

Story 924 (1981 Tape 8)

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Location: Çıkırıkçı village,  
Sarıkaya kaza, Yozgat  
Province

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Cihanşah and Şemsi Bani

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This story that I am going to tell you now was one of those told to Camesep by Şahmeran.<sup>1</sup>

At one time in the past, the King of Georgia had a son named Cihanşah. After he had grown to manhood, he ordered his men to prepare a ship for a very long voyage. Then he said to his father, "I want to travel over the entire world to see what it is like." His father tried to persuade him not to do this, but his father's efforts failed

Cihanşah took aboard plenty of supplies, and, accompanied by a squadron of soldiers, put out to sea. They sailed along for some time, visiting country after country without any difficulty. One day while the ship was far from the sight of land, they encountered a severe storm. This grew worse and worse until the ship sank and all of the crew and the soldiers were drowned. Cihanşah would also have been drowned if he had not clung to a board that he saw floating in the water.

<sup>1</sup>This is a reference to an incident in ATON Tale 921. In that tale Şahmeran, King of Snakes, told tales to his guest, Camesep, to keep that young man from being bored in his underworld kingdom.

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Those who hired Cihanşah rode on mules to a very brushy area where they slaughtered a horse. After they had removed all of the entrails of the horse, they explained to Cihanşah what his job was to be: "You are to sleep inside the carcass of this horse for one hour. Then after you awaken, you are to report to us what kind of dream you had." Cihanşah crawled into the carcass, and they then sewed up its belly and left.

Right after his employers had departed, some Anka birds<sup>139 x 448</sup> arrived there and carried off the horse in their huge claws. After flying for a short distance, they landed with their prey on the very peak of Kabur Mountain. When the Ankas began tearing the horse apart to eat it, Cihanşah crawled out of the carcass. When the birds had gone, Cihanşah tried to find a way down from the pinnacle on which he was stranded. It was a very high precipice, below which there were many huge jagged rocks.

People from the city gathered at the foot of the pinnacle and shouted up to Cihanşah, "If you will throw down to us some of the stones lying there on the top of that pinnacle, we shall tell you how to get down from there." These stones con-

<sup>4</sup>The Middle East has many giant birds in its myths and tales: the roc (rukḥ), the Phoenix, the simurgh, and the Anka. These terms are sometimes used synonymously. The Anka is supposedly green and it is often called the Zümrüdu Anka--Emerald-Green Anka. The giant birds, the precipitous peaks, and the jewel-bearing stones constitute a motif cluster best known in the story of Sinbad in the Arabian Nights.

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tained valuable jewels. Cihanşah threw down several stones, but the people below just gathered them up and left without telling him how to descend

Cihanşah! He went this way, he went that way, but he was unable to find a way down from the precipice. Finally he found a much less perpendicular path, and taking a long horse bone as a walking stick, he began to pick his way downward very slowly. When he had gotten about halfway down, a pebble dislodged beneath his walking stick, and he tumbled the rest of the way down the precipice. By the time he reached the bottom, he was covered with blood, and he felt as if every bone in his body had been broken. Looking about, he saw a fountain nearby. He dragged himself painfully to this fountain and washed in its water. Almost miraculously, his wounds were healed and his bones stopped aching.

He arose now and started walking. After a short time he arrived at a seven-story palace surrounded by a large garden that was filled with roses and other flowers. When no one answered his call, he entered the palace, which seemed to be empty. He opened door after door and inspected room after room, but he found no one in any of them for some time. It was only when he opened the last door that he saw a living creature. It was a strange creature whose head looked human but whose body was birdlike. He was the King of Birds, and his name was

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Murguşah.

Murguşah asked Cihanşah, "Oh, my son, how did you get here? Did you come up out of the earth or down from the sky? Did a bird bring you here?"

Father, please do not ask me that! My story is very long. Just send me back to my country."

Murguşah answered him, "Oh, my son, we shall do as you say. I can send you back to your own country, all right, but I do not know how long it may take--one year, three years, five years. I have a great many birds which come here every year. I put forth King Solomon's sceptre,<sup>5</sup> and when the birds see that, they come here, they eat, they drink, and then they go. I shall ask my birds if any of them knows your country. If there is one who does know it, I'll put you on his wings and send you back to your own country."

Unable to do anything else, Cihanşah had to accept these conditions. He therefore began waiting for the arrival of the birds.

After two or three months had passed, Murguşah said one day to Cihanşah, "I am 100 years old. I have a brother much

<sup>5</sup>Among the ample folklore about Biblical Solomon is the belief that he understood bird language. In folktales some of his achievements are credited in part to his communication with birds.

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older than I am. He is 200 years old.<sup>6</sup> I am going to visit him. While I am away, you may enter any room in this palace except this room. Never, under any circumstance, enter this room while I am absent." Saying this, he departed

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Curious about the palace, Cihanşah examined all the rooms of the palace except that one, but, as he had discovered before, all of the other rooms were completely empty. Finally his curiosity got the better of him, and he opened again the door of the forbidden room. Inside he found this time a beautiful garden filled with flowers, rose bushes, and clumps of trees. In the center of the garden was a large pool. While he was resting under a plane tree, he saw three pigeons come and land in the branches of the large tree above him. After a few minutes two of them flew down, took off their clothes, and jumped into the pool. As they did so, they became girls. The third pigeon, the youngest of them, remained on the branch of the tree. She said, "I smell a human being here, and so I shall not come down.

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But her older sisters said, "How could any human being get here? No one like that could reach this place. Come

<sup>6</sup>In both the Arabian and Turkish traditions, great longevity is attributed to birds. This may possibly be influenced by the actual longevity of vultures that live in that area. Although they do not live as long as their legendary counterparts, there are on record vultures that have lived for more than 150 years. In the 1960s there was one of that age at the Ankara Zoo.

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down, Şemsi Bani! 143-147

3 sisters

After her elder sisters had spoken in this way, the  
 third pigeon flew down, undressed, and joined them in the pool.

When Cihanşah saw the youngest sister become a girl as beautiful as the fourteenth night of the moon,<sup>7</sup> he immediately fell in love with her and then collapsed in a dead faint.

It seems that these three girls were daughters of the King of Fairies. When they had finished bathing in the pool, they dressed themselves and flew away as pigeons.

When Murguşah returned from visiting his brother, he looked for Cihanşah but could not find him. He called, "Cihanşah! Cihanşah! Where are you?" but he received no answer. At last he found the young man in the forbidden room, still in a faint. Murguşah lifted the young man from the ground and placed him on a couch.

When Cihanşah slowly came to his senses again, he told Murguşah what had happened. He said, "I fell in love with the youngest of those girls, and I want to marry her."

Murguşah told Cihanşah that the three pigeons came there only once a year. He said, "If you want this girl, you will

<sup>7</sup>For various reasons the moon is regarded throughout the Middle East as a symbol of supreme beauty. It is thought to be at its most beautiful when full, and this fullness always occurs at the middle of the month on the lunar calendar. To compare the beauty of a woman with that of the moon is flattering to that woman, but to compare her beauty with that of the moon on its fourteenth night is the ultimate compliment.

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Advice

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have to wait for another year to pass. You will then have to hide yourself in the plane tree again. After the three pigeons have landed on a branch of that tree, two of them will fly down, undress, and jump into the water, and as they do so, they will become girls. The third pigeon, the youngest, will stay on the branch of the plane tree, saying, 'I smell a human being here, and so I shall not come down.'

"But the older sisters will say, 'How could any human being get here? No such being could reach this place. Come down! Come down and enter the pool!'

"Just as soon as the third one is in the water, climb out of the plane tree and sit upon the third girl's shirt. Be sure that you do not give the shirt back to the third pigeon, no matter how much she begs you to do so. Do not ever let her have it again."

Cihanşah waited another year for the return of the pigeons. When the time had expired, Murguşah said to him, "The pigeons will be coming today."

Cihanşah hid himself in the plane tree. Some time later the three pigeons arrived and perched on a branch of that tree. Two of them then flew down, undressed, and entered the pool. They called to the third pigeon, "Come down, sister! Come down and join us in the pool!"

"No, I shouldn't. I smell a human being here."

*Swan Maiden  
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"Oh, come, now!" her sisters answered. "How could any son of man get here? Come down and bathe!" And soon the third sister undressed and entered the pool.

When Cihanşah saw this, he left his hiding place in the tree, went to the pool side, and sat on the shirt of the third pigeon. The two older sisters dressed and flew away as pigeons, but because Cihanşah was sitting on the shirt of the third, she could not follow them

Murguşah told Cihanşah to wear the pigeon's shirt: "Never take this shirt off. Now both of you will have to wait for a year for the coming of my birds. When they do get here, I can send you and your wife to your country."

In the meantime, Rüstem Paşa,<sup>8</sup> the father of Murguşah, had searched everywhere for his son and had given up hope of finding him. He had made an announcement that anyone who could find him would receive as reward all of Rüstem's wealth

This time the year passed more quickly as Cihanşah awaited the return of the birds. After the birds had eaten and drunk, Murguşah said to them, "Tell me. Which one of you knows where the land of this young man is located?"

Among the group there was a very old bird, more than 360

<sup>8</sup>This is a curious insertion in the story. It seems to serve no function, for Rüstem appears neither before nor after this brief notice. Is there in literature or folk tales a Rüstem Paşa who loses a son named Murguşah?

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years old. He said, "I know where that young man's country lies."

Murguşah said, "If you know where it is, then you are to take this couple there." They rode on this old bird's broad wings to Cihanşah's land and were dropped in the middle of a road not very far from the palace.

It seems that Cihanşah's father had stationed troops along all main roads in his effort to locate his son. When the soldiers saw Cihanşah and Şemsi Bani, they took them into custody at once and delivered them to the palace.

The king recognized his son right away, and the two of them embraced. He ordered that wedding festivities should begin the very next day. It was to be a long wedding celebration, lasting for forty days and forty nights. While it was going on, Cihanşah ordered a palace built. He said to the builders, "Place a large marble stone beneath the foundation of the palace, but before you put it there, cut into that stone a small, deep hole." When this hole had been cut, Cihanşah had his men stuff Şemsi Bani's shirt into it and seal it there. The palace was then built on top of that stone. By the time that the wedding celebration had ended, the palace was ready for the newlyweds.

On the nuptial night, the attendants first brought

*Wedding  
celebration*

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Şemsi Bani to the palace.<sup>9</sup> As, soon as she entered the palace, she started sniffing in an effort to find her shirt. She quickly determined in this way exactly where her shirt was located. She struck her fist against the foundation of the palace and split it apart. Finding the marble stone beneath it, she broke open that stone and recovered her shirt. As soon as she put on her shirt, she was transformed into a pigeon. She then flew to the marble stone and perched upon it to wait for Cihanşah

When Cihanşah was conducted to the palace, he could not find Şemsi Bani anywhere. When he came upon the smashed foundation and the broken marble stone, he realized that Şemsi Bani had discovered her shirt. Then he saw the pigeon perched on one piece of the marble stone. The pigeon said, "O Cihanşah, if you want me, then you must find me!" Then she flew away. Poor Cihanşah! When he saw his bride depart in this way, he was so grieved that he fell to the floor unconscious

In the morning when the king's attendants came to the palace, they could not find the newlyweds in the nuptial chamber. As they searched the new palace, they came upon the broken stones of the foundation and the still unconscious

<sup>9</sup>This seems to be adjusted solely to meet the demands of the plot. In Turkish weddings the bride is delivered to the home of the groom, who is already there to receive her.

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body of Cihanşah. When he came to himself, he remembered clearly what had happened, and he immediately ordered the preparation of another ship with which he could go forth to search for Şemsi Bani.

Again his ship was caught in a severe storm after it had been at sea for a short while. Again the ship sank, and again everyone aboard except Cihanşah was drowned. After he had been washed ashore, he met the same caravan that he had encountered before, and again he joined it as it traveled to the Mountains of Kaf. When they arrived there, Cihanşah again heard the towncrier announcing a one-hour job that would pay very well, and again Cihanşah took that job. Just as before, his employers slaughtered a horse and sewed Cihanşah inside its cleaned-out belly. Once again the Ankas came and carried the horse to the peak of Kabur Mountain.

the Ankas started tearing the horse apart to eat it, Cihanşah crawled out and hid until the birds flew away. Then the city people at the base of the mountain yelled to him, "Roll down some of the rocks from up there, and then we shall tell you how to come down safely yourself."

time Cihanşah shouted back, "No, no!" He knew that they were just lying to him, and he did not throw down a single rock. Again he found a long horse bone to use as a walking stick and started picking his way down the precipice. At the

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same spot that he had slipped before, he again lost his footing and tumbled the last half of the distance to the ground below. Bleeding and badly bruised, he again dragged himself to the *(Pond)* fountain of curative water and was healed.

When Cihanşah arrived at the palace of Murguşah, King of Birds recognized him and asked him what had happened. After Cihanşah had related his whole story to him, Murguşah said, "What did I tell you? You should have worn her shirt all of the time! Fairies are very strong creatures. They can break rocks or stone walls, or almost anything else. Now the pigeons have escaped, and she will never return to this place again. When my birds return the next time, I shall ask them whether any one of them knows where fairyland is. If none of them knows, then perhaps the birds of my next-older brother will know. He is 200 years old, and his birds older than mine, and so they know much more than my birds do.

Cihanşah waited there another year, and then the birds returned. After having them all eat and drink, Murguşah asked them, "Does anyone here know where fairyland is located?" When no one of his birds answered, Murguşah ordered one of them to take Cihanşah to the palace of his older brother. The older brother's birds had just departed, and so Cihanşah had to wait for still another year to pass.

After that time had elapsed, the birds returned. After

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Murguşah's older brother had given them all of the food and water they wanted, he asked them, "Does any one of you know where the land of fairies is located?" When it was clear that none of them knew, Murguşah's older brother said to Cihanşah, "We have a brother who is even older than I, for he is 300 years old. His birds, being much older than mine, know much more than mine. I hope that his birds are able to determine the location of fairyland." Saying this, he ordered one of his birds to carry Cihanşah to the palace of the oldest brother.

When he arrived there, Cihanşah saw that he had missed the annual assembly of birds. Another year was thus spent awaiting the gathering of the birds of Murguşah's oldest brother.

After that year had expired, the birds again returned. After they had eaten and drunk plentifully, the older of Murguşah's two brothers said to them, "If there is anyone of you who knows the location of fairyland, please speak up."

A bird so extremely old that it had only three feathers left on its body said, "I know that country. Once I tried to hatch some chicks there, but the fairies gave my offspring no chance to survive. They kept stealing my eggs just before they were ready to hatch. I can take Cihanşah to the border of that country but I cannot actually enter it. I'll drop him

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right on the border." This is exactly what that old bird did.

When she had returned to her own land, Şemsi Bani, daughter of the King of Fairies, had ordered her soldiers to be on the lookout for strangers and to bring to her any that they captured. As soon as the old bird had dropped Cihanşah, these soldiers saw him. Capturing him, they took him to Şemsi Bani

Şemsi Bani recognized him at once, and they embraced each other. As quickly as possible they were married, and they lived together there in fairyland for some time. They then decided to go to visit Cihanşah's father, for it had been several years now since they had seen him. They were carried to Georgia on the wings of a giant bird.

Now it so happened that just at that very time the enemies of Cihanşah's father had declared war on him. These enemies had invaded the land and dealt several serious losses to its army. When Cihanşah and Şemsi Bani arrived, they saw at once what the situation was. Şemsi Bani called her soldiers from fairyland, and with their help the enemy forces were driven off in total defeat.

Cihanşah and Şemsi Bani lived very happily together for several years, spending part of their time in her land and part in his. One day while they were returning from her country to his, they pitched their tent beside a fountain. While

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Cihanşah was resting, Şemsi Bani went to the fountain for some water. As she was dipping water, however, a fairy monster arose from the fountain and attacked her. Although Cihanşah rushed to help her, he arrived too late, and the monster killed her.

Cihanşah built a tomb for Şemsi Bani and himself. He buried his wife in that tomb and gave the following order to his people: "When I die, you will bury me here beside Şemsi Bani."

Ahmet Uysal: "This, then, was one of the stories told to Camesep by Şahmeran?"

Ali Çiftçi: "Yes."

Ahmet Uysal: "He told Camesep six such stories--didn't he?"

Ali Çiftçi: "Yes, but I cannot remember them right now."

Ahmet Uysal: "That's all right. You think about them, and when you remember them, you can tell us."

Ali Çiftçi: "İnşallah!" 7