

Story 1184 (1990 Tapes 4 and 5)

Narrator: Unidentified man

Location: Malatya, capital
of Malatya Province

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Yalvaç

The Beautiful Dilber and the Substitute Bride

Once there was and once there wasn't, a time long ago, there were two sisters. One of them married a rich man but the other married a poor person. The latter became pregnant a short while after her marriage.

When women are pregnant, they often have a strong desire for different kinds of foods. The wife of the poor man began to crave tiny bulgur,¹ and the longer she was without tiny bulgur, the more she craved it. In some parts of Anatolia,² including Malatya Province, bulgur is ground into three different sizes: large bulgur, medium bulgur, and tiny bulgur. The last

¹Bulgur is an instant cereal made in Turkey. Wheat is boiled until it is soft enough to eat. It is then placed in a large stone mortar, where it is pounded with wooden mallets to loosen the husks from the grains of wheat. After it has been dried, it is then ground to whatever level of coarseness one desires. It is then stored in readiness for use. To make a batch of this wheat porridge, one merely stirs a handful of bulgur into hot water. Having been precooked, it can be prepared in just a couple of minutes.

²Anatolia is the Asiatic part of Turkey, the land mass in Asia Minor which constitutes 97% of the country.

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of these is sometimes called simit pilav.³ It was this tiny bulgur, or simit pilav, that the pregnant woman craved. Going to her sister's house, she said, "Oh, sister, I want very badly to eat some simit pilav. Will you prepare some for me?"

Her sister answered, "My husband is at home right now, and so I cannot cook something special for you. Come back tomorrow and I shall make some for

On the following morning the pregnant woman returned to her sister's house for some simit pilav. This time, however, the sister had a different excuse. She said, "Today I have guests, and I have to cook the things they want. I cannot prepare anything for you right now."

The pregnant woman went home again and began crying. She cried for a long while, and when her husband came home, he asked, "What is the matter? Why are you crying?"

"I want very much to eat simit pilav, but I do not have any. I went twice to my sister's house and asked her to prepare some for me, but she refused both times. That is why I am crying."

Her husband went at once and cut some wood in order to get some money. With the money he bought some simit pilav from the market and cooked it for his wife. She felt satisfied when she

³Simit pilav could be a confusing term. Simit can mean finely ground wheat, but most Turks would first associate the term with a crisp pastry ring sold everywhere in Turkey. Pilav could be confusing in this context, for the primary meaning of that word is "a rice dish."

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had eaten this food.

When the time came for the woman to give birth to her child, she went to the public bath and spent the night there. The child that was born there was a girl. Soon after the baby's birth, three or four fairies ¹⁴²⁻¹⁴⁴ appeared at the bath.⁴ The woman did not know what sort of creatures they were, but she was pleased by what she heard them say to the baby. One of them said, "When you cry, may pearls, not tears, fall from your eyes."

Another fairy said, "Wherever you walk upon the ground, lush grass spring up and flourish.

A third one said, "Whenever you bathe, may the water that falls from your body become gold."

And the fourth fairy said, "Whenever you smile, may roses bloom on your lips." After each of the fairies had spoken, the four fairies swaddled the baby and placed her in her mother's arms.

In the morning the poor man came to the bath and took his wife and daughter back to their home. Shortly after their arrival there, they bathed the new baby. When they did so, the water that dripped from her wet body turned into gold, just as the fairy had said it would. After this had happened for several days in a row, they had enough gold to have a very

⁴There is a widespread belief in Turkey that every hamam (public bath) is haunted or frequented at night by supernatural

*Book of oc us
Public bath
142-144*

*Book from
teaser*

*run from hearts
Tread of road from
142-149, 151*

*Gold falls from
bath water
142, 146,
-Pearl fall from
mouth of special
woman, 142, 146,*

147,

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comfortable house built for themselves

It was not long before the sister of the new mother heard about their new wealth. She went to the new mother's new home and said, "Aman,⁵ my sister, how did you become so rich?"

"When it was time for me to have my child, I went to the public bath to deliver it there. There were (fairies) there in that bath, and right after the baby was born, they spoke to her. One of them said, 'When you cry, may pearls, not tears, fall your eyes.' A second fairy said, 'Wherever you walk upon the ground, may lush grass spring up and flourish. The third said to the baby, 'When you bathe, may the water that falls from your body be turned into gold.' And the fourth said, 'Whenever smile, may roses bloom on your lips.' And what they said must have been true. Just by washing the baby we have received enough gold to build this great house and become rich.

The second sister was now also in an advanced stage of pregnancy. When her child was about to arrive, she also went to the bath to deliver it. It was also a girl. Again there were fairies in the bath, and again they spoke to the newly born child, but what they said was very different from what they had said at the birth of the first sister's child. One fairy said, beings. The best-known Turkish folktale illustrating this is "Wednesday Witches"--ATON No. 9.

⁵A mild expletive meaning Oh, my goodness! or Wow! or Alas!

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"May an ugly red lump grow out of your forehead."

A second fairy said, "May you eat and eat and eat, but may your hunger never be satisfied."⁶

Afterward, the mother took this infant home. Because were only a few days apart in age, and because they were cousins the two little girls grew up together. But they were very ferent from each other. The child of the formerly poor couple was very beautiful, but her cousin was quite ugly.

By the time the girls had reached a marriageable age, name of the beautiful girl, Dilber, had become known far and wide. When the son of the padişah of a neighboring country heard about her, he sent several of his advisers to ask for hand. After the usual discussions and negotiations about marriage, the two families reached an agreement, and Dilber was engaged to the son of the padişah. Everyone was pleased with this except Dilber's aunt, who was jealous, for she wished to have her own daughter chosen in marriage by someone like the son of the padişah. And when it was time for Dilber to travel to the country of the bridegroom, the aunt said, "Aman! How can you permit this child to travel alone to a foreign country?

⁶When fairies bestow rewards or punishments, they are some times responding to good and kind acts or, conversely, to evil or selfish acts which they observe right at the time they make their bestowals. But at other times they may confer desirable or undesirable gifts or qualities on the basis of obliging or unobliging character traits. The latter is the case here.

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My daughter and I must travel with her to be certain that arrives safely at the palace of the bridegroom!"

Dilber, her aunt, and her cousin all set out in a ^{carriage} carriage to travel to the bridegroom's land. When it was time to eat the aunt gave Dilber some very salty bread which she had prepared. She herself and her daughter ate ordinary bread, but Dilber was given bread in which a large amount of salt had been mixed before it was baked. As a result, Dilber soon became very thirsty. "My aunt," Dilber said, "give me also a glass of water to drink."

"My girl," answered her aunt, "water is so nearly unobtainable along this route that I can give you a glass of water if you will pay me for it with one of your eyes. Give me an eye and I shall give you the water!"

The aunt gouged out one of her eyes and gave her some water. After a while, however, Dilber's thirst became so great again that she had to give up her other eye in order to get more water. Shortly after that they threw the ¹⁴⁵⁻¹⁴⁸ blind girl out of the carriage and continued on to the palace of the padişah.

Dilber wandered about aimlessly for a while after being thrown from the carriage. She was finally observed by an old man, who asked her, "My girl, what are you doing here alone in a place like this?"

After telling him her whole story, Dilber said to the old man, "Give me some water with which to wash my head.

eye for drink
of water

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He gave her some water, and she washed her head with it. As the water fell from her head, it turned into drops of gold. The old man was amazed to see water turned into gold. He took the girl to the poor hut in which he and his wife lived, and there more and more gold was produced every day. After a short while there was enough gold accumulated so that the old man could have a very fine house built. When it was finished, Dilber walked through the house feeling the walls and the furniture and the carpets. She was so pleased that, for the first time in a long while, she smiled. When she did so, a rose blossomed from her lips, even though it was the middle of winter.

At that very moment the son of the padişah was thinking about roses, and so he asked his wife a question. "I was told that when you cried, pearls, not tears, fell from your eyes. And I was told that when you smiled, roses burst from your lips. But you have now been here for several days, and I have seen no roses."

"Of course not! This is winter, and no roses bloom in such cold weather. Don't worry about this. Roses will appear in time."

Meanwhile, back at the new house, the blind girl smiled again, and another rose burst forth. She sent for the old man, whom she had called father since coming to live in his home. "Father, take this rose to the front gate of the padişah's palace and sell it to anyone who will give you an eye for it."

Going to the palace, he walked back and forth past the front gate shouting, "A rose A rose for an eye!"

When Dilber's cousin heard this, she said to herself, "Of what use to me are the two eyes I have been carrying around? I shall give one of them for this rose." She therefore bought the rose with one of Dilber's eyes and placed it in a small vase. When the son of the padişah returned, she said to him, "During your absence I smiled, and this rose burst forth from my lips.

A few days later Dilber smiled again and, as before, a rose bloomed on her lips. The old man took this second rose to the palace and sold it too for an eye. He had delivered the first eye to Dilber, and now he brought her this second one.

The next morning when Dilber awoke, she heard two birds talking to themselves on the ledge of her window. One of them said, "If the people of this house would but kill me, they could use my blood to restore that girl's eyes into their sockets."

And the second bird said, "Yes, and if they killed me, they could use one of my feathers as a brush with which they could smear your blood onto her eyeballs for that purpose."⁷

⁷This is a curious motif that occurs in Turkish (and perhaps other?) folktales. It is a deus ex machina device used to rescue a character from seemingly unsurmountable difficulty. Instead of an angel, say, or a god, or an ordinary agent of God, two self-sacrificing birds carry out the mission. They not only give up their lives to save the protagonist, but they also inform the protagonist how their bodies are to be used for that purpose; the information is conveyed indirectly through overheard

*Language
Human
spike of*

Birds, self-sacrificing

*CURE
147-8*

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When Dilber told the old man about this conversation of the birds, he reached out the window and grabbed both of them. After killing the birds, he plucked a feather from the body of one bird and dipped it into the fresh blood of the other bird. Then after smearing the two eyes with bird blood, he placed back into the girl's eye sockets. Dilber's sight was at once restored, and she was able to see as well as she had before she had lost her eyes.

Now it also happened that the land to which Dilber had had been suffering from a long ¹⁴⁸⁻¹⁴⁹ drought. No rain fell, and after a while no grass or other plants could grow. Farm animals were beginning to starve to death, and even the animals of the padişah were becoming thin and weak. In an effort to save his heard of ¹⁴⁸⁻¹⁵¹ camels, the padişah was distributing them temporarily among his people. Each family was required to take at least one camel and care for it until the drought was over.

When Dilber heard the padişah's order announced, she said conversation of the two birds. Part of this supernatural scenario is either the birds' ability to speak human language or the girl's ability to understand bird language. This motif is a key element in the very long tale "The Ordeal of Lâtif Shah and His Family" ATON No. 672. There the rescued protagonists later realize that the three birds were either The Three (an especially powerful trio of saints in Moslem mysticism) or a visible projection of their will. In the present tale there is no statement or even suggestion that the birds represent any agency. Obviously they do, however, for the whole episode in which they are involved is not something which could happen in the normal cause-and-effect, realistic world.

to the old man, "Father, go to the palace and get a camel for us to tend until the drought has ended. Get one already so weak that it can walk here only with difficulty.

"Aman, my daughter! Do not say that! If the animal should die while it is here with us, we would have to pay its value to the padişah."

"Don't worry about that! I shall feed it and feed it well while it is here."

Accordingly, the old man went to the palace and brought an old and feeble camel. The girl then went outside and began walking back and forth between their house and their barn. *grass grows beneath feet of animal* Wherever her feet touched the ground, lush grass sprang up. The hungry camel ate and ate of the grass. Every day the girl walked back and forth, and every day fresh grass sprang up. The camel kept grazing on this grass, and after a while it began to grow fat and look much younger than it had when it arrived there.

At last the rains came, and the drought was ended. The padişah then began to reclaim the various animals which he had assigned to his subjects for care. Before anyone came to repossess the camel which she had been feeding, Dilber went to the stable and spoke to the animal. She said, "May you go blind if you stand up without an order from me to do so."

jump up, down indicated by owner of
A couple of days later, servants of the padişah came to take the camel back to the palace. But they were unable to take the camel because it would not rise to its feet. They

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tried and tried to raise it, but no matter what they did, it refused to stand. When they finally had to leave without it, they went immediately to the padişah and reported to him what had happened

The padişah therefore decided to send his son to force the camel to arise. He tried and tried to do this, but he failed. He then asked, "Who is the person who has been tending this camel?"

The old man answered, "I have a daughter, my prince, and it was she who fed the camel during the drought until it became fat, as you see it now.

"Tell her to come here now and make this camel stand up!"

When Dilber arrived at the stable, she said to the son of the padişah, "Only when I am wearing golden slippers and standing upon a pearl-studded carpet shall I cause the camel to arise. If I am not provided with those two things, I shall not make it rise."

the golden slippers were brought and placed upon her feet and when the pearl-studded carpet was placed beneath those slippers, the girl said, "Very well! Now I shall order the camel to stand." Touching the animal with the toe of her golden slipper, she said to it, "Stand up! Never having received any benefit from your owner, why should I expect to receive any from you?"

The son of the padişah saw the camel arise after hearing the girl's words. He also observed that wherever she walked, lush grass sprang up beneath her feet. He wondered what she had meant by her remark to the camel: "Never having received any benefit from your owner" " Going to the old man, he questioned him for several minutes about the origin and behavior of the girl, and when he heard the old man's answers, he realized that this was the girl he had sought to marry.

Execution

The son of the padişah ordered his servants to tie his deceitful first wife to the tails of several unbroken mules. When set loose, those mules dragged her over jagged rocks into the mountains, where she died of her injuries. He then married his true bride, Dilber, and the two lived happily together after that.