

Story #59 (Tape 50 & 50 1/2)
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of Stories 56, 57, 58

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The Adventures of Mehmet the Mad

medrese (convent)

^{king-Egyptian}
There was once an Egyptian king who was childless for many years,

until towards the end of his life, after visiting many hocas' convents (medrese) and such places,¹ God gave him a son. He named his son Mehmet. As Mehmet grew up and was being educated in the palace, he became a very spoiled child, and he was soon known among the people as Mehmet the Mad.

Following the death of his father, Mehmet inherited the throne, but as he was not popular, because of his strange behavior, he was deposed by his own people. He lived on, with his mother, in his father's old palace, but after a while, he was reduced to poverty. One day his mother called Mehmet to her side and said to him, "What shall we do, son? We have lost everything, but we cannot starve. You must try to support us."

"Very well, mother," said Mehmet, "but what shall I do? This palace is too large for us. Why don't we get a small house with just two rooms and live there? Let us sell this palace."

His mother agreed to this proposal, and Mehmet sold the palace. The ready money went quickly, however, and soon Mehmet and his mother were again penniless. His mother said to him, "Mehmet, what shall we do now?"

"Mother, I should like to be a woodcutter," said Mehmet. "I like that job. Find enough money to buy me a donkey. Then I shall go to the forest, cut wood, bring it back on the donkey, and sell it in the market for money."

¹There are a great many Turkish folk remedies for sterility, but most of them are religious. Intercession by hocas and dervishes is a common motif.

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His mother gave him the last golden coin which she had in her necklace.² With that money, Mehmet bought a donkey, an axe, and some rope, and then he went to the forest to cut wood, along with several other men. He became separated from his companions, and after a while they feared that he might have gotten lost. They sent a search party after him, and when this group found him, they asked him why he had wandered so far from the other woodcutters.

"I couldn't find any dry wood," he answered, "and so I kept looking farther and farther."

One of the group said to him, "Why don't you just cut green wood,³ as all of us do?"

"No," said Mehmet the Mad, "I cannot cheat my customers and sell them green wood instead of dry. You can return to the city without me. I do not have to go back with you."

Mehmet spent that night up in a tree in the forest. During the night, wolves came and tore his donkey to pieces and ate it. When Mehmet climbed down from the tree in the morning and started to pick his way through the thick forest, he saw two monsters with human heads but the bodies of snakes.³ They were fighting with each other. Mehmet watched them fighting from behind a large tree, and he noticed that one of the monsters had been caught badly by the other and was screaming. Deciding to help the one which was losing, he threw his axe at its opponent and cut off the head of that black monster. The other monster, which had thus been saved, spoke to Mehmet in human language and said, "What is your name?"

²At one time women wore the family fortune in a necklace of gold coins. This is still a practice among some groups of Turks, noticeably among the Alevi sect in southern Turkey, especially in Hatay Province.

³Serpents with human heads are common among Turkish monsters.

language -- human -- spoken by monster

King of Snakes -- daughter of
Snakes -- King of

"My name is Mehmet the Mad," he said.

"You have done me a great service, Mehmet," it said. "I am the ^{daughter of King of Snakes} ~~daughter of the king of the snakes~~. The ^{snake} ~~snake~~ you have just killed was a servant in my father's palace. He abducted me one day, and I have been in his possession now for two years, during which time I have continually fought with him, and I lost none of my chastity. But thank God that you came to my aid today. If you will now escort me to my father's palace, I shall do you some service in return."

Mehmet accepted this proposal and escorted the daughter of the king of the snakes to her father's palace. They went a great way but they went only a little way; they went over rivers and mountains but they went straight; they went for six months and a summer, but when they looked back, they found that they had gone only the length of a grain of barley.⁴ They told the first snake that they met near the palace to run along ahead and report their arrival to the king of the snakes. That little snake ran ahead and reported this at the palace, and the entire army of the king of the snakes came out to salute the long-lost princess and her escort, Mehmet the Mad.

distance
folk formula
for describing

After the king had embraced his daughter and kissed her, she told him that the young man who had saved her from the ^{servant -- wicked} ~~wicked~~ servant and had then escorted her to the palace was Mehmet the Mad. Mehmet was thereupon received into the palace as a guest.

The snake girl came to Mehmet and said to him, "My father may give you a present when it comes time for you to leave the palace. When he asks you what you want do not show much excitement about it. Simply

⁴This is a standard tekerleme used both to indicate long journeys and to keep the listeners from being bored with the details of the trip itself.

say, 'May your majesty live long. I want nothing more than that.'⁵ He will never allow you to depart without giving you a gift. When he insists that you tell him what you want, say, 'Your majesty, I want your cap, your whistle, and your royal seal.' He will not want to give these things to you, but I shall be there, and I shall tell him that I will go away with you unless he gives you these three gifts. Then he will agree to give you the cap, the whistle, and the seal." Cap -- magic
Magic cap
Whistle -- magic
Magic whistle
Seal -- magic
Magic Seal

It happened as the girl had said. After Mehmet had been at the palace a few days, the king called him to his throne and said, "Mehmet the Mad, I am wealthy. I can give you anything that you wish."

"May your majesty live long. That is all I wish," said Mehmet.

"No, that is not enough," said the king. "My health is something that concerns only me. You must have something for yourself. Ask for something and I shall give it to you."

Unable to resist the king's invitation any longer, Mehmet then said, "Very well, then, your majesty, I should like your cap, your whistle and your royal seal."

"I am sorry that you have asked for things that I cannot relinquish," said the king.

"It is all right, and may your majesty live long. I am leaving now," said Mehmet.

At that moment the king's daughter intervened and said, "Farewell, father, for I am going too. Are the things Mehmet the Mad asked for so

⁵As noted in an earlier tale, this is the proper and polite response made in folk tales of Turkey by anyone who is asked what he wants as reward for some service performed.

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very valuable that you must refuse him? He is a man who saved me and my chastity as well as your honor."

Upon this, the king said, "Very well, Mehmet, follow me." He took Mehmet the Mad to his treasury, which was full of diamonds, pearls, and gold. There he gave Mehmet his cap, his whistle, and his royal seal. The young man did not know of what use these would be to him, but he took them and thanked the king.

After he had left the palace, Mehmet forgot about his experience there and thought only about his donkey which had been eaten by the wolves. He walked back to the same forest where he had formerly cut wood, but he saw there none of his friends. While he was wondering what he should do, it occurred to him that he might go and work as a night watchman in his village and thus make use of the whistle he had received from the king of the snakes.⁶ He decided to try the whistle right there to see how it sounded, so he took it from his pocket and blew on it. Two immense ghosts appeared immediately who said, "Tell us, sir, shall we destroy or shall we restore?" Mehmet the Mad was terribly frightened by what he saw, but one of the ghosts said to him, "As long as you have your whistle, you need fear nothing. We are your slaves. You command and we shall carry out your orders." Supernatural helpers

Much relieved by this explanation, Mehmet the Mad said to them, "Take me to the city now." They took him up and a moment later set him down on the outskirts of his city. Then he commanded them, "Produce a donkey with a load of dry wood." Then he took the donkey home and said to his mother, "I am sorry to be so late, but I had to search long to get a load of dry wood."

⁶The Turkish night watchman or bekçi blows upon a shrill police whistle as he makes his rounds. Bekçis often work in pairs and they keep each other informed of their whereabouts by blowing their whistles.

In the morning he took the load of wood to the market and sold it. When he returned to his home, he said, "Mother, I am used to good living, and I don't think I can be a woodcutter any longer." He then shut himself in his room and blew his whistle. When the two ghosts appeared, he asked them to bring some money for him. In no time at all they returned with a pot of gold. Now Mehmet and his mother were wealthy again, and they began to lead the prosperous life they once had enjoyed.

In the meantime, Mehmet the Mad had forgotten all about the cap and the seal which the king of the snakes had given him. One day he said to his mother, "Mother, we had a cap and a seal, as well as this whistle."

"I put them in the chest," said his mother.

"Will you please bring them here. I want to see if I can become a king," he said.

When his mother brought the cap and the seal, Mehmet took the seal and after dipping it in water, tried to stamp pieces of paper with it.

He was amazed to see that whatever he stamped with it turned into gold. *magic seal - turns to gold*
Mehmet the Mad took the whistle and the seal and went out of the house. *thing stamped with it*
He forgot the cap, which his mother picked up and put back into the chest.

Mehmet went to the seashore, for this city was a port, and there he saw a ship anchored. He shouted at the crew, "Oh, sailors, who is your captain?" *Seal - magic - same as above*

"We have come from a foreign country," they shouted back.

"Will you sell me that ship?" he asked them.

"Yes," they answered, "but we want 300,000 gold pieces for it."

"I shall pay you 400,000 gold pieces for it," said Mehmet, "but I want the crew with the ship."

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Mehmet the Mad bought the ship at the price he stated, and he also paid each member of the crew a thousand gold pieces, telling them to go ashore and have uniforms made for themselves, all of cloth of the same color. Quite impressed with their new employer, whom they called Mehmet Bey, the crew members all went to the city and had very expensive uniforms made for themselves.

During the night Mehmet Bey was busy turning the most conspicuous parts of the ship into gold by stamping them with his seal. When the crew returned to the ship in the morning, they were amazed to see many parts of their ship turned into gold and glittering in the sunlight. In fact, they hardly recognized their ship. When they asked Mehmet Bey how this had happened to their ship, he told them to mind their own business and not to ask him any more questions of that kind.

Mehmet Bey now returned to his mother, gave her some more money, and bade her farewell. He sailed away in his new ship, and after many days landed at a strange port. The king of this land was told of the arrival of a magnificent ship. He ordered his men to go and inquire whose ship it was, where it came from, and what its purpose was in coming to his land. He also sent an invitation for the ship's company to come and visit him in his palace.

When the king's men gave this invitation to Mehmet Bey, Mehmet Bey asked them, "Has your king a golden ship like this one?"

"No," they said.

"Well, then, I cannot go to him. Let him come to me," said Mehmet

When this was reported to the king he said, "He is right. A man who owns a golden ship is too important to pay me a visit. I must first go

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and visit him." Taking with him his ^{visitors} ~~vezirs~~ and high-ranking officials, the king went to the pier where Mehmet Bey's ship was docked. Mehmet Bey watched the retinue coming as he stood on the bridge of the ship. his guests came aboard, he introduced himself to the king as "Mehmet the Mad, the Noble Son of Unknown Lands." The king was very impressed by the reception given him on Mehmet Bey's ship, and, in return, he invited Mehmet Bey to his palace, where a big party in his honor was held that night. During the party the king could not help noticing Mehmet's peculiar behavior, his madness.

The next day the king said to Mehmet Bey, "I want you to stay in my palace as a guest for a week. I cannot let you go sooner." Very pleased, Mehmet Bey accepted this invitation.

One day the king invited Mehmet to a private dinner party at the palace. The queen, her ^{of King's} ~~daughter~~, Mehmet Bey, and the king were to dine together. Before the dinner, the king instructed his daughter to find out from Mehmet Bey the secret of his golden ship. The daughter used all her charms at the dinner table to win the heart of Mehmet Bey. She winked at him and looked at him in winning ways. When the king learned that Mehmet Bey was not married but a bachelor, he asked him whether he would like to marry his daughter.

"It is a great honor for me, your majesty," said Mehmet. Then he ^{raising} ~~kissed~~ the king's hand and formally asked for his daughter in marriage.

A ^{secret} ~~secret~~ wedding ceremony was held, and after the wedding feast, Mehmet went to his room with the daughter of the king. "Before I can sleep with you," she said, following her father's instructions, "I must know the secret of your golden ship."

"Just imagine that!" said Mehmet Bey. "What a thing to be concerned about at such a time as this. This whistle and this seal are responsible for all my wealth." Then he took the whistle from his pocket and blew it.

When the two ghosts appeared, they asked their usual question:
"Shall we destroy or shall we restore?"

"Do neither," said Mehmet. "Just go away."

"Will these creatures obey me, too?" asked the girl.

"Yes," he said, "whoever blows the whistle will be able to command them."

"And what does the seal do?" she asked.

"It turns everything that it touches into gold," said Mehmet.

"Shall we try it?" asked the girl, and she brought her jewelry case. When she touched it with the seal, the case turned into gold.

Now the girl wanted to blow the whistle and see if the immense ghosts would really obey her command. She blew the whistle and the ghosts appeared.

"Shall we destroy or shall we restore?" they asked

"Let everything stay in its place," she said, "except this (dog) beside me. Take him and carry him away for a distance of seven lands."⁷

The ghosts grabbed Mehmet by the arm and, carrying him over seven lands, dropped him in an unknown country. After many hardships and long journeys, he at last managed to return to his native city and to his mother, who was becoming very worried about him.

"What happened to your ship?" she asked him.

"It was caught in a ~~storm~~^{storm--at sea} at sea," he told her. "I lost all of my crew, but I managed to reach shore on a piece of plank."

After being home for a few days, Mehmet the Mad remembered the cap which he had left behind, and he asked his mother to get it for him from the chest. He tried to use the cap in every possible way. He made a

⁷This is a proverbial expression which in Turkish folk tales means to the end of the earth.

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seal of it, soaked it in water and stamped things with it, but nothing happened. He concluded that the king of the snakes had given him the wrong cap, for this one apparently had no magic powers. He thought that he might as well wear this cap if it was good for nothing else, but when he put the cap on his head, he immediately became invisible. *Invisibility -- cap of*

"Mehmet, where are you? I can't see you," his mother said. *Cap -- makes*

"That is strange, mother. I am right in front of you," he said. He *weaver invisible* took the cap from his head and became visible once more, and then he knew the power that it had. After that Mehmet the Mad gathered a quantity of money again by stealing from various houses while he was wearing the magic cap that made him invisible.

After a while he decided to leave home again. He went to the pier, and without being noticed by anyone, he boarded a ship and settled in the most luxurious *of ship* cabin. Finally, after a long voyage, he reached again the land of the king whose daughter had cheated him. Unobserved, he entered the palace where the king was holding an important meeting with his ministers. Mehmet sat in a *chair* in the corner and listened to their discussions, and then he joined them at the dinner table. He took food from the plate of each of the diners unnoticed, but when the food kept disappearing from the king's plate, the king turned to his vezir and asked, "Why do you take food from my plate when there is plenty on your

"No, your majesty, I did not do such a thing," said the vezir.

When the king retired to sleep that night, he said to the queen, "I am worried about that son-in-law of mine, Mehmet the Mad. I had him searched for without success. I wonder what could have happened to him? I miss him very much." The king had, in fact, suspected that Mehmet had returned and was responsible for the strange things that had happened

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at the dinner table. And he also suspected that Mehmet might be present in his room and might hear him, and so he spoke in this kind way about his son-in-law. When Mehmet heard the king talk in this manner, he was happy, and so he took off his cap and became visible. The king pretended to be very pleased with Mehmet's return, and he sent word to his daughter, and he said when she came, "Your dear husband, Mehmet, is back."

The girl pretended great joy at seeing Mehmet again: "I have been ill all the time that you have been away. I was able to get up only now when I heard that you were back safe and sound."

By gestures and signs the king gave his daughter instructions to find out how Mehmet managed to become invisible. Mehmet said it was all done by his cap: "When I put it on my head, I become invisible." She asked Mehmet to see the cap, and when he gave it to her, she put it on her head, became invisible, and then blew the whistle.

"Shall we destroy or shall we restore?" asked the two ghosts when they appeared.

Pointing to Mehmet the Mad, she said to them, "Take this fool to a place so far away that he cannot return for fifteen years."

The ghosts carried Mehmet to a distant land and left him there in a dense forest. After wandering about for many miserable days, he came to an apple tree and, being very hungry, he ate some of the apples. Right away, two horns grew on his head. He hoped that these horns would be of some use to him sometime, somewhere, but as yet he did not see how they could help him. The horns kept growing. They grew so long that he could hardly walk between the trees of the forest without catching them in the branches. He came to a fig tree one day and decided to eat a fig, hoping that he might grow four arms and turn into a scorpion. But much to his

magic apple - produce horn on head of eater
apple mag

Magic figs -- cause disappearance of horns from head of eater 108
 Fig -- magic " " " " " " " "

delight, when he ate the fig, the horns disappeared, and he became his former self. He made a basket for himself, and in it he put some of the magic apples and some of the magic figs, and then he set out for the land of the king whose daughter had cheated him twice.

He went a little way, he went a great way; he went over hills and dales, and yet he went straight; he went for six months and a summer, and then he went for six months and an autumn; and finally, a year after that, he one evening reached the palace of the king again.

Distance -- for description of
Importance -- here protect to be fruit seller

In the morning, he walked around and round the palace shouting, "I am selling the fruit of paradise! I am selling the fruit of paradise!" The queen, her daughter, and the other women of the palace woke up to this nerve-wracking shouting, "The fruit of paradise! I am selling the fruit of paradise!" They looked out of the palace windows and saw that a shabbily dressed man was wandering about the streets, with a basket in his hand, shouting these words

Just for fun, one of the palace women shouted, "Hey, Keloğlan⁸, what are you selling? And why are you dressed so shabbily?"

"I am selling the fruit of paradise," answered Mehmet. "Do you think you can eat it with that big mouth of yours?"

Finally the queen heard of a strange-looking man being nearby selling the fruit of paradise, and so she addressed him from her window, "What is it that you are selling?"

"I am selling fruit of paradise," he answered, "but you cannot afford to buy them. They are meant for palace people. Only wives and daughters of kings can eat them."

⁸ Mehmet is disguised as keloğlan, a bald boy. Traditionally, they are shabby.

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"Well, that is what we are," she said.

"But there is a special way to be able to eat them," said Mehmet.

"You have to buy them with money."

"How much are they?" asked the queen.

"They are one golden lira apiece," he answered.

They threw down two golden liras and asked for two pieces of the fruit. Mehmet instructed them then how to eat the apples which he had thrown up to them: "Peel one of them. Then divide it into three pieces, and each of you take one piece." The queen, her daughter, and the wife of the grand vezir did as the peddler told them. About fifteen minutes after each had eaten a piece of apple, she grew horns on her head. Mehmet, in the meantime, went away, changed from his keloğlan clothes, and hid himself.

The king was informed of the terrible condition of his wife, his daughter, and the wife of the grand vezir, and he was asked to come and see them at once. When he came and saw them, he was frightened by the large horns that grew out of their heads. He ordered his men to go and find all the soothsayers, pilgrims, ⁹hocas, seers, and doctors--every sort of man with healing powers. Although many doctors--^{religious men} and ^{men--of} religious men came to the palace, none of them was able to cure the women of their condition. Then the king sent messages to foreign countries to ask that doctors be sent from those places, too, but none of them could cure the women.

Finally, Mehmet the Mad put on a gown ^{books--old} stuck an old book under his arm, and walked up and down the streets where the people would notice him.

^{power of looking}
^{Realin} ^{of power}
^{of} ^{men--of}
^{religious}
9 The haci, the pilgrim returned from Mecca, was sometimes thought to have special powers.

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As the king's men had all been instructed to lead straight to the palace any healer from any part of the world, they also took Mehmet there and introduced him as the famous Doctor Lokman from Arabia.¹⁰ He was shown into the room of the palace where the three ladies lay in bed with their heads covered with napkins. After examining them, he said, "These patients must be taken to a place where they will be completely alone. A bath-house just outside the palace would be a most suitable place."

The king, thereupon hired a nearby bathhouse, had it cleaned, and ordered that the patients be carried there. After they had been there for a day, Mehmet gave a piece of fig to the queen and another to the wife of the grand vezir, and in about five minutes' time, their horns disappeared. The good news was carried at once to the palace, and a huge feast was arranged in honor of the famous doctor.

The third patient, the king's daughter, was still not cured, however. Mehmet visited her for forty days but pretended that he could not cure her. One day he said to the girl, "I happened to find the prescription in a book which I was reading today which, I think, will cure you. According to that prescription, you must first get married."

"All right, then," said the girl, "Let my father find a husband for me."

"That will not be necessary," said Mehmet. "It need not be an official marriage. You can marry me."

Mehmet the Mad and the girl ^{were} married there in the bathhouse, and

¹⁰In the Koran he is credited with being a contemporary of David. He was a legendary figure who was thought by the folk to be the father of medicine. The Fables of Luqman may well be derived from Aesop's fables. Elsewhere we have a note on the chapter of the Koran devoted to Lokman.

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after a while, the girl became pregnant. One day Mehmet said to her, "You may have something magical in your possession which makes all of my cures ineffective. It could be a magic whistle, or a magic seal, or a magic cap of some sort. As long as such things are in your possession, I cannot cure you."

"Yes, I think I have those very things," she said.

"Where are they?" asked Mehmet.

"In a drawer in a closet in my room," she said. She sent for these three things and had them brought to the bathhouse immediately.

As soon as he had recovered the whistle, the seal and the cap, he gave her a piece of fig to eat, and shortly after that she lost her horns. Then Mehmet took off his mask and said to his wife, "Do you recognize me?"

"Yes, you are my doctor," she said.

"Yes, but try to remember where you saw me before," he said.

Then she struggled to think about him, and she was able to recall him. Suddenly she said, "Why you are my dear husband, Mehmet Bey!"

Then he said to her, "You have cheated me twice, and I have now taken my revenge upon you. I shall not stay with you." Saying this, Mehmet the Mad left the girl and returned to his own country. There he regained the throne and began to live happily thereafter. He enjoyed a very prosperous reign.