

Story 1039 (1973 Tape 1

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Collected by Dr. Saim Sakaoğlu

Memorandum with cryptic notes p. 111

The Three Children with Unusual Names

Once there was and once there wasn't a padişah who had but one child, and that child was a daughter. It was not long after the child was born that its mother died. When the padişah married another woman, he locked his tiny daughter in a chest and threw that chest into the sea.

After the chest had been floating in the sea for some time, it was picked up by a fisherman. Taking the girl home with him, the fisherman made her part of his family and reared her to the age of fifteen. By then she was a very beautiful young woman, and without consulting her in the matter, the fisherman gave her in marriage to the ağa¹ of that village. After a year she had a child which she named "What was I?" A year or so later she bore a second child, and this one she named "What Am I Now?" And finally when a third baby was born, she named that one "What Shall I Become?"

After about twenty years the padişah began thinking

¹An ağa is a rural landholder, usually wealthy, often quite powerful. He is not a member of the aristocracy.

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again of the daughter whom he had placed in a chest and dropped into the sea. He said to his grand vizier "I dropped my daughter into the sea inside a chest twenty years ago. I do not know what became of her. Let us search the country and see if we can possibly find her."

The padişah and the vizier set out on their journey and after several days they came to a beet field. The padişah's daughter saw them there, and she recognized her father at once. She immediately shouted for her children, "Come here, What Was I?, What Am I Now?, and What Shall I Become?"

When the padişah heard this, he said to his vizier, "Allah, Allah! I have never heard any names like that before. Let us go and see if we can find out the reason for such names." Accordingly, they went to the village and asked to be accepted as guests at the home of the ağa. The padişah did not know, of course, that this was also his daughter's present home. After dinner had been served and eaten, the guests were talking with their host, the ağa. The padişah said, "I heard some very interesting names today: 'What Was I?,' 'What Am I Now?,' and 'What Shall I Become?'. Never before in all my life have I heard such names. What kinds of names are those?"

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village ağa answered, "My wife gave these names to our children at the time they were born.

"I should like to ask her why she gave the children such names. Call her here," said the padişah. After the ağa had called his wife into the room, and after she had sat down, the padişah asked her, "Why did you give your children such unusual names?"

She said, "I had a very cruel father. My mother loved me very much, but my father was very cruel. When my mother died, my father placed me in a chest and dropped that chest into the sea. I was a padişah's daughter, but I was dropped into the sea. That was the reason I named my first child 'What Was I?' A fisherman rescued me from the chest and reared me, so I named my second child, 'What ← Am I Now?' Because I was later married to the village ağa, I named my third child 'What Shall I Become?' And if I have another child, I shall name it 'What Shall I Become Next?'"

By that time the padişah had grown very sad. He then said to the woman, "None of all this is your fault. It is all my fault. I am your father, and I have caused you much difficulty during your life, but your difficulties have now come to an end."

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On the following morning the padişah said to his son-in-law, "Up to this time I have caused my daughter much trouble. I want to take you both with me to live in the palace." He took his daughter and her family to the palace, and there she and her husband had a second wedding, this one lasting for forty days and forty nights. All of their wishes were fulfilled.