

Story 944 (1977 Tape 27)

Narrator: Cafer Durak

Location: City of Kars, capital
of Kars Province

Date:

İbrahim, Son of Zülâl Şah

Once there was and once there was not, in a day of days, a padişah named Zülâl Şah whose wife died. This loss left him lonely much of the time. One day his viziers gathered in his room to talk with him. They said, "Great Padişah, you cannot go on living as a single man permanently. You should find another wife and get married." After giving this matter careful thought, Zülâl Şah followed their advice and married again.

The padişah had had two sons by his first marriage, boys named İbrahim and Ahmet. These boys were attending school, but they ate their lunch at home every day. One day when they came home for lunch, the padişah's new wife fell in love with İbrahim and even offered to make love with him. İbrahim answered the woman, "My God, don't talk that way! We cannot possibly do such a thing!" Instead of going to bed with his stepmother, the boy returned at once to school.

After that, the stepmother did not take very good care of the boys. In fact, she neglected them badly. She sent them off to school each day wearing old and dirty clothes and walking barefoot.

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The padişah noticed that his sons now always appeared in old and ragged clothes. He asked his new wife why the children had been allowed to go to school in such shabby condition. His new wife answered, "My great Padişah, you might have done better if you had never had a son!"

This remark angered the padişah, and he asked, "Why do you say such a thing? What has happened?"

The woman answered, "Your son İbrahim has laid hands on me. He tried to rape me."

The padişah became even angrier when he heard that said to his wife, "When İbrahim comes home from school, I shall have his head cut off!"

But İbrahim's brother, Ahmet, overheard this conversation, and he went immediately to his brother to tell him the bad news. He said, Brother İbrahim, our father is going to cut off your head. What did you do, Brother? Our father is very angry."

İbrahim answered, "I didn't do anything. Our stepmother has slandered me."

The two brothers then decided to run away together, and that night they left home. They went as water slips along a stream; they went as wind blowing off a hill; they went day and night with all the force of such a strong wrestler as

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Hamzai.¹ One day they came to a very large tomb. There Ahmet said to his brother, "İbrahim, you wait here while I go to the nearest town to buy some food for us.

When Ahmet reached the town, he saw that all of its stores were closed. He thought to himself for a moment and then said, "How very unusual! Today is neither Saturday Monday. Why should the stores all be closed?" He then noticed three people sitting upon a rock as they counted their prayer beads, one by one. He called, "Selâmünaleyküm" to these people.

They answered, "Aleykümselâm."²

Ahmet then asked them, "Why are all of the stores closed? It is not a holiday

They explained the reason for this. "Son, in this country we have a tradition of releasing the "government bird"³ when the old padişah dies and it is time to select a

¹ Was there some great wrestler of this name?

² This is the traditional exchange between Moslem strangers: "Peace be unto you," and "May peace be unto too."

³ The Talih Kuşu (Bird of Fortune) is an imaginary bird whose landing on a human being's head indicates that that person will be extremely lucky--will acquire some great fortune or come into a position of great prominence. In folktales in which a released bird selects a new ruler by landing on his head, the bird has come to be known as Devlet Kuşu (Government Bird).

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new padişah. It is now time to release that bird again, for the old padişah died yesterday. The shops are all closed because everyone is going to attend the ceremony of padişah selection

Ahmet followed the crowd of men as they were going to a very large field on the edge of the town. When the government bird was released, it flew round and round and then landed on the head of Ahmet. The people were greatly annoyed at this and they shouted, "Who is this strange fellow? What is he doing here? Let the bird fly again!"

They put Ahmet in a barn where the bird could not see him, and then they released the government bird again. The bird again flew round and round, as if it were looking for something, and then it flew through a window in the barn and landed again on the head of Ahmet. This time the people became angry about what was happening. They said, "Our bird is acting strangely. Let us hide that silly fellow in a different building and then release the bird once more

This time they took Ahmet some distance away from the city and placed him in a deserted gristmill. ⁶⁹⁻⁷⁰ But the government bird, when released for a third time, flew straight to that mill, found a hole in one of the walls, and then landed again on Ahmet's head. This time the people could do nothing but accept what was clearly the will of the bird. Removing

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Ahmet from the mill, they had him bathed and dressed in fine clothes, for he was acknowledged now as the new padişah.

Now we shall hear some news from İbrahim. He waited and waited a long while for his brother, Ahmet, to return. He was very hungry and very worried, but still his brother did not return. He sang this song:

My eyes penetrate all the mansions
 That lie on each side of the road
 said you would go and get food for us--
 I have waited in vain so long for your coming.

What is the sin I am punished for now,
 Lone as a column supporting the sky?
 Will this place become poor İbrahim's grave?
 I have waited in vain so long for your coming.

No one is coming or going with news.
 I have waited in vain for your coming, Brother
 My eyes are like blood pots, my bosom is pierced--
 I have waited in vain so long for your coming.

Now let us return to Ahmet for some news. After Ahmet had become padişah, he canceled all taxes. He announced, "If anyone collects any taxes in this land, I shall have him executed!" The people were very pleased with this decision,

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for they did not wish to bother about the collecting of taxes and the listing of tax fees. Ahmet had his brother in mind when he ordered the canceling of all taxes. He knew that Ibrahim had no money and that he would be unable to pay the usual border tax if he wandered into the country which Ahmet now ruled

Days passed, but Ibrahim did not appear. Ahmet had (town criers) make the following announcement one day: "Let all the people gather at the large tomb outside our city. We shall have a big feast there."

the people went to the large tomb on the outskirts of the town, and there Ahmet began searching for his brother. He could not find Ibrahim anywhere in that vicinity. After the feast had ended, he sent all the people home to the town, and he then began to sing:

t. Sable Clouds in the sky keep turning and turning;
 My wounds have hardened and dried and cracked.
 My brother--what hope is there now for him?
 Where is Ibrahim now, Ahmet Şah?

No one is coming or going with news.
 I consign my heart to a pot of blood.
 It is news of you that Ahmet Şah seeks--
 It is news of Ibrahim Ahmet Şah seeks

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Much has been mine through the hand of God.
Let my bloody tears now redeem my brother.
What was His will for İbrahim?
What has God willed for my brother now?

After hearing Ahmet's song, his vizier looked at the ruler's condition and laughed. "My Padişah," he said, "I hope that no one has observed you in such a state. If they they could only conclude that you were a madman!"

Annoyed by this remark, the padişah said to his vizier, "What kind of a vizier are you anyway? You should be sympathetic with my condition and help me!" Remembering this incident, Ahmet dismissed this vizier later from his office and replaced him with one more suitable

Now back to İbrahim again. In the middle of the night, İbrahim heard a noise. Creeping forth from his hiding place, he saw that forty thieves had come there and had turned their horses loose to graze. They now began to divide all of their loot among themselves. All of it was assigned to one or another of them until all that was left was an old sword.

At first İbrahim tried to pretend that he was a dead person, but the thieves were not deceived by this. When he realized that they were just about to kill him with that old sword, İbrahim arose and said, "Oh, robbers, do not kill me yet. First listen to my song:

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Oh, I would die for the sake of Allah.
For the sake of Him, don't kill me now.
I have been burned by the fire He sent.
Desolate now, don't kill me, robbers!

What has befallen me now through
Show pity for the tears I shed.
Here I am stranded, helpless, alone
Kill me not, robbers, but show me some pity!

What have I, Ibrahim, done that was wrong?
The bosom that holds my heart is a blood pot.
My only body don't sacrifice now.
Desolate here, don't kill me, robbers!

When the robber chieftain heard Ibrahim's words, he said to his followers, "All stolen goods can be yours. All that I want for myself is this young man to adopt as my son."

Turning then to Ibrahim, he asked, "My Son, what can you do?"

Ibrahim answered, "I can read and I can write."

"Very good, my Son, very good. You can manage my store. You can sell, and I shall provide the merchandise." He rented a shop in the city for Ibrahim.

After this arrangement had been made, the robber chieftain ceased being a chieftain and became a lone thief. His former companions continued robbing people, but they missed the

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leadership of their chieftain. One day one of these robbers said to his friends, "Our chieftain left us because of that young man that came along. Let us find someone to kill that young man, and then perhaps our old chieftain will return to us." All of the others accepted this idea. They collected some money among themselves to pay an assassin, and they gave this to the man who had suggested having Ibrahim killed. This person went to the city, located an assassin, and said to him, "I shall pay you a large sum of money if you will kill the young man who is now living in the home of our chieftain."

The assassin answered, "All right I shall accept that job with pleasure." He then went to the home of the chieftain and pretended to be a salesman. When the wife of the chieftain opened the door, the assassin said to her, "You may not remember me, but you and I are cousins. My mother and your mother were sisters

simpleminded woman believed this and said, "Oh, my dear cousin, come inside! Drink some of my coffee!"

But the man responded, "Oh, no, I cannot do that!"

Confused by this response, the woman asked, "Why can't you?"

assassin said, "I have heard many bad things said about you and Ibrahim, and therefore I cannot step into your house."

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The woman felt very embarrassed by this. When her husband came home from work, she said to him, "We must kill İbrahim, for he is giving us a bad reputation. Everyone is talking about İbrahim and me!"

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But her husband said, "Oh, my dear, we cannot do that. Much of what we now have we owe to İbrahim." The woman would not change her mind, however, and continued to insist on her demand. Helpless, the robber chieftain went to the shop and said to İbrahim, "My Son, it has become necessary for you to leave my house." The next morning İbrahim mounted his horse and rode away, and it was in this way that he and the robber chieftain were separated.

In the middle of the following night, İbrahim had a dream. In this dream an old man gave him some water to drink. İbrahim asked the old man, "What is this for?"

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old man answered, "Drink this water for the sake of God.

After İbrahim had drunk the water, the old man handed him more water. İbrahim asked, "Father, what is this now?"

"Son, drink this water for the sake of Ceylan Şah Hanım."⁴

İbrahim drank that water, too. Then the old man said, "Son, in this way I have arranged to have you and Ceylan Şah

⁴ The third word here, Hanım, is not part of the name but is a title, Lady.

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Hanım fall in love with each other.⁵ Tell me now what you see."

İbrahim said, "Father, I see a large, attractive house in a city. There is a beautiful girl walking back and forth on the balcony of that house. The girl is so beautiful that she gleams with light⁶ in the same way that the moon does."⁷ After having seen this girl in his dream, İbrahim fell madly in love with her⁸

When morning arrived and İbrahim awakened, he saw a caravan approaching. When it came abreast of him, he asked

⁵ In many, many Middle Eastern romances, love matches are made in heaven. A divine affinity is established between two people, and both are informed of this in a dream. Often sherbet (a cold fruit drink in the Middle East) is used to plight the troth of the lovers, though here water is used. This dream-world engagement reputedly occurs in the life of every real-life folk poet (often called âşık, meaning, literally, lover but, by extension, lover poet). The poet then spends intervals throughout his life seeking and composing songs to this ideal girl, this dream girl, whom he often refers to as "The Most Beautiful Girl in the World." Inasmuch as İbrahim composes and sings verse, the narrator may well have had the very old and strong âşık tradition in mind here.

⁶ Such refulgence was common among Greek and other goddesses. In Turkish tales a few especially beautiful mortal women have this same radiance. See, for example, ATON tale No. 65.

⁷ Inasmuch as the moon is to many Middle Easterners the symbol of beauty, any association made between a woman and the moon is a great compliment to that woman.

⁸ This dream-world falling in love is common in Turkish and other Middle Eastern romances.

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the caravan leader, "Oh, brother, can you take me to Sendera⁹ by the end of this day?"

When the caravan leader heard this question, he laughed at Ibrahim and said, "Are you crazy? From here it takes two months to reach that city!"

Ibrahim realized that there were no spiritually mature men among the camel drivers of that caravan. He saw a hoca¹⁰ a short distance away, however, and so he approached that hoca and began to sing. Let us listen to what they said.

Hoca, oh my reverend hoca,
 Give me news now of my love,
 A love I have who burned my heart.
 O Hoca, give me news of her!

The hoca answered:

Oh, my fair young man, my son,
 I do not even know your name.
 How, then, can I bring you news?
 How can a hoca bring you news?

⁹ Unidentified city

¹⁰ A Moslem priest.

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İbrahim sang:

It is İbrahim who, burning, walked here,
Writing his grief in a thousand ways
I still seek my love, though walking far
O Hoca, give me news of her

To this the hoca replied:

I saw her pace the balcony,
Though sleep poured from her weary eyes.
Roses bloomed upon her face
This news your hoca brings to you.

Then the hoca added--this time not singing but speaking clearly--"Son, remain here no longer Go at once to your love!"

İbrahim then continued his journey. He went and went. He walked and walked. Finally he came to the great house that he had seen in his dream.

All of the time that İbrahim had been traveling, Ceylan Hanım had been waiting for him. When she at last saw İbrahim passing beneath her balcony, she shouted to her friends, saying, "Girls! Girls! The man whom I saw in my dream is now passing beneath my balcony. Hurry and stop him, then bring him to me!"

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The girls intercepted İbrahim and took him to Ceylan Şah's room. What did they say to each other there? Let us listen.

Ceylan Şah sang:

The vineyard is ready for harvest;
 Its fruit is all tasty and ripe.
 My old wound has opened again--
 My love comes; my hope lives; I bleed again.

İbrahim sang:

Oh, I passed the snowy mountains
 To come and be with you here.
 My longing had overwhelmed me;
 Thus I came to greet you here

Ceylan Şah then sang:

Your sacrifice now let me be,
 And for you let all else be prepared.
 Come gather around me, girls.
 My love and my hope have arrived.

İbrahim next sang:

I had glimpses of heaven in you;
 In my heart I was burning for you.
 I came, love, to see you here
 And offer my praises to you.

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Ceylan Şah added:

Let Ceylan your sacrifice be.

She is dying for your song.

My two eyes are yours, İbrahim.

Girls, my love and my hope have come.

Still once more İbrahim sang:

My head lay in foreign hands;

My head suffered all kinds of pain.

I lost from this world a brave brother;

I gained in this world a dear lover.

After that, they embraced and kissed each other in passionate fashion. Let us leave them where they are while we take a brief rest

/Editor's note: Unfortunately, the narrator did not return to complete this tale._/