The owner began shouting, "Get out of my cornfield! Take your donkey and get out of my field!" But because the man was dead, he didn't move and he made no response. Very angry, the owner of the field rushed over and struck the boy on the head with his shovel.

When Dull-Witted Boy saw this, he came out of his hiding place. He grabbed the owner of the field by the collar and cried, "Oh, you have killed my father! You have killed my father!"

"He must have been dead before I hit him.

"No, no! You hit my father and killed him," said the boy.

Story

The helpless owner of the cornfield asked, "Well, what should we do now?"

"You will give me 100 liras; otherwise I shall take you to court.

right I shall give you 100 liras and half of my corn.

"I shall take the 100 liras," answered the boy, "but I shall leave all the corn for you and I shall leave my father's corpse with you to be buried."

Taking the money, Dull-Witted Boy left the cornfield and went to the hut where his brother lay suffering from his serious wound. "My brother, let us go. I have killed the ağa and his wife too. I have also earned 100 liras, enough money to restore our own farm

They then went to the ağa's house and removed all of the valuable things from it. These they then took to their own house in their own village. When they reached that village they found that many changes had taken place during their absence. Some of the people had died, and others had become poor. Very sad, they said, "Aman! We did not leave our village in this condition!" They decided to rebuild the village and restore it to its former condition

Dull-Witted Boy asked, "What about us? What are we going to do?"

Story 1461

Clever Boy answered, "Brother, I shall become a farmer again, just as our father was. You stay at home, and I shall take care of you."

"All right, Brother."

Soon after that, Clever Boy got married, and as time passed, he had several children of his own. When these children were fully grown, Clever Boy stopped farming and turned over the farm to them.

Three apples fell from the sky. One of them landed on the head of the teller of this story, and the other two landed on the heads of the two listeners.¹⁰

¹⁰One of the common formulaic endings of Turkish folktales.