

Story #114

(First 3/4 on Tape 18, flipside;  
last 1/4 mailed in by muhtar,  
Duran Çatal)

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The Faithful Wife of the Padişah's Son

*Son of Padişah*

There was once a padişah who had a son named Ahmet. When the son grew up and came of an age to marry, his father asked him, "Would you like to marry the daughter of such-and-such a padişah?"

"No," answered his son

"Well, then," said his father, "would you prefer the daughter of some other padişah?"

"No," answered the son, "but there is a girl of our own village, the daughter of a poor man, and I should like to marry that girl."

So the padişah went to the home of the poor man and formally requested the hand of his daughter for the son. A wedding was arranged that lasted for forty days and forty nights.

It was not long after the wedding that the padişah and his wife both died, and so the son became the new padişah. He lived with his wife in his father's house, and he carried on his father's affairs as best he could.

One night when he was lying in bed with his wife, the young man noticed some papers attached to the ceiling. They climbed up and took down the bundle of papers and examined them. They discovered that these papers were title deeds for property, such as mills and factories, which his father had owned at Ankara.<sup>1</sup> He decided to go and take charge of these pieces of property

<sup>1</sup>Ankara is not an industrial city, but for Anatolian peasants it is imagined to be the proper site of anything new, different, or modern.

as soon as possible, and so next morning he got on his horse and set out for the city. He said to his wife, "If I do not return within a month's time start searching for me

He went a little way, he went a great way, he went over hills and plains and finally he reached Ankara. He pulled in at a hotel for the night, and he showed the hotel keeper the documents which he had brought with him.<sup>2</sup> The young man learned that the manager of his mills and factories was an Arab who was a cruel and oppressive fellow; the people of Ankara hated him, and they would be happy to learn that the owner of the mills had come to relieve them from the tyranny of this Arab. The Arab manager had become very rich while operating these mills

When the Arab learned who Ahmet was, he said to him, "Why did you register in a hotel? You could have been my guest instead." The Arab brought food and drinks, and they sat down to talk. "What padişah's daughter did you marry?" asked the Arab. "Was it such-and-such a one, or was it such-and-such another one?"

"Neither," answered Ahmet. "I married the daughter of such-and-such a poor man in our village."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed the Arab. "By Allah, the daughter of that man is an old mistress of mine."

The young man found this unbelievable. "If you can prove that," he said, "I shall give you all my property including this suit that I am wearing. Than I shall become a water carrier here in Ankara. I shall offer every passerby a drink of water; then I shall give him five kuruş<sup>3</sup>, and I shall

<sup>2</sup>The peasant coming to Ankara probably would show such documents to an inn keeper.

<sup>3</sup>A kuruş is a hundredth part of a lira. It is now worth about a tenth of an American cent.

WAGER

ask him to slap me on the back of the neck."

The Arab manager was not sure that he meant this, but he decided to find out. He filled a saddle bag with gold, mounted his horse, and set out for the village of the young padişah. When he arrived there, he stopped at the house of an old woman and asked her, "Will you house me here for the night?"

"No, son," she said, "I have no room in my small home.

The Arab pulled some gold from his saddle bag and gave it to her. When the old woman saw the gold she was glad enough to accept the Arab as her guest. After he had entered her house and sat down, she said to him, "Tell me what it is that brings you to this village."

The Arab told her why he had come and he said to her, "If I can take away from here any article belonging to the wife of the new padişah, he will give me all of his property."

*woman  
evil w*  
The old woman was a very wicked person and she was known to be a witch. She said to the Arab, "I shall tell the woman that I am going to Mecca and that I want to leave my possessions in her care in a large trunk. You can hide in this trunk, and then you can come out of it at night and steal whatever articles you want from her bedroom."

The old woman hid the Arab in her trunk and had it carried to the home of the padişah. At the gate they were stopped by the old man who had been hired by the padişah as his guard. The old man knew that the woman was an evil person, and he started beating her.

The wife of the padişah heard the noise and looked out the window. She shouted down to the guard, "Don't beat her! She is only an old woman. So the witch left her trunk, with the Arab in it, at the home of Ahmet's wife.

After the padişah's wife was asleep, about midnight, the Arab crawled

out of the trunk. He took a handkerchief<sup>4</sup> from her clothes. He came close to the sleeping woman. He noticed through the very thin night clothes that she was wearing a mole on her breast. Then he climbed back into the trunk and waited for the morning.

In the morning the witch returned. She said to the wife of the padişah, "The pilgrims would not let me join them in their trip to Mecca. I have come to take back my trunk."

After he was released from the trunk, the Arab paid the witch a few more gold coins, and then he rode back to Ankara. When he found Ahmet, he said to him, "I have just returned from a night with your wife. Here is a handkerchief that she gave me."

Ahmet recognized the handkerchief as his wife's, but he still doubted the Arab. "Do you have any other proof?" he asked.

*False accusation  
Faithfulness*

"Well," said the Arab, "I noticed last night that your wife had a mole on her breast."

When he heard this, Ahmet was persuaded that his wife had been unfaithful to him. He turned over to the Arab all his property, including the suit that he was wearing. He put on old clothes and started work in Ankara as a water carrier.

After a month had elapsed, Ahmet's wife decided to go in search of her husband. She said to the old man who guarded the gate, "Father, I must go in search of my husband. Bring me a good horse for my trip."

<sup>4</sup>In Turkish folktales a handkerchief is a more personal and cherished memento than it is in real life. Their owners can always, somehow, be identified, and they suggest as convincing evidence of infidelity as did that of Desdemona.

The old man brought her a horse, but he complained, "First the padişah leaves and now you are going away, too."

*DISGUISE*  
The wife dressed as a man, mounted her horse, and started riding toward Ankara. Passing through a village, she saw a shoemaker at work in his shop. She stopped to watch him at work, and while she watched, she heard a loud moaning sound coming from the nearby mountains. "Who is that moaning so loud?" she asked.

"That is my son," said the shoemaker. "His name is Hasan the Mad. He carries from the mountains five tons of wood each day and delivers it at the home of the baker. For this he is given a whole oven full of bread. He spends all his spare time eating bread, for he has an enormous appetite."

"Would you be willing to place him in my care?" asked the wife.

"How would you manage to feed him?" asked the shoemaker.

"Don't worry about that. I shall keep him well fed," she said.

*BIG EATER*  
The shoemaker gave Hasan the Mad to the wife of the padişah. She bought forty mule loads of bread, mounted Hasan the Mad on a horse, and started again for Ankara. She rode in front, and Hasan rode along behind her. After a while Hasan became <sup>so</sup> very hungry, and so he dismounted from his horse and started to walk back to his village. When the woman saw this she shouted, "Hasan, where are you going?"

"I am going home," he said. "I am hungry!"

"But the bread loaded on these forty mules is all for you," she explained to him. When he heard this, Hasan ate two mule loads of bread at once. Then he mounted his horse again and rode along behind the wife of the padişah.

On the way they came to a flat piece of grassy ground. It was a

pasture, and they stopped there to rest and to allow their animals to graze. The woman slept and Ahmet took some clay and began making a cup from which his master might drink coffee. While he was working on the cup, three guards came up to him. "How dare you let your animals graze here? Why, even birds are not permitted to land on this pasture!"

"Please do not make so much noise," said Hasan the Mad, "or you will awaken my master." Then he wrapped his arm around a tree and tore it up by the roots. He beat the three guards to death with this club.

When the wife of the padişah woke up she saw the dead bodies nearby. She was pleased with Hasan the Mad, for she knew that he was the kind of servant she needed. They continued on their journey, and at last they reached Ankara.

Hasan pulled in at an inn with the mules and the wife went in search of her husband. Before she left Hasan she told him to buy a batman of vintage wine, a batman of leblebi, and a batman of nuts; she gave him the money necessary to buy these things.

The wife of the padişah found the former padişah selling water but giving money to the buyers instead of taking money from them. To each person he gave five kuruş and then he stretched out his neck to be slapped. The water seller did not recognize his wife, for she was dressed as a man.

"Will you give me a drink of water?" she asked.

Ahmet still did not recognize his wife, so he gave her a cup of water and five kuruş. When his wife asked what the five kuruş were for, Ahmet said to her, "You just take your five kuruş and go your way. Many things have happened to me and I have suffered great losses."

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The whole episode was repeated again next day. This time, however, the woman said to Ahmet, "Who are you and where do you live?"

"I live at the inn at the end of this street," he said.

"I am staying there also," said his wife, "and tonight I should be pleased if you would dine with me."

Ahmet dined with his wife, and when the meal was over they drank from the vintage wine, ate leblebi,<sup>5</sup> and chewed on the nuts that Hasan the Mad had bought. After they had talked for a while, Ahmet's wife said to him, "Tell me the story of your life."<sup>6</sup>

Ahmet told her his story. "When I first came to Ankara, I was eating and drinking with a certain man. He said he could seduce any woman in the world. I said that he could not seduce my wife. He then asked me who my wife was and where she lived. When I gave him this information, he said, 'Oh, she is a former mistress of mine.' I said that if he could prove that, I would give him all of my property in Ankara as well as the suit of clothes that I was wearing. Then I would become a water carrier, I said, and give five kurus to everyone who took a cup of my water, and I would let that person slap me on the back of the neck."

"How did the man prove that your wife was his mistress?" asked the wife of the former padişah.

"He brought me a handkerchief that I had given her," said Ahmet.

"He may have stolen it," said the woman.

<sup>5</sup> Leblebi are roasted chick peas. They are eaten in Turkey as hors d'oeuvres; more often they are served with rakı, the favorite after-dinner cordial. The fact that Ataturk ate leblebi with his rakı has undoubtedly added greatly to their popularity among Turks.

<sup>6</sup> In Turkey, where people while away long hours in leisurely conversation, one is often asked to tell his life story.

"But he proved it in another way, too," said Ahmet, and here he slapped his knees in grief.

"How was that?" asked his wife.

"He told me something about my wife's body that nobody but her lover could know."

"What was that?" asked the woman

"He told me that my wife has a mole on her breast, and this is true. On her left breast there is a large mole. And so I gave the man, who is an Arab, all of my property, and then I became a water carrier."

The next day the woman found the name and address of the Arab, and she invited him to come to her inn to dinner. When the Arab came, he did not suspect that his host was really a woman. They ate and drank for some time, and then the wife of the former padişah asked the Arab, "Tell me, how did you attain all of your great wealth?"

The Arab told her this story. "There is a man in this city who is a water carrier, but once he was the son of a padişah. I made friends with him when he came to Ankara to inspect his factories here. I knew his father, and I was the manager of his factories. After I became acquainted with him I said that I could seduce any woman on earth. He said that I could not seduce his wife. I asked him who his wife was and where she lived. When he gave me this information, I said, 'Oh, I know her. She is a former mistress of mine.' He said that if I could prove that, he would give me all of his property here in Ankara, including the suit that he was wearing."

"Did you seduce his wife?" asked the woman.

"No, but he believed that I had done so," said the Arab, "and that is why all his property became mine."

"Why did this padişah's son think you had seduced his wife?" she asked.

"I went to his village," said the Arab. "There I told my story to an old woman who was a witch. For some gold, she had me carried, in a trunk, into the house of this man's wife. During the night, I climbed out of the trunk and stole a handkerchief from her clothing. The moonlight fell upon her as she slept, and her night clothes were so thin that I could see a large mole on her breast. Then I climbed back into the trunk and was carried back to the home of the witch. I gave the old woman some more gold, and then I returned to Ankara. When I gave the padişah's son the handkerchief of his wife, he still refused to believe that I had seduced his wife. But when I told him that she had a mole on her breast, he believed me."

After the Arab had finished his story, the wife of the padişah said to him, "Let us play pishti.<sup>7</sup> If you win, I shall give you this bag of gold. If I win, I shall stamp my seal on your buttocks."

The Arab agreed to this and so they played pishti. She won three successive times, and the woman stamped her seal on his buttocks.

The following morning the woman went to a kadı and complained that the Arab had cheated her husband out of his fortune. The kadı had the Arab summoned to the court and he then asked him if he had cheated such-and-such water carrier out of his property.

"I have done nothing of the sort, efendi," said the Arab.

"How can you prove your claim?" the kadı asked the woman.

"I am really a woman," said the wife of the padişah, "and the water carrier is my husband. While my husband was away from home this Arab had himself carried secretly into my bedroom in a trunk. He then stole a hand-

<sup>7</sup>Pishti is a simple card game enjoyed by Turks.

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kerchief and observed a mole on my breast. He took the handkerchief to my husband and told him of the mole on my breast. He did this to make my husband believe that he had slept with me. In this way he received my husband's property in Ankara, for my husband had wagered that the Arab could not seduce me."

"Were you carried into this woman's room in a chest?" asked the kadı.

"No, efendi, I never was," said the Arab.

The kadı then demanded that the witch who owned the trunk be summoned. Two days later she appeared before him, and he asked her, "Did you or did you not have this man carried, in a trunk, into the home of this woman?" When the old woman said nothing, the kadı said, "I shall give you a handful of gold whatever your answer is, but you must answer."

"Yes, this is the man," the witch said.

The kadı then asked the wife of the padişah, "How did you recognize this man when you saw him?"

"I have my seal stamped on his buttocks," she answered.

The Arab's buttocks were examined, and the kadı was satisfied that the woman's seal was stamped on them. The kadı ruled that the water carrier should have all of his property returned to him, and after that he and his wife were united again and lived happily.