

Story 1103 (1966 Tape 10) Narrator: Mrs. Sümer, in her 60s  
(Mother of Faruk Sümer)

Location: Aliçeri village, Bozkır  
kaza, Konya Province  
(Taped at Ankara)

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The Evil Dervish<sup>1</sup> and the Three Daughters of the Woodcutter

There was once a woodcutter who had three daughters. He chopped wood in the forest to make a living for himself and his daughters. One day after he had chopped a great amount of wood, he felt very tired and he said, "Of-f-f!" He had no sooner said that when a man appeared beside him there in the forest "What are you doing here?" the woodcutter asked this man

"You just called out 'Of-f-f.' Well, my name is Of-f-f.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Of f f* <sup>Ynn</sup> The narrator confuses two folktales (both well-known in Turkey and both bearing Aarne-Thompson Type numbers). The antagonist who abducts three daughters--usually killing the first two--is an evil dervish, spindle-seller, or thread-seller, who has some magical or supernatural power. He lures all the girls away from home, one at a time, and they go without the consent of their parent or parents. A day after the third girl has been abducted, the antagonist is for the first time called dervish.

<sup>2</sup> The Of-f-f Jinn is an entirely different creature. He is a supernatural being who is thought to appear to anyone who in exhaustion says, "Of-f-f!" (This is an involuntary exhalation of breath which in English would probably be "Oh-h-h!") The Of-f-f Jinn, however, is usually a benefactor who comes to the aid of the exhausted person. He usually gives the person a magic gift which will make that person's life easier--perhaps a small table that will produce quantities of gourmet food when properly commanded to do so, or often a donkey that defecates gold. He never comes to steal from or worsen the misery of the unfortunate person. The person may at a later time come into conflict with the Of-f-f Jinn, but initially there is no conflict between them.

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I came when I heard you call. I know that you have three daughters, and I shall take one of them for this trouble you have caused me. I shall not leave without one."

woodcutter thought, "I have three daughters, but can hardly support them. It might be better if I were to give one to this man as his wife." He therefore gave the stranger his oldest daughter.

Several days later the same thing happened again. Although the woodcutter tried not to use the word, he grew very tired and he accidentally said, "Of-f-f."

Again, Of-f-f appeared beside the woodcutter. This time he said, "I shall now take away your middle daughter."

"What will you do with her?" asked the woodcutter.

"I shall give her away to someone else."

"Very well," said the woodcutter. They went to his home and he gave away his middle daughter also.

After that, the woodcutter began thinking about his situation. He thought, "If I marry my youngest daughter to someone, I shall stop being a woodcutter. I have done this hard labor long enough." One day shortly after that he cut wood for several hours. He then sat down to smoke a cigarette. As he did so, the sound Of-f-f escaped from his mouth before he knew it.

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Immediately, Of-f-f appeared again and said, "I shall now  
your third daughter

"Very well," said the woodcutter. They returned to his  
and there he gave his youngest daughter to Of-f-f.

The youngest daughter now went with Of-f-f to his house.  
When they arrived there, she looked about the place but could  
see her sisters there anywhere. She said, "You brought  
my sisters here too. Where are they? Where did they go?"

"Don't think about your sisters now. I shall give you  
money enough to go to the public bath, to wash. When you  
return from the bath, we shall talk about your sisters."

"All right."

He then brought the girl a bath bundle<sup>3</sup> in which there  
golden bowls,<sup>4</sup> golden bath clogs, and towels with gold  
embroidery on their edges. He also gave her a five-lira<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Such a bath bundle is contained in a square piece of cloth known as a bohça. The four corners of the bohça are folded inward to enclose the contents. Sometimes the whole bundle is referred to as a bohça.

<sup>4</sup> Within a Turkish bath there are no showers. One rinses the soap off oneself by throwing water over the body with a handleless saucepan called a tas. Only a member of royalty or a very wealthy person would have a golden tas.

<sup>5</sup> At an earlier time the five-lira piece would have been worth a great deal. Even one-lira coins were once made of gold. Devaluation of Turkish money has been so great in the late twentieth century that today (July 1989) there are 2,000 liras to the American dollar.

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piece and said, "Give half of this to the attendants there and bring back the other half."

"All right," the girl said, "but I cannot go right now because I am very tired from my trip here. I shall go in the morning." After saying this, she handed back to Of-f-f both the bundle and the money.

They then retired for the night. When Of-f-f had fallen asleep, the girl arose and examined the place. It was a very large house with forty rooms, and after the girl had taken a ring of keys from Of-f-f's pocket, she began looking into these rooms, one right after another<sup>6</sup>

In one room she found her older sister hung from the ceiling, dead. Her middle sister was hung there, too, but she still alive. The youngest daughter cut down the middle sister and saved her life. "What happened to you?" she asked middle sister, and the two of them talked about it

<sup>6</sup> This is the weakest point in the story. In the traditional form of this tale, the antagonist gives the girl forty keys to forty chambers. He tells her that she may examine all that is in the first thirty-nine rooms but that she must not open the fortieth door. After resisting the temptation to open the 40th door for some time--sometimes several days--the girl at last opens the door of the Forbidden Chamber. This involves a taboo and magic, for when she opens the door (1) the antagonist knows this intuitively and immediately, or (2) the key acquires a blood stain on it which cannot be scoured off. It is then that the antagonist decides to kill the youngest girl; in no form of the tale, however, does he succeed in killing the youngest daughter.

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There was still one unused key on the key ring, and youngest daughter looked for some time to find the door which it would fit. She finally found that door beneath a stairway. It was the door to a small room that was full of gold. She filled all of her pockets with gold and then locked the door again. She then returned the key ring to Of-f-f's pocket and went to bed.

In the morning she arose and said, "I'd better go to the bath now. Bring me the bath bundle."

Of-f-f brought her the bundle and the five-lira piece. He said, "Give half of this to the bath attendants and bring back the remaining half. And make sure that they give you good service at the bath

"All right! Of course I will! I'm not stupid," said the girl.

The youngest daughter went to the bath and opened her bundle. When the attendants there saw the contents of her bundle, they ran to her assistance. They washed her and dressed her with great care. When she was ready to leave the bath, the girl handed them the five-lira piece and said, "Here, take this. Keep half of it and give me back the other half

"Oh!" exclaimed the attendants, "this is the third time that this has happened to us!"

"What has happened three times to you?" asked the girl.

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"Twice before, ladies have come here and said the same thing you just said about a five-lira coin. What are we to do in such a situation? We couldn't cut it in order to give half of it back! So in the first case we kept one of the golden bowls as payment for our services. In the second case we kept one of the golden bath clogs. In your case we shall take one of your gold-embroidered towels."

"No, you will not Bring all three of those things to me. Here is a handful of gold for you instead." Saying this, she took from one pocket some of the gold she had taken the night before from the small room beneath the stairway in Of-f-f's house.

Greatly pleased with this, the attendants asked, "Where have you come from, Lady?" They treated her with great care returning to her the golden bowl and golden clog which they had taken from her sisters.

Before she left, however, she again brought forward five-lira piece and said, "Find some way to cut this in half." After several attempts they finally succeeded in chopping the coin in half with a large heavy knife.

The dervish was waiting for her at home, and when she arrived, he asked, "What happened, woman?"

"Before me at the bath, one of my sisters left a bowl and

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the other a clog. I recovered both of them for you. Here they are, and here too is half of the five-lira gold piece I didn't know that my sisters were so extravagant."

"That was the trouble with them. That was why I became angry at them," said the dervish.

"Where are my sisters now?"

"They are not here right now

"Well, I do not care about them, anyway," said the girl.  
"They may go wherever they wish

shall get married tonight," said the dervish. "I shall go out and buy some food so that you can cook for us."

"Very well, my dear husband. I'll cook for you," she said.

The dervish went out to shop for food. Along his way he saw two children fighting for possession of a sparrow they had killed. The dervish said to the children, "I'll help you decide which should have the sparrow. I'll shoot an arrow into the air. Whichever of you can get it first will win the sparrow." After he had shot an arrow some distance and the two boys had chased it, the dervish picked up the sparrow, put it into his pocket, and went on to the market, where he bought a very scant amount of a few things that he found there. When he got back to his home, he said to the girl, "Cook a meal with

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these things."

"Very well. I shall do that," the girl replied

As she set about cooking a meal, the dervish departed, saying, I shall go and call the muhtar<sup>7</sup> and the hoca<sup>8</sup> so that our marriage can be completed."

The girl began cooking with the very limited supplies she had. She cut the sparrow in half and used only half of it while cooking that meal. She set aside the other half for another time.

When the man returned and found the food cooked, he was very pleased. "The muhtar and the hoca will both be here within an hour," he said. Then, noticing the half sparrow that had been set aside, he asked, "What is this?"

"Well, I kept half of it to cook tomorrow," she answered. When she saw how extremely happy the dervish was made by that remark, she said, "Come, my dear husband, and let me hug you

<sup>7</sup> A muhtar is the head man of a village. He is elected by the people of that village. In some cases, the muhtar is the only elected official that villagers may see. Other officials whom they might see are appointees of one or another ministry of the central government.

<sup>8</sup> The hoca was in pre-Republican times both preacher and teacher. Just as the muhtar is the political leader of the village, the hoca is the religious leader. Today he is only a preacher; the teacher must be a secular person.

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once. Show me your tongue. I'm going to kiss you starting with your sweet tongue." When the dervish stuck out his tongue, the girl bit off half of it.

Shortly after that, the muhtar and the hoca arrived. They were at first somewhat confused, for they could not understand a word that the dervish was saying. With half of his tongue gone, all that he could do was to make funny noises.

"Oh, only I can understand what he is trying to say," said the girl, "and I shall tell you what he means. Just now he said that this house is to belong to me."

Hearing this, the dervish went almost mad, and he shook his head up and down violently. He meant No by this,<sup>9</sup> but the others thought that he was nodding assent. The muhtar and the hoca filled out the papers necessary to have the ownership of the house transferred to the girl. Shortly after that time, the dervish died of grief and frustration.

The youngest daughter rescued her sister from the room where the dervish had tried to kill her. She then brought her

<sup>9</sup> Turkish people do not shake their head sideways to signal No. Instead, they jerk their heads backward. Of course, in order to jerk your head backwards several times you must also bring your head forward several times too, and it was this latter motion that was interpreted here as a sign of assent.

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mother and father there to live with them. Opening the door of the room beneath the stairway, she took out enough gold to furnish beautifully the entire house and hire servants to take care of it. They then lived very comfortably and attained all of their wishes. May we rise up in this world and sit on their throne with them.