

Story 749 (1976 Tape 14)

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Location: Bektik village,
Şereflikoçhisar kaza,
Kırşehir Province

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Seven Brothers and a Sister

Once there was and once there was not a married couple who had seven sons. The mother was again pregnant. One day

her sons went hunting, they said, "Mother, if the new child is a girl, hang up a red flag that we can see. If it is another son, then hang up a black flag for us to see."

then left on their hunting expedition.

Some time later the mother delivered a girl child and mounted a red flag outside the house. But someone came along and exchanged the red flag for a black one. When the sons approached the house on their return trip, the first thing

they saw was the black flag. When they discovered that their mother had delivered another son, they were upset and retreated into hiding.

They did not return home at all, and they remained absent for years and years. As this time elapsed, the little girl grew up into a big girl. One day she went to the mill of their village to have some bulgur¹ ground. There were

¹Bulgur is made of wheat. The wheat is boiled and then

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several other girls at the mill, and as they were all talking, somebody farted.² One of them said, "I didn't do it," and then another said, "I didn't do it," and another said the same until they had all denied responsibility for the fart. Then they all swore on the life of a brother or a sister that they had not committed this offensive act. The sister of the seven brothers said, "I do not have a brother or sister to swear upon, but I have an old aunt whose life I will swear upon that I did not do it."

One of the other girls said, "Why do you say that you have no brothers when you really do have seven brothers?"

"No, I do not have any brothers. If I did, they would live with us."

Then they all said, "Ask your mother!"

Later that afternoon the girl went home from school. She went straight to her mother and said, "Mother, I was told in school today that I have seven brothers. If that is true, then where are they? Why didn't you tell me about them?"

pounded with mallets to remove the husks. It is then dried and later roughly ground into half- or quarter-kernel size. It is then a ready-cooked cereal that can be prepared for eating simply by being heated in a small amount of water.

²In Moslem countries farting is a much greater offense than it is in Europe and America. People have been rather severely penalized for "breaking wind." As recently as July 1986 Turkish newspapers carried an account of a miscreant of flatulence who was jailed for the offense. See Notes to this tale.

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Quest
*66 * only*

The mother had no choice now except to tell what had happened to her brothers a long time before. When the girl heard this story, she said, "Mother, I shall go and find my brothers." Although the mother tried and tried to dissuade her from going, the girl insisted on doing so. The two of them went outside and made a donkey out of ashes. The girl said, "When I say 'Giddap!' to it, the donkey will go ahead when I say 'Whoa!' it will collapse on the ground."³

The girl and her donkey set off on their journey together. They went little, they went far. When the girl said, "Whoa!" the donkey collapsed on the ground; when she said, "Giddap!" it moved ahead again. She rode and rode and rode the donkey until one day she at last reached the village in which her brothers lived.

In name
Famulai Efferen

When she went to her brothers' house, and said,

She answered,
jinn but your sister."

Recognition

When they heard this news, the seven brothers celebrated and enjoyed themselves with their sister for some time. After

³The Turkish commands to donkeys, mules, and oxen are not "Giddap" and "Whoa" but "Deh" and "Çüş," respectively. Çüş is pronounced "choosh."

⁴This is the standard formulaic query put to any stranger whose presence startles one. In Turkish it is inmisiin cinmisiin.

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all of this excitement was over, her brothers gave her a stern warning. "Sister, do you see that house over there? Well, it belongs to a giant. Stay well away from that house Don't even get close to it!"

happened to be a very cold day, and the people of the village lighted a large bonfire at the center of the village. The girl, like many others, went and stood close enough to the fire to enjoy its heat. While she was standing near the fire, she dropped a ball of yarn that she was carrying, and this ball rolled and rolled, and before it stopped, it rolled into the home of the giant. The girl went along the street picking up the yarn. The yarn led her to the giant's house, but just as she was about to enter the house, the giant's wife saw her and shouted, "Don't come in here! Go away quickly! If the giant should come home right now, he would surely eat you!" So the girl turned around and returned to her brother's house.

When the giant got home, he sniffed a different scent at the door. He said, "It smells like fresh human flesh here." Then he found the yarn ball and started following where the wool thread led. It led him to the door of the seven brothers' home, where the girl lived. The giant knocked on the door.

"Who is it?" asked the girl.

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"Open the door!"

She said, "My brothers are not at home, and I never open the door when they are away

The giant then said, "My daughter, your brothers have sent a ring with me for you. Hold out your finger and I shall put the ring on it."

But the girl did not give her hand or even one finger to the giant. Angry, the giant shoved a sharp splinter of wood under the door and left. When the girl was later walking about the room, she stepped on that splinter and it stuck into her foot. She immediately fell over on the floor and died

When the brothers came home at night and found their sister dead, they were greatly grieved. They all cried a long time. Then the oldest brother said, "Because she is our sister, we cannot bury her. Let us put her in a fine box and place that box on the back of a white female camel, after which we shall let the camel go where it will. In this way we can avoid the necessity of burying her in the ground. Let the camel carry her everywhere in the world." The other brothers agreed with this suggestion, and they soon saw her depart on the back of the camel.

Later that day the camel was observed by the son of padişah and a group of his friends who were hunting. The prince said, "The camel has a box on its back. If that box

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contains anything alive, it is mine. If it contains physical property of any kind, it is yours."

When they reached the camel, they took the box from its back and opened it. "What a wonder!" they said. "There is a girl in this box, but the girl is dead!" They took her with them and placed her body on the board⁵ in the mosque yard to be washed. As she lay there, one of the prince's companions saw the splinter and said, "Alas, a splinter has stuck into her foot." As soon as he pulled this splinter out, the girl awoke and sat up on the board. They then wrapped a piece of fine cloth around her and took her to the palace of the padişah.

After she had lived at the palace for a short while, she was married to the son of the padişah. Time passed, and they had one son, two sons, and finally three sons. Sometimes when she talked to her sons, she told them that they had seven uncles whom they had not yet seen.

One day she took her family's clothes to the riverbank to wash them.⁶ The three boys went with her while she was

⁵Behind some mosques, especially village mosques, there is a wooden platform or marble slab for washing corpses before burial. It is not simply a cleansing measure but also a ritual ablution to place the deceased in a state of purity.

⁶It does not seem at all inconsistent to peasant narrators or peasant audiences that a princess would do the family laundry.

*Attention -
Folklore*

Resuscitation

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doing this work. The boys kept saying to each other, "Isn't it remarkable that we are the nephews of seven uncles but the sons of only one mother?"

Near that river was a camp where the girl's seven brothers were resting after a day of hunting. They overheard the three children saying, "Isn't it remarkable that we are the nephews of seven uncles but the sons of only one mother?" They did not understand the meaning of this at first, but after a while they became curious about

"Who is your mother?" they asked the boys. "Where is she? We wish to see her."

The children then led the way to the place where their mother was working. As soon as the brothers saw their sister they all recognized her immediately. They hugged and kissed each other and lived happily from that time to the end of their lives.⁷

Recapitulation

⁷This is not a very expert piece of narration. Such a sudden and simple ending does not tie up the many loose ends of the plot.