

Narrator: Osman Tan, aged 12  
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The Cauldron-Headed, Ax-Toothed Sister

Once there was, and once there was not, when it was a long time ago, there were a husband and a wife. They had <sup>BROTHERS</sup> three sons and a lot of sheep, but they had no daughter. One day the mother prayed to God, "O, God, let me have a daughter, even if her head is as big as a cauldron and her teeth are like axes." It happened that after a while they did in fact have a daughter whose head was as big as a cauldron and whose teeth were like axes.

They noticed after a while that a sheep was missing from their flock every day. To find out who it was that was carrying off the sheep, the sons were put on guard at night, each taking his turn. The first night it was the turn of the eldest son. While he was watching he became sleepy, and did not see that his cauldron-headed and ax-toothed baby sister got up from her bed and went to the flock and there ate the sheep. The next night it was the turn of the middle brother to be on guard, but he also fell asleep toward the middle of the night, and again the cauldron-headed, ax-toothed sister got up, killed another sheep, and ate it.

When it was the turn of the youngest brother to watch, he managed to stay awake, and he saw their baby sister get out of her bed, go to the flock of sheep and kill one, and then eat its flesh. In the morning he told his parents about this. He said to them, "The sheep are being eaten by your cauldron-headed, ax-toothed daughter."

The parents were very angry with what the youngest son told them about their daughter. They said to him, "How could a little baby like that possibly do such a thing?"

SON  
 three  
 sisters

watch

Very much offended at the attitude taken by his parents, the youngest son left home. He mounted his horse and rode away. As he left home he was eating dates along the way and throwing the pits on the side of the road. Finally, after riding for some time, he saw a light in the distance and went toward it. When he arrived at the cottage where the light was burning, he discovered that an old woman lived there. He asked her whether she could use him as a shepherd. She hired the young man as a shepherd, but she warned him never to take the sheep near the three nearby mountains because they were filled with monsters.

The next day the young man began his job as a shepherd for the old woman. He took his gun and his flock and he went to the first of the mountains about which he had been warned. There he came face to face with a lion. When the young man aimed his gun at the creature, the lion said to him, "Stop--have pity on me. Spare me. I have two cubs in a cave, and I will give you one of them if you will spare me." The lion went back and got one of the cubs and gave it to the young man. The young man returned that night to the cottage of the old woman. He took the cub with him, and told the old woman to take care of it for him.

The next day he took his flocks to the second mountain. This time a bear approached him, and when he was about to shoot the bear, the animal said, "Stop--have pity on me. I shall give you one of my cubs if you do not shoot me." He got the cub from the bear, and that evening he took it home and told the old woman to take care of his bear also.

The next day the young man went with his flocks to the third mountain where he met a tiger. He was about to shoot the tiger when the tiger said to him, "Stop--have pity on me. If you do not shoot me, I shall give you one of my cubs." The tiger gave him the cub, and he took it home and gave it to

the old lady to take care of, along with the lion cub and the bear cub

The young man lived this way for a long time with the old woman, taking care of her sheep. One day, however, the old woman noticed that the young man sat by the side of the cottage during the evening, and was stabbing the ground with a stick and thinking. The old woman asked him, "What are you thinking about so deeply?"

"Well," said the young man, "I am thinking about my parents. I want to go and see them."

"Very well," said the old woman, "why don't you go and visit with them?"

Before he left, the young man said to the old woman, "Take care of my three cubs. Feed them with milk. If they should vomit blood, you will know that a disaster has befallen me. Then you are to release them and let them come to help me."

During the time that the young man had been away from home, his cauldron-headed and ax-toothed sister had been harassing the neighboring villages by eating everything that she could lay her hands on. When the youngest brother returned to his village, he was greeted immediately by his sister. She said, "Welcome, brother. Shall I take your horse to water?"

"All right, you may take my horse to water," said the young man.

While she was away with the horse, taking it to water, she ate off one of its legs. When she returned with the horse she asked her youngest brother, "How many legs had your horse? Had he three legs?"

"Yes, he had three legs."

"Shall I take your horse to eat now?" asked the cauldron-headed, ax-toothed girl.

"All right, sister, you may take him to eat."

While she was away with the horse taking him to eat, she ate off another one of its legs. When she returned with the horse she asked her brother, "Had your horse two legs?"

"Yes, it had two legs."

"Shall I take your horse to water again?" asked the cauldron-headed, ax-toothed girl.

"All right, sister."

This time she ate a third leg off the horse. When she brought it back, she asked her brother, "Had your horse one leg?"

"Yes, it had only one leg."

"Shall I take it to eat again?"

"All right, you may take it to eat again."

This time she ate the fourth leg off the horse. When she returned to her brother without the horse, she asked him, "Did you come on horseback or did you come on foot?"

"I came here on foot," answered her brother.

The cauldron-headed, ax-toothed sister then asked her youngest brother, "Shall I delouse your head?"

"All right," said the youngest brother, "you may delouse my head."

When the cauldron-headed, ax-toothed sister was delousing her brother's head, she opened her mouth and was prepared to bite his head off. He realized this and said to her, "Stop! Do not eat me in this way. You go and stand in the fireplace, and I shall go to the top of the roof and jump down the chimney into your mouth. You can eat all of me better in that way."

He went out and left his monster sister standing in the fireplace. He locked the door of the room and climbed up on top of the roof. There he

took the heavy roller<sup>1</sup> from the roof and dropped it down the chimney into the mouth of the cauldron-headed, ax-toothed sister. The young man then escaped, running down the road

Very soon, however, he saw that his cauldron-headed, ax-toothed sister was chasing him. He climbed up a date tree, which had grown from one of the pits he had thrown there when he first left home. When the cauldron-headed ax-toothed sister came to the tree, she simply gnawed it at the base and cut it down. Before the tree fell, the young man jumped to the next tree. Then the cauldron-headed, ax-toothed sister gnawed that tree down, too. He jumped from one tree to another, all along the line of date trees which had grown up from the pits that he had thrown there, until he came to the last tree. He realized, then, that there would be no more trees to which he could jump.

"Stop, sister," said the young man. "You will eat me, all right, but before you do, let me play a few sad tunes on my flute." He then played several tunes, and after a while the three cubs came running from the cottage of the old woman. The lion cub came first, and then the bear cub, and then the tiger cub

"I am afraid of these creatures," said the sister

"You need not be afraid of them," said the brother. "They are coming to you as your prey."

But when the cubs came close enough, he said to them, "O, lion, catch her! O, tiger, swallow her O, bear, split her ax-toothed jaws!"

Just before the cubs killed her, the cauldron-headed, ax-toothed sister

<sup>1</sup>Although the Turkish government has encouraged peasants to tile their roofs, many of the rural homes in Central Anatolia still have clay-and-straw roofs. After a rain such a roof is rolled with a heavy concrete roller in order to seal up any cracks made by the latest watering. The roller is left up on the roof and is a familiar object in Anatolian villages.

*Animals - helpful*

said, "You will kill me, all right, but before I die, will you please cut out my tongue and put it in your pocket? You may need it in the future."

The young man cut out her tongue and put it in his pocket. On the way home, he met a man with a long caravan loaded with goods. This man took a stick from his pocket and showed it to the young man and said, "If you know what this stick is, you can have the caravan that I have. If you cannot guess what it is, you will give me those cubs."

The young man said, "All right, I shall guess what the stick is." At that moment the sister's tongue, which he had in his pocket, spoke to him and said, "The stick is called the magic staff."<sup>2</sup>

The young man won the caravan of goods in that way, and he became very rich. He ate and drank and lived happily ever afterwards, and so may we all.