

Story #625 (1977, Tape #21)

Narrator: Mustafa Düzgün

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#625

King -- daughter of

Daughter -- of King

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The King's Daughter

There once was a king who had a daughter. The king's daughter went to school every day. On her way to school every day her cousin would ask her, "Daughter of the king, how many leaves does our fesleğen plant have?"<sup>1</sup>

And she would reply, "Son of a gentleman, how many stars are there in the sky?"

This went on day after day. One day when the boy asked the same question again, the girl's mother died, and soon the king re-married. The boy, knowing that the second wife could only be a stepmother to the daughter, went to her and said, "Please convince the girl to accept my hand in marriage."

The stepmother said, "I can't influence her, but I could teach you certain things. I could say, for example, that I had a terrible craving for a head,<sup>2</sup> and you could be passing by disguised as a sheep's head vendor. Then you could tell the girl you will sell the head for a kiss, but not for money."

Sheep's head

<sup>1</sup> Reyhan is an obsolete word for the plant fesleğen or feslihan. In Europe this plant is known as marjoram or sweet basil. There is much lore about sweet basil.

<sup>2</sup> Sheep heads are sold in Turkey but usually not to upper-class customers.

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So the boy went and got into a head vendor's disguise and passed by the street, crying out, "Heads, heads; I sell heads!"

The stepmother ordered the girl to go out and get her a head. The daughter protested, saying she had no money. The stepmother told her that money was of no importance. So they called the head vendor in. The head vendor told them that he did not sell the heads for money, but he could for a kiss. Of course the woman refused such a bargain but convinced the daughter to submit to the bargain.

The next day on her way to school, the girl's cousin asked her the same question. "Daughter of the king, how many leaves does our fesleğen have?"

[Ahmet Uysal, "What is reyhan?"

Narrator: "It is a type of plant, an herb.

Uysal: "Is there such an herb?"

Narrator: "Yes, there is."]

The girl gave her usual reply, "How many stars in the sky, son of a gentleman?"

But the cousin went further and asked, "O girl who gave me a kiss for a head, how many leaves on the herb?"

This upset the girl very much. When she came home from school, she cried and cried. Then she thought of a way to get even with him. She went to her father, told him what had happened, and asked him how she could get even with the boy. Her father told her to invite the boy to the house.

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So the boy came over and they talked. One day the girl asked him to come over at night. Meanwhile, she asked her father to get her forty geese, a <sup>tail of cow</sup> cow's tail, and a barrel of molasses. She took off her clothes, poured molasses over her body, and then donned the geese feathers, that stuck all over her. She took the cow's tail in her hand and waited for the boy at her door. When the boy arrived and saw the terrible creature at the door, he fell down in a faint. She quickly pounced on him and beat him with the cow's tail until he was covered with cuts and bruises. Then she rolled him out on the street. The injured boy was taken away to be treated at the hospital, and he could not return for six months.

When he returned, time and fortune had changed. The girl's father had been deposed from the throne, and the boy's father had become king. When the girl's father had been deposed, the boy had asked for her hand in marriage, but since a feud had broken out between the families, he had had to participate in the hostility.

When the girl heard this, she asked her father to hire sol-  
diers for her, and so she went off to battle after the boy, some-  
where in one of the southern provinces. The girl camped her  
regiment close to the boy's and had one of her soldiers invite  
him over to her camp. She had disguised herself as a major. She  
told the boy that as a friend she would fight with him and help

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him out. They went to battle together and won great victories.  
 Once at night, they played a game and the girl said, "If you win, I'll let you have one of our women for the night. If I win, I'll ask you for the most precious thing you've got."

First the girl lost to the boy. They each lost to the other three times. She asked for his ring the first time she won, then for his knife, then for another of his treasured possessions. And he spent the night with a woman three times. Each time a child was born. Two were boys and one was a girl.<sup>3</sup>

When they returned from the war, the boy immediately had her hand asked in marriage. Since he now was the <sup>King--son of</sup> King's son, he could <sup>Son--of King</sup> not be refused. The family had to let her go. As soon as he married her--she had kept all the happenings a secret during the war--he had her thrown into a well and had the well sealed with stones. She had anticipated this, and had had a <sup>tunnel</sup> cave dug from the dry well to her father's house. So, as soon as she was thrown into the well, she escaped to her father's house.

After her supposed death, the boy got ready to remarry. He had the drums beaten for forty days and forty nights before his marriage. About the fifteenth or twentieth day, three children appeared and created a terrible commotion by dumping over all the

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<sup>3</sup>The narrator has telescoped much of this tale. It is quite obvious here. In other variants of this tale, the young man also has three children by his disguised wife. But the three conceptions are about a year apart, as would be natural, not on three nights close together.

food. The people caught the three children and were about to give them a thorough beating when the children cried out, "How dare you lay a hand on us? Don't you see who our father is?"

According to the custom of the day, everyone wore an emblem of identity. The king's son, hearing this, asked to have the children brought to his presence. When the children gave him his ring, his knife, and his other prized possession, the king's son cried and embraced the children. Then the king's son asked them, "Who are you? Where did you come from?"

And the children replied, "Our mother sent us to you."

The king's son married the children's mother, and they all lived happily ever after. It is hoped that the listeners will also live happily.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>This is a badly-told variant of a widely distributed tale in Turkey, "The Feslihanca Girl," UW #118.