

Story 742 (1976 Tape 14)

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Location: Bektik village,
Şereflikoçhisar kaza,
Kırşehir Province

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The Substitute Bride

Once there was and once there was not. Time within time, and the sieve was in the straw. When jinns played jirit¹ in the old public bath, when the flea was a barber and the camel was a town crier. Back then, when I was rocking my mother's cradle, tingir mingir,² there was a son of a master craftsman.³ One night this young man saw in a dream a white-haired, white-bearded old man wearing a green skull cap.⁴ He was a saint. He said to the master's son, "If you will go and wait by the side of the fountain,^{36,37} in such-and-such a place, you will see some foam rise to the surface of the water. If you catch this foam and drink it, there

¹This introductory passage of nonsense is a tekerleme, a formulaic beginning for many Turkish folktales. Jirit is a javelin-throwing game played by contestants on horseback. It was a Turkish form of jousting. Today the "javelins" are blunt sticks.

²Tingir mingir is onomatopoeia for the sound of the rocking of a cradle.

³The term used here is usta.

⁴This is the stereotyped image of a dervish. Green is the sacred color of Islam, and so the skull cap alone would give religious significance to the image even if the narrator had not referred to him as a saint.

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will soon appear a lovely girl, the most beautiful girl in the world.⁵ 36-37,39

Following these directions, the young man went to this fountain when morning arrived. After he had waited there for a while, he saw foam rise to the surface of the water. When he had drunk some of this foam, a lovely girl appeared, the (most beautiful girl in the world.) He placed this girl in the top of a willow tree which grew beside the fountain and told her to wait for his return. Then he went back to his village to start preparations for the wedding ceremonies and the wedding feast, for he intended to marry this girl.

It so happened that at this time a band of gypsies³⁷⁻⁴⁶ was passing through the area. When the gypsy women came to the fountain to get water, they saw on the surface of the fountain pool a very beautiful image. Each was stunned with the image she thought her own. Each said, "Look at my image in the water! I am beautiful!" In their happiness they were crying and screaming and breaking their clay jugs in their frenzy.

The foam maiden in the tree had remained silent until this time, but now she spoke: "Oh, but that image in the water is not yours but mine! Don't break your water jugs in vain."

⁵In reality every hero could not fall in love with the most beautiful girl in the world, but in Turkish folktales they can and do.

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the
cat

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When they heard her voice and then looked up and saw the foam maiden, the gypsy women were all chagrined. One of the youngest of them entreated the beautiful girl in the tree to take her up beside her. "Please, Sister, allow me to come up into the tree beside you. I beg this of you!"

The world beauty agreed to this, and the gypsy girl climbed up to the top of the tree. The other gypsies left after they had taken from the fountain what water they needed

At the same time in the village wedding preparations were going on. The feast was being cooked, and the son of the master craftsman was arranging for the celebration. When everything was ready, he intended to return to the fountain with a group of village people to bring back the girl as a bride

Back in the tree-top the beautiful girl had grown sleepy. She said to the gypsy girl, "I shall lay my head on your knees and sleep a while. While I am sleeping, remove from my hair any lice that you may see in it." But as soon as the beauty dozed, the gypsy girl quickly grasped her and threw her down out of the tree. She drowned in the water of the fountain pool, but before she died a drop of her blood, which had fallen on the bank of the pool, sprang up in the form of a rose bush covered with beautiful red blossoms.

The group of villagers who had come to escort the bride

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arrived now at the fountain. When they looked up into the tree, they saw there the black, ugly gypsy girl. The young man said, "Why, I thought that she was ravishingly beautiful!"

Some of his companions were shocked by the sight of the gypsy girl. One of them said to the others, "Did he not us that she was (the most beautiful girl in the world?" ^h

The son of the master craftsman asked her, "Who are you? I do not recognize you!"

The gypsy girl answered, "What else could you expect after leaving me here exposed to the weather? I was beautiful when you left me here, but when I looked at the ground for such a long time, I turned black. Then when I looked at the sky for such a long time, I turned purple. That is how I got my present appearance."

After all was said that could be said, the people took the girl out of the tree, placed her upon a horse, and led the horse back to their village. As they were leaving the fountain, the young man noticed the rose bush. He pulled it up and took it along to the village with him. The gypsy girl said to those leading her horse, "Tell him to throw down that rose bush. If he doesn't, I shall cast myself down from this horse!"

When told this, the young man said, "I don't care if she

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does jump down. I intend to take this rose bush with me." Although the gypsy girl repeated her threat several times, the young man took the rose bush with him and planted it by the door of his house. That little bush grew so rapidly that before very long it was a small tree.

The gypsy girl bore several children, among them a son named Ali. Whenever the children or their mother went near the rose tree, it lashed its branches at them, stabbing them with its thorns. On the other hand, when the son of the master craftsman approached the tree, it put forth many new blossoms. All of this annoyed the gypsy girl greatly. She said to her husband, "Oh, how that tree has made me and our children suffer! It does all sorts of things to us. I want you to cut it down!"

At first he paid little attention to what she said, but she continued to nag him about it:

Let it become a ²threshold for our door--

Let it become wooden spoons for our mouths--

Let it become a ²cradle for that child of ours!⁶

⁶These lines are more poetic in Turkish than any translation can render them.

Kapımıza eşik-- [kapı is door; eşik is threshold]

Ağzımıza kaşık-- [ağız is mouth; kaşık is spoon]

Çocuğumuza beşik olsun. [çocuk is child; beşik is cradle]

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What could he do? After a while he grew tired of his wife's constant complaints about the rose tree, and so he cut it down. From its wood he made a threshold for their front door, spoons for their soup, and a special cradle for little Ali. But whenever little Ali tried to sleep in the cradle, it squeezed the child until he cried. Whenever one of the wooden spoons passed the woman's lips, it injured her mouth and made her cry out, but when the man used the same spoon, it caused no difficulty. When the woman or children passed over the threshold, it made them fall, but when the man passed over it, nothing happened.

After this had gone on for some time, the woman said, "Break up and remove all of those things which you made from the wood of the rose tree!" So the man tore out all this wood, broke it up, and had it hauled away to the trash pile. After a while all that was left of that wood was a splinter, like a needle. When the aged village herdsman came along, he picked up that splinter, took it home with him, and placed it in the cupboard.⁷

A few days later when the herdsman returned from his day's work, he noticed that the house was unusually clean. Everything shone and sparkled brightly. He thought, "I wonder how this happened." He examined every place in his house in an effort to discover something about this change, but he found nothing. The next day was the same: the house

⁷Cupboard is perhaps the best English equivalent for the Turkish taha, which refers to a small wall closet without doors

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clean but there were no clues as to how it got that way

On the third day he hid himself in the house, saying,

Transferrable
"Let us see what is happening here." Later (the girl) came down from the cupboard. She swept the floors, wiped all of

furniture, and cleaned the whole house. When she was

missed it
about to disappear again, the herdsman grabbed her by the arm and said, ("Are you a supernatural being or a jinn?"⁸)

Jinn
"I am neither a supernatural being nor a jinn but a human being," she said

"If that is so, don't you have any relatives with whom to live?"

"No, I have none

"Then you will be my daughter," said the man.

"How can that be?"

"Is there any reason why it could not be so?" he asked.

When the girl said nothing he added, "Then it is so."

After she had been living at the home of the herdsman

a short while, she heard a report that the son of the master craftsman had a number of horses which he wished to board with anyone who would care for them. He placed these horses with people who would feed them and take good care of them, and for this service he paid a good price. The

⁸The formulaic expression for this is inmisiin cinmisiin. Anyone who is startled by the unexpected presence of a stranger might use this query.

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girl said to her herdsman father, "Get one of those horses
me

"My daughter," he said, "what could we do with such a horse? We have no food for it here. We could not take care of it very well, and then the owner would become angry at us." The young man had become governor of that area recently, and he was an important and powerful person.

"Do not worry about that, my father. I can feed the horse and care for it well. All that I want you to do is
me one."

Then the old man went to the home of the son of the master craftsman and got a horse. It was not a very strong horse, and it was lame when he got it. He brought this horse home and put it in their small stable.

As soon as the horse arrived, the girl washed her hair and poured the rinse water on the dirt floor of the stable. She did this every day, and inside that stable there sprang up lush grass that grew to the height of a man. The horse ate and ate this grass until he became the finest of all the horses that had been boarded out.

The time was approaching when the owner would come for his horse and take it home with him. Before his arrival, the girl whispered into the horse's ear, "Unless I come and
tell you to stand up, don't do so. Resist all their efforts

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to make you do so." The horse knew her very well by now, and he understood what she said.

When the young man came to take the horse away, it was lying in its stable. It refused to stand up, and no one who was there could compel it to do so. They therefore sent word to the girl to come and help them. When the girl came, she said, "Stand up, you Küheylan.⁹ I was never treated with any kindness or generosity by your owner, and so why should I expect anything better from you?"

The horse arose after the girl finished speaking and walked outside the stable, but then it lay down again. The girl went to its side and said, "When have I ever benefitted in any way from the behavior of your owner or even received any consideration from him? Why, then, should I expect any better treatment from you?" The horse stood up again but soon, for the third time, she said, "When have I ever benefitted in any way from the behavior of your owner or even received any consideration from him? Why, then, should I expect any better treatment from you?"

After that had happened three times the owner was able to mount the horse and ride it home. Along the way, however, he repeatedly asked himself, "Why did that girl behave that way? What was the reason for the things she said about me?"

⁹Küheylan is the term for a pure-bred Arabian horse

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There must be some meaning in her words."

There was in that village a group of women engaged in carpet weaving. The young man had these carpet weavers invite the girl to join them in their activity for a day. "While she is with you, I want everyone in the group to tell her own life story, to tell about all the unusual things that have happened to her in this world."

On the day that the girl was to join the carpet weavers, the young man arrived early at the weaving shop and hid himself in a large closet where he could observe and hear everything that went on. After the girl arrived and the weaving had begun, the women talked incessantly as the work went on. They told their own life stories to each other. Then they said to the girl, "Now it is your turn to tell us about yourself."

The girl said, "Oh, the things that have happened to me are worse than the experiences of a boiled chicken,¹⁰ and so do not ask me about them!"

"That may well be true," they said, "but tell us about them anyway"

Then she started at the beginning and told about every-

¹⁰This is a common expression in Turkish real life as well as in Turkish folktales. To have experienced the ordeals of a boiled chicken is to have suffered the Nth degree of agonies.

story telling

for

all

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thing that had happened to her. When she had completed her story, the young man came forth from the closet and went straight home. There he put his wife and children into a large cauldron, and then he tied that cauldron to the tails of forty mules. When the mules were beaten and driven into the mountains, the cauldron bounced against the rocks until the people inside were ground to pieces and their parts strewn everywhere.

The young man and the beautiful girl were married and they lived happily ever after that. (They attained their desire, and now it is time for us to retire.)¹¹

¹¹The narrator here says, "We are to go to Kerevet." The word kerevet means couch or wooden bed-stead.

Eloahin

*Jacobs
Lambert
ends
Jacks Lambert
desires*