

Story 1645 (Dictated)

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The Pomegranate Thief and the Padishah's Sons

There was once a padishah who had three sons. The padishah and his family had in their garden three pomegranate trees which produced a good quantity of very delicious fruit. In fact, it was the best-tasting fruit in the whole world. Every year the people in the area used to hold a fruit festival at the time that the pomegranates on those trees began to ripen. All of this pleasure came to an end, however, when a very large giant discovered this delicious fruit and ate all of it before the padishah or any of his people could even taste it.

The giant was so huge and so terrifying that no one volunteered to try to kill him. Finally the oldest son of the padishah decided to undertake this dangerous mission. He said to the padishah, "Father, I shall kill the giant that is oppressing us in this way." After kissing his father's hands, the oldest son found the home of the giant, but when he saw the size of the shadow cast by this monster, he was badly frightened. Feeling helpless before

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such a huge creature, the prince fled without engaging the giant in battle.

When he realized that his oldest son was not capable of killing the giant, the padishah sent his middle son to accomplish this work. But the shadow of the giant also terrified the middle son, who, like his older brother, fled without having had the courage to fight with the monster. The youngest son then went to the padishah and requested permission to kill the giant. The padishah responded, "My son, oh my bald son,¹ your strong brothers were not able to kill that giant. How do you think that you could accomplish such a feat?"

The youngest son begged, "Please, Father, let me try. Allow me also to have my chance to do so." After this pleading had gone on for some time, the padishah could not stand it any longer. At last he gave permission to his youngest son to take his turn at trying to kill the giant.

¹The term bald son appears here by way of great indirection. A type of ringworm can cause baldness in children. This happens more often to young or youngest members of a large family, for they cannot keep themselves clean and, in poorer families, may be neglected. The resulting keloğlan (bald boy) is often a sympathetic folk figure who wins success via his wits and good luck. The keloğlan is so often a youngest child that any youngest child may be called keloğlan even though he may have a full and thick head of hair.

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The youngest son took his bow and arrows and left the palace. When he found the giant's home, he hid inside the house while its owner was away. Lying in ambush very quietly, he waited patiently for the arrival of the giant. When the giant finally came, the youngest son shot it in one of its eyes with an arrow. Yelling in great pain, the giant began running and fled from that place.

The youngest son of the padishah returned to the palace and said, "Father, I shot the giant! I shot the giant!"

Refusing to believe this, the padishah said, "Don't lie! Your strong brothers were unable to do any such thing. How, then, could you manage to shoot the giant?"

Standing there before his older brothers' eyes, which were filled with envy and jealousy, the youngest brother repeated what he had said: "Please believe me, Father. If you don't believe me, let us go find the giant so that you can see his lack of one eye."

They left the palace and went to the giant's house. There they saw some bloody footprints leading from the house to a deep pit. There the oldest brother, thinking that the giant was probably dead in that pit, said, "Tie

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a strong rope around my waist and lower me slowly into pit." But while they were lowering him into the pit, he began yelling, "Pull me up! Pull me up! I am burning It is very hot down here!" Therefore, those above pulled up out of the pit.

Then the middle son of the padishah tried to enter pit, but he, too, was unable to stand the heat. Those above had to pull him back up, just the way they had the oldest brother

Finally the turn of the youngest son of the padishah came. He said to those with him, "If I should shout, 'I am burning Pull me out! Pull me out!' don't pay any attention to me. Just lower me farther and farther down." He then tied the strong rope around his waist and had the others lower him into the pit. After a while he started to shout, "I am burning! I am burning! Pull me out!" But the others did no such thing. Instead, they lowered him farther and farther down, just exactly as he had directed them to do. They lowered and lowered him until he reached the bottom of the pit. Finding the giant lying there close to death, he immediately killed that monster.

Looking around then, he discovered that he was in an

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underground hallway. He saw at the end of that hallway three closed doors. Opening the first of these doors, he found behind it a beautiful girl weaving a carpet. Opening the second door, he saw another beautiful girl who was cooking. When he opened the third door, he saw the most beautiful girl in the world, who was playing with a golden tray upon which a golden greyhound was chasing a golden rabbit.² All three girls were a padishah's daughters whom the giant had abducted from their palace and carried off into slavery.

youngest son of the padishah tied the rope around the waist of the first and oldest girl, who had been weaving a carpet. He then shouted up to those above, "Here is a girl who should belong to the oldest of us brothers. Pull her up from here!" After she had been pulled up to the surface of the earth, the youngest brother tied the rope around the waist of the second girl and shouted, "Pull out this second girl. She is my middle brother's kismet." They then pulled up the second girl.

it came time to pull up the most beautiful girl in the world and the youngest son of the padishah, the

²This is one of the most frequently mentioned automata in Turkish folktales.

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said to him, "Do not have me leave this place before do. I am the most beautiful of the three of us girls, when your brothers see me, they will betray you and leave you here beneath the ground."

But the youngest brother refused to believe this, and so he said to her, "You are worrying needlessly. My brother would never do such a thing."

Realizing that she was not going to be able to convince him of the truth of what she had said, she answered, right, but just in case my words turn out to be true, take these two hairs with you. One is from the tail of a horse and the other is from the tail of a chestnut horse. If your brothers should fail to pull you up to the surface, rub these hairs together. Then you will see a white goat and a black goat fighting with each other. Approach these goats. If the white goat kicks you, you will land in the world of light above. If the black goat kicks you, you will land in the world of darkness far below where we are now standing. You should be very careful to stay close to the white goat."

The youngest son of the padishah said, "Very well," and put the two horse hairs in his pocket. Then he tied the rope around the waist of the most beautiful girl and

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had her raised to the surface, too. When the two older brothers saw this girl and became aware of her great beauty, they decided to leave the youngest brother at the bottom of the pit. They then returned to the palace with all three of the girls.³

The youngest son of the padishah waited and waited for his brothers to lower the rope to him. After a while, however, he realized that the girl had been correct in saying that his brothers would not draw him up to the surface. Remembering the horse hairs, he immediately rubbed the two together. Two goats appeared, a white one and a black one, and began fighting. Not having paid much attention to the directions of the most beautiful girl in the world, he could not remember which goat it was that he should stay near. Unfortunately, he went and stood near the black goat, which kicked him very hard, sending him to a world of darkness below.

When the youngest son of the padishah recovered his consciousness, he discovered that everything around him

³It is a common motif in folktales for two older brothers to betray their younger brother by leaving him stranded in the underworld in exactly this scenario. The narrator here, however, seems to have forgotten that the padishah himself, the boys' father, had accompanied the group who had traced the giant, via his bloody footprints, to the pit mouth.

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was shrouded in almost total darkness. He had difficulty in finding his way as he groped about in that darkness. Then he saw a dim light in the distance. Walking toward that light, he discovered that it was shining from inside a house. When he knocked on the door of that house, the door was opened by an old woman who asked him what he wanted. He answered, "Oh, aunt, please give me some water to drink."

When the old woman brought him a bowl of water, the young man observed that it was not clean water. He asked the old woman, "Aunt, what is this? This is not clean water."

"That is not my fault, son," answered the old woman. "There is only one fountain in this city, and that fountain is controlled by a large giant. He permits us to draw water from the fountain only on those days when we bring him a girl. Because we haven't taken him a girl for the past three days, no one has any fresh water left. But because people cannot live without water, we are going to take him another girl tomorrow. This time it will be the daughter of the padishah of this land who will be given to the giant."

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The youngest son of the padishah answered, "Aunt, please give me a place to sleep tonight and then awaken me very early tomorrow morning."

On the following morning the old woman awakened the boy very early. The youngest son of the padishah took his bow and arrows and went to the fountain. When the giant observed him there, he laughed and said, "Look at this! I cut off their water for three days, and as a sult they have now sent me two human beings." But the youngest son of the padishah immediately shot an arrow that struck the giant in the center of the forehead, wounding him fatally. As the giant lay dying in agony he said to the padishah's son, "Oh, young man, shoot me once again so that I will die without suffering such great pain any longer."

The young man replied, "I was born only once, not twice."⁴ He refused to shoot the giant a second time, and

⁴There is apparently a folk belief that giants and other supernatural beings can be resuscitated by any "over-kill" attack against them. If a giant is struck again after having been seriously wounded, he is likely to recover all of his former strength. When the human contender is asked to strike again, he refuses and frequently says to the giant, "I was born only once, and so I shall strike but once." The rationale for the choice of this answer is not entirely clear, but it occurs several times in earlier ATON tales.

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it was not long after that that the giant died.

When the padishah of that dark land heard that the giant had been killed and that his own daughter was still alive, he was overwhelmed with joy. He called the youngest son into his presence and said, "Son, ask me for anything you wish."

The young man answered, "O my padishah, my greatest wish is to return to the world of light above."

But the padishah seemed to be confused by this request. He said, "Allah! Allah! Is there a world somewhere which really has light?" After consulting with his viziers about this matter, he called the young man to his presence again and said to him, "A great distance from here a very old bird lives on a tall mountain peak. She is the only means of taking you up to the world of light. There is no one but that very old bird who can help you return to that upper region."⁵

The padishah of the land of darkness assigned some troops to accompany the youngest son part of the way on his journey to the distant mountain. As they came within sight of the mountain, the troops returned, and the youngest son proceeded alone. When he located the nest of the

⁵There are several legendary giant birds in Middle Eastern lore: roc (ruk), simurgh, phoenix, and anka. Turkish tales feature the anka.

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bird he was seeking, that bird was not there. Noticing that a large snake was beginning to crawl up the tree toward the several young birds in the nest, he unsheathed sword and killed the snake.

When the mother bird returned a short while later and saw the blood on the ground, she supposed that the stranger had been trying to kill her children. She therefore began attacking the youngest son of the padishah.

the nestlings stopped their mother. They cried, "Mother, Mother! He saved us from that snake on the ground. He saved our lives!"

When the great bird heard these cries from her children, she looked at the ground beneath her nest and saw the body of the dead snake. She said to the youngest son, "O human being, because you saved my children, you may wish from me anything that you want

The youngest brother sighed deeply and answered, "There is only one thing that I wish from you. I wish you to take me back up to the world of light."

"Human being, you have asked me to do something that is almost impossible," said the bird, "but I shall try to fulfill your wish for the sake of my children. However,

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you must provide forty batmans⁶ of water and forty batmans of meat for this journey. During our trip when I say, 'Lak!' you must give me water, and when I say 'Lok!' you must give me meat."⁷

They left the mountain on which the great bird's nest was located and started their long journey upward to the world of light. The young man sat on the bird's back as it flew. Throughout their flight, the young man fed the great bird water and meat whenever it said "Lak" and "Lok." As the end of the journey approached, however, the supply of meat was finished. When the bird called, "Lok!" once again, the young man felt quite helpless. Then he quickly cut a piece of flesh from the calf of his leg and fed it to the bird. Because of the different taste of that last piece of meat, the great bird realized what had happened, but at that time she said nothing about it.

When their journey had ended and they were in the world of light, the bird said to the young man, "We are here now. You may go your own way."

⁶A batman is an old measure of weight which over the years ran from 2.5 to 10 kilograms.

⁷It is inconsistent that this otherwise articulate bird can say only lak and lok when it needs water and food respectively.

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But the young man responded, "No, you leave first and start back on your long journey. I shall watch you as you depart."

"No, no! You must go first," said the bird. So the young man began to walk away, but because of the wound on his calf, he limped as he walked. Seeing that, the bird called him back and replaced the piece of his thigh, which she had not eaten but kept in her mouth. Once that piece of flesh had been replaced, the young man was able to walk perfectly again.

The padishah's youngest son traveled over hill and dale until at last he reached his father's country again. There he found a job in the shop of a goldsmith. At that time there was in progress a wedding celebration for the marriage of the padishah's oldest son to the most beautiful girl in the world, the girl that the youngest son had found in the pit for himself. But the girl had set a condition for her acceptance of that marriage. She demanded a golden tray on which a golden greyhound was chasing a golden rabbit. She knew that only the youngest son of the padishah could provide those objects, and she wanted to discover whether he was still alive.

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When the oldest son of the padishah heard of the girl's request, he went to the goldsmith and ordered a golden tray on which a golden greyhound was chasing a golden rabbit. "If you do not make these golden objects for me, I shall have you executed," said the oldest son.

That evening the goldsmith sat in deep thought wondering how he could provide the golden objects he been ordered to make. When the youngest son saw the goldsmith looking sad and lost in thought, he asked his master what his problem was. He was told what the oldest son of the padishah had ordered to be constructed by the following morning. When he heard this, the youngest son said to the goldsmith, "Don't worry about this. Bring me a good quantity of hazelnuts. Then leave me alone, and by morning I shall produce the objects that you need." Helpless to know what else to do, the goldsmith and his wife took some hazelnuts to the youngest son and left him alone for the night.

The youngest son of the padishah began cracking hazelnuts one by one and eating them. Time passed, and the morning was approaching. The goldsmith and his wife grew weary of looking into the room where the apprentice was

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doing nothing but cracking hazelnuts and eating them. Finally the goldsmith said, "Come, Wife; let us go to That stupid boy is doing nothing but eating hazelnuts. us go to bed and get some sleep.

As soon as the goldsmith and his wife had gone to bed, the youngest son got out the two horse hairs, one from a bay horse and one from a chestnut horse. When he rubbed those two hairs together, a servant⁸ appeared. The youngest son ordered the servant, "Bring me a golden tray upon which a golden greyhound is chasing a golden rabbit." servant disappeared, but returned almost immediately with what he had been ordered to bring.

In the morning when the goldsmith and his wife awoke, they went to their apprentice. They were in a very bad mood until the youngest son of the padishah showed them the golden tray with a golden greyhound chasing a golden rabbit. They were amazed at what they saw, and they were so grateful to their apprentice that they embraced him with great joy. They immediately took the golden tray, greyhound, and rabbit to the palace.

⁸Although the narrator says servant, this is obviously not simply a servant. It is a jinn or some other supernatural agent.

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According to the custom of that city, a game of cirit⁹ was an important part of every wedding celebration. Knowing this, the youngest son rubbed together the two horse hairs and demanded from the jinn a good horse and a new suit of clothes. When these things were provided he dressed in his new clothes and rode his horse to the playing field near the palace to participate in the cirit contest. Because he was wearing new clothes, he was not recognized by anyone. During the cirit match, he played against his older brother, who expected to become a bridegroom soon. Aiming his javelin carefully, he killed his older brother with a single blow. Then he quickly changed into his old clothes and returned to the shop of the goldsmith.

A short while later the goldsmith also returned from the cirit match. He said to his wife, "Oh, lady, don't ask what happened! A large man on a gray horse entered the cirit game and killed the padishah's oldest son with his javelin. Then that stranger disappeared."

⁹Cirit is an ancient Turkish game similar to European jousting at tournaments. The difference, however, is this: Tournaments feature contests between two participants; cirit is a "battle royal," a free-for-all struggle in which each participant fights against all other participants. Once a deadly game, cirit in modern times is played not with javelins but with blunted sticks.

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Soon after that, the middle son of the padishah decided to marry the most beautiful girl in the world. Again, however, the girl had a condition to be met before she would accept marriage to the middle brother. She demanded another golden tray with other animals moving about on its surface.

When the goldsmith received an order from the middle son of the padishah to make such a set of golden objects, he said to his wife, "I hope that our apprentice is not angry at us for any reason, for we need his help again." They went to the youngest son of the padishah and explained their problem to him. He agreed to make the second golden tray with animals moving across its surface, and when the following morning arrived, he gave this second mechanical toy to the goldsmith.

As soon as the goldsmith had departed to the palace to deliver the golden tray, the youngest son of the padishah again rubbed together the two horse hairs. When the servant asked what he wished, the youngest son demanded another fine horse and another suit of new clothes. When these were brought to him, he dressed in his new clothes, mounted his horse, and rode to the playing field near the

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palace. There he again participated in the cirit game, and this time he killed the padishah's middle son

This time, however, he did not flee after having struck his brother with a javelin and killing him. The palace guards captured him and took him into the presence of the padishah. The padishah was furious. He said to the young man, "You have killed my two sons! I shall have you executed very slowly, inflicting a thousand tortures upon you before you die!"

The youngest son answered, "My padishah, look at me very carefully. Remember that we once had three pomegranate trees that bore delicious fruit until a huge giant came along and ate all of our pomegranates before we could pick them? My older brothers were unable to kill that giant, but I succeeded in wounding him seriously. When we pursued the bleeding giant to a deep pit, my brothers were unable to descend into the pit to kill the wounded giant, but I went down to the bottom of the pit and did so. Then they took both the brides I had found for them as well as my own bride and abandoned me, leaving me at the bottom of the pit.

The padishah suddenly recognized his youngest son,

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he then realized how cruel his older sons had been. "Alas!" he said. "My poor son! My lion son! You have suffered greatly!" Saying this, he embraced his youngest son and clung to him for a long time

Then he ordered that a wedding celebration be prepared for the marriage of his youngest son and the most beautiful girl in the world. That celebration lasted for forty days and forty nights. After that had ended, they lived happily together.