

Story 1038 (1979 Transcript
of tape made by
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bride of the village
muhtar

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attached to city of
Bilecik, Province
of Bilecik

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Collected by Dr. Mehmet Yalvaç

The Youngest Son, His Life Token,
and the Beautiful Girl (MBCU)

3 broz
Once there was and once there was not a padişah who had three sons. One day the oldest son went hunting along the seashore. His father had warned his sons repeatedly not to do that, but the boy decided to go anyway. As he approached the seashore, he heard a voice calling him, "Hey, son of the shah! Hey, son of the padişah! If you want to wrestle, come here in the water and wrestle with me!" The one who called was an extremely beautiful girl who lived in a box in the sea. The son of the padişah wrestled with the box which guarded this girl, but he died in doing so.

It was not long after that that the middle son wanted to go hunting along the seashore as his older brother had done. Although the padişah did everything he could to dissuade his son from going, his talking was of no use. The boy went anyway, and like his older brother, he lost

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both the wrestling match and his life.

After the middle brother failed to return, and all hope for him had been lost, the youngest brother began to implore his father for permission to go hunting along the seashore. The father refused to give him permission to go, but, like his older brothers, he went anyway.

Along the way to the seashore the youngest son came upon the home of some giants. In the yard of the giants' house the mother giant was frying liver over an open fire. She had thrown her huge breasts back over her shoulders to keep them out of the way while she worked. The boy sneaked up behind her, grabbed one of her breasts, and began to suck milk from it. He knew that once he had done that, the giantess could not harm him. The giant mother now said, "O human being, if you had not sucked my breast, I would fry you as I am frying this liver. But now you have become the same as one of my sons, and I cannot harm you." Saying this, she turned him into a broom and stood him behind the door.

This giantess had nine giant sons. When these nine giant sons returned home, they said to their mother, "There is the smell of human flesh here. Where is that human being?"

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The giant mother did not answer this question right away. Instead, she said this to her sons: "If my back was turned toward a human being, and if that human being then grabbed one of my breasts and sucked some of my milk from it, what would be his relationship to you?"

The nine sons all said in unison, "He would become our milk brother."¹

After the son of the padişah left the home of the giants,² he went on down the road toward the sea. He had been given two arrows by the giants, one of which was to be left at their home and one of which he was to carry with him at all times. If he fell into serious danger, the giants would know this by observing the condition of the arrow at their home, and they would then go to rescue him from disaster

When the youngest son reached the seashore, he heard the same voice calling from the box that his brothers had

¹The "milk sibling" kinship derives from real life, not simply folktale convention. In rural areas mothers with infants often nurse each other's children briefly in order to establish that relationship, a relationship which ties both the children and their families closer together henceforth.

²Much has been omitted from the episode at the home of the giants. Some of this we learn about from what follows, but the actual relationship with the giants and the conversations with them are all omitted.

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heard: "O son of the shah! O son of the padişah! If you wish to wrestle, come here and wrestle with me!" The boy began wrestling with the box, but then he pulled out his knife and cut the box open. From its interior came an extremely beautiful girl. Grabbing the son of the padişah, she took him to her kiosk on the other side of the sea. There they fell in love with each other, and it was not long before they became husband and wife.

youngest son was deeply in love with this beautiful woman. He always carried with him in his purse a single strand of the hair of his wife. One day as he was wandering along the seashore, he took the strand of hair from his purse to smell its lovely scent. But at that moment a sudden gust of wind pulled the hair from his hand and blew it away.

The hair was blown along the seashore and was eventually washed up onto the property of a wealthy aga.³ Because it shone brightly, it was easily seen on the shore, and so it was soon picked up and taken to the aga. He marveled at this bright hair with the sweet scent and wondered where it had originated. From a witch woman⁴ he learned that it had

³A rural landowner, usually wealthy, often powerful, but not aristocratic.

⁴A person with some preternatural or supernatural insight but not necessarily allied with the demonic.

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Beauty -
for me

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come from the head of a World Beauty.⁵ He immediately offered forty purses of gold to anyone who could find this World Beauty and bring her to him.

Knowing where the girl lived, the witch woman went to her kiosk and tried to gain admittance into the building. She disguised herself as a poor old beggar woman and knocked on the door of the kiosk, asking for bread. Although her husband had warned the World Beauty never to admit anyone into the house during his absence, the girl felt (pity) for the old woman and allowed her to come inside.

After she had been at the kiosk for a while, the witch woman said to the girl, "My daughter, your husband has some kind of life token in which his well-being is preserved.⁶ If he loves you, he should be willing to

⁵In folktales of this kind and in minstrel tales, the girl loved by the protagonist is often called The Most Beautiful Girl in the World. More and more in the past two decades this girl's sobriquet has been shortened to World Beauty. Is this possibly the influence of increased international perspective among Turks? Is it possibly the influence of the Miss World Beauty Contest, which Turkish girls won twice in the 1970s?

⁶Many cultures include the belief in a vital relationship between a human being and some object, animal, or bird. The relationship ranges from a mirroring effect--when the individual's life is gravely endangered his life-token sword, for example, grows very rusty--to a vitality or life force or soul kept, for safety's sake, in a bottle, in the stomach of a certain deer, in three or more goldfish. In cases of this separated life force, destruction of the life force destroys the individual. There is some of both extremes in this tale. See Footnote 7 below.

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you what object it is that contains this magic life force."

That evening when he came home, the youngest son was talking with his wife. After a while she said to him, "If you really love me, you will tell me what your life token

The youngest son thought about her request, but he did not wish to tell her what his life token was. He therefore lied to her about it. He said, "My life token is a certain stone that lies on the seashore

On the following day when the witch woman received this information from the World Beauty, she searched the seashore until she found the stone he had described. She threw this stone into the deep water of the sea, thinking that she would kill the youngest son in that way. But on the following day the boy was still alive and unharmed and so the witch woman concluded that he had lied about the life token. Going to the World Beauty, she said,

Your husband does not actually love you. If he did, he would tell you what his life token really is. It is not the stone.

That evening the girl again asked her husband about this. She went to him very unhappy and crying, and said, "Apparently you do not love me, for you refuse to tell me

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what your life token is."

The youngest son did not wish his wife to be unhappy, but, at the same time, he did not wish to reveal the secret of his life token. To satisfy her, he said, "My life token is the piece of iron that stands behind the door."

On the next day the girl told the witch woman what her husband had said. The old woman found the piece of iron behind the door, took it to the seashore, and threw it far out into the deep water. She thought that this was the young man's actual life token this time, and so she was surprised to see him alive on the following day. Going to the girl again, she said, "Your husband has no love for you at all. He keeps lying to you about his life token. It was not the piece of iron from behind the door. Ask once more

That evening the girl went to her husband in deep grief, sobbing loudly. "I think that you do not really love me at all. If you did, you would tell me what your life token is

Not wishing to cause his wife such suffering, the youngest son finally told her the truth about his life token. "It is the arrow which I keep by my bed."

When this information was given to the witch woman the next day, that old woman went to the bed and found the

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arrow. Taking it to the seashore, she threw it far out into the deep water.

That evening when the youngest son returned home from hunting, he went immediately to bed. He fell into a deep sleep, and when morning came he did not wake up. Although his wife tried repeatedly to arouse him, he continued to lie in bed unconscious

By deceiving the girl in various ways, the witch woman took her to the farm of the ağa in order to make her his bride. The girl was unable to prevent this, but she went into deep mourning and had black curtains stretched across all of the windows in her room as the wedding feast began. The feast was to last for forty days and forty nights, and after that she was to become the bride of the

Let us leave the girl there for now and turn to the youngest son. He still lay unconscious at the kiosk, but condition became known to the giants who were his milk brothers. On that morning they looked at the arrow which the youngest son had left at their house, and they observed from the tip of the arrow there hung a drop of blood so full that it was about to fall to the floor. They knew from this that their human brother's life was in

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danger.⁷ Rushing to the kiosk, they found him unconscious, and they discovered that his magic arrow was not with him. Diving into the sea, they scraped the bottom of the sea with their hands until they found his arrow and returned it to him

After the youngest son had recovered, his giant brothers killed a ram, turned its skin inside out, and fitted it upon his head to make him look like a keloçlan.⁸ They gave him a saz⁹ and disguised him as an entertainer. Then they took him to the farm of the

Standing beneath the window of the World Beauty, the boy sang,

Mine is the lovelock long and black;
 Mine are the moles along your neck.
 Black curtains hide me from your view,
 But I have come to get you now.

⁷ Damage to the arrow he carries with him has a corresponding effect on the hero. The twin arrow, miles away, is also affected and bleeds.

⁸ The word keloçlan means bald boy, but the baldness is not normal baldness but that caused by ringworm infection of the scalp, once not uncommon among peasant children. The ram skin, inside out, on the hero's head gives him the appearance of a keloçlan, a favorite method of disguise in Turkish folktales.

⁹ Three-stringed instrument used by Turkish minstrels and folk poets.

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Slip your finger from the ring,

For I have come to get you now.

When Zülfiye¹⁰ heard this, she said, "O Keloğlan, you may wish from me whatever you want!"

"I wish only your happiness," said the keloğlan.

The giant brothers, who had hidden themselves and their horse nearby, now came forth and rescued the couple, taking them far away from that farm. Zülfiye and the youngest son lived happily together after that.

¹⁰This is the first time in the tale that the beautiful girl is called Zülfiye.