

Story 719 (1976 Tape 5)

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Söğüt kaza,
Bilecik Province

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Czade *xx*

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The Lovers and Karaçor the Conjuror

Once there was and once there was not a young man who saw the same girl in his dreams every night. One night, the girl said to him, "Take an iron cane in your hand and put iron sandals on your feet, and then search for me until you find me."¹ The following day the young man got an iron cane, put iron sandals on his feet, and set out in search of this girl of his dreams. He traveled a great distance seeking her, so far, in fact, that his cane was worn down and his sandals were nearly worn through. One day he sat in the shade of a building and began to sing:

¹People who must make a long journey in quest of someone or something traditionally do so with an iron walking stick and iron shoes. They are sometimes told that they must walk until both shoes and cane are worn out, and a long journey it is that will wear out such iron items. Here the sandals are almost worn through and the cane worn to a stub when he arrives, unbeknown to him first, at the place where the dream girl lives. The iron shoes are said to be iron çarık (sandals made normally of camel skin or donkey skin).

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I have come to pick the kerchief up,²
 long I walked to reach this place.
 love of you my nights turned days;
 love of you I have endured.

The girl of his dreams lived in that house, and, hearing his song, she now awoke and answered with these lines:

Sleeping I was, but now I stand
 Leaning against my roof's ridge-pole;
 Between my sleep and waking now
 I thought that you were Karaçor

This is what she sang to her lover, though now engaged to a man named Karaçor.

The young man sang again:

The millstone now may turn itself,
 May turn itself without my hand.
 No more shall I believe an oath,
 By woman made for sake of love.³

²It is one of the conventions of romance that a lady interested in a man drops her handkerchief to signal this interest; if the affection is mutual, the male signals this by picking up the handkerchief. The Turkish expressing this is here stated: Mendil atma, mendil düşürme.

³This may refer to a part omitted from this tale. Lovers who meet in dreams in Turkish tales often plight their troth by sharing a goblet of sherbet--a sweet fruit drink. This may be the oath referred to here.

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To this the girl replied:

An orange is in slices cut
Because my tongue once spoke amiss,
And now I know it spoke amiss,
I wish it too were cut apart

And then the young man sang:

Don't cut your orange now, my love,
And wipe the blade that sliced it so.
For you may say whate'er you will,
And keep your orange tongue intact.

Because the house was well guarded, with doors and windows locked, the girl lowered a rope to him and pulled him up into her room. She took him to her bed, one lying on one side and the other on the other.

But Karaçor the conjuror had magic ways of knowing many things, and when he learned of this rendezvous, he waited until the lovers slept, and then by magic means had them transported to the office of the muhtar,⁴ where they continued sleeping on the floor. When the young man awakened, he discovered that they were in the middle of the muhtar's office. He sang to the girl:

⁴The muhtar is the elected head of a village or of a city district (mahalle). He is the only elected official that most villagers ever see, other administrators in rural areas being appointees of various federal agencies.

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No pomegranates grow on poplar trees;
 No shame should grow upon a beauty's cheek.
 Arise, my love, and let us fly,
 To some less public place than this.

girl was amazed when she awoke and discovered where they were, but she was unafraid:

Let pomegranates grow on poplar trees,
 And blushes grow upon a beauty's cheek;
 Let's hug and lie here on the floor,
 Abandoning caution evermore.

The next morning the father of the girl came to the muhtar's house and said to the young man, "My son, if you can defeat Karaçor in combat, then you will marry my daughter, but if Karaçor defeats you, he will marry her."

The boy and Karaçor then held a wrestling match each fighting with all his might. But Karaçor was both faster and stronger, and he defeated the boy. He then killed the boy and had his flesh cut into strips to be sold like mutton in the market. But the girl went to the marketplace and bought up all of this meat. Placing it all in a tight chest, she went to the Sakarya River⁵ and threw it into the water.

⁵The Sakarya is a major river of western Turkey. It flows through Bilecik Province very close to the spot where this tale was collected.

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 god OSIRIS

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Downstream from where she threw it in, two women were that day washing clothes on the riverbank. When they saw chest floating down toward them, they made an agreement: "Whatever that chest may contain, whether valuable property or a human soul, we shall share it equally." When the young man heard this, he sang:

Strive not so hard to unearth treasure hoard,
 To drink from forty fountains all at once.
 Another girl has all my heart--
 It can't be shared by you.

*Resurrects
from death*

When the women pulled the box to the shore and opened it, they saw step forth a handsome young man.

At the very time that this was occurring, the wedding of Karaçoğ to the girl was being prepared. The young man again went to her house, and standing beneath her window sang:

Her gorgeous gown and ornaments
 Do not reveal the bride's bad luck.
 Oh, may the main wall tumble down,
 That I may see once more my love.

When the girl heard this, she removed the make-up from hands and face and declared, "He is the one that I must marry!"

But her father intervened and would not agree to this.

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He said only what he had said before: "If these two men will fight again, then I shall give my daughter's hand to the winner; otherwise I shall not give permission to either of them to wed her."

The two men fought again, and Karaçor killed the young man for a second time. They took the lover's body to the cemetery and buried it in a grave

Again the wedding ceremony began, and they celebrated the occasion for forty days and forty nights. On the final day, the day when they were actually to be married, the girl said to her friends, "Let us go to the cemetery and visit the grave of my beloved for the last time, and then they may place me upon the horse⁶ and take me to my husband's home." When they reached the grave, the girl sang:

Where is your gravestone now, my love,

Engraved with the form of huma bird?⁷

You live down there alone, alone--

Is there no mate to comfort

⁶When a village wedding has been completed, the bride is placed upon a horse and taken to the home of her husband. Inasmuch as most Turks in rural areas are exogamous, this ride is more than a ritual gesture, for she is often taken to a neighboring village.

⁷The huma is a mythical bird. It is sometimes referred to as a Bird of Paradise.

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From the grave came this song:

Here is my gravestone now, my love,
 With the form of huma bird upon it.
 I am no longer here alone,
 For you're the mate to comfort me.

The girl ordered that the grave be opened, and when it stood open again, she jumped into it. When Karaçor learned of this, he went to the cemetery and tried to harass the lovers. He was prevented from doing this, however, by a shepherd who saw him there. This shepherd said, "You prevented them from having happiness in this world. Do not try to deny their happiness in the next world."⁸

Karaçor said nothing, but those who were there saw a blackthorn⁹ spring up suddenly in the grave, separating the lovers and preventing their embracing any longer.¹⁰

⁸The word used by the narrator for next world is Ahiret.

⁹The blackthorn is a shrub covered with spikey thorns. The Turkish word used here is karaçalı.

¹⁰The implication is that the conjuror and magician Karaçor was able to frustrate the lovers even in the after-life.