

Story 2040 (Transcribed from  
tape of Atatürk İlkokulu)

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town of Bursa  
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The Prince and Three Seville Oranges<sup>1</sup>

Once there was and once there wasn't,<sup>2</sup> when the sieve was in the straw,<sup>3</sup> there was a padishah who had one son. One day that son set forth on a hunting trip. As he was passing through a small village, he saw an old woman filling her water jugs at the public fountain. As she filled each jug, she set it down beside her. Seeing those jugs in a row the prince shot an arrow at them and broke one of them. The old woman said, "O my Allah, may this young man endure suffering from his contact with three Seville oranges."

When the prince returned from hunting, he did not feel well. Days passed, months passed, but the prince did

<sup>1</sup>The Turkish word for this large and sour type of orange is turunç.

<sup>2</sup>This is the beginning of a tekerleme, a nonsense jingle which provides a formulaic opening for Turkish tales

<sup>3</sup>While threshing grain, workers pass the detached kernels of grain and finely ground straw through a large-mesh sieve. Longer pieces of straw which may still have grain attached to them do not pass through and will need further threshing. So, the straw is in the sieve, not the sieve in the straw. This incongruity is typical of the humor in a tekerleme.

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not recover his health. After he had begun to lose weight, his mother asked him one day, "What is wrong with you? are you becoming so thin?"

"There is nothing wrong with me," answered the prince  
"I am fine."

But after his mother continued to question him about his health, he finally told her how his condition had begun. "A few months ago I went hunting. Along the way I passed through a village where an old woman was filling water jugs at the public fountain. I shot an arrow at those jugs and broke one of them. The old woman said, 'O my Allah, may this young man suffer from his contact with three Seville oranges.

The mother now had some idea about the cause of her son's illness but she did not know any way of curing it. She took her son to many hocas,<sup>4</sup> but none of them could provide any help.

One day the prince asked his mother, "Where would anyone find turunçes?"

<sup>4</sup>A hoca is a preacher and the religious leader of a Muslim community. In pre-Republican times he was also a teacher, for education was then the responsibility of the clergy.

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"They grow in a place a great distance from here."

"Then I shall find some of them, no matter how far away they may be," said the prince. He chose a good horse from the royal stables, and on the following morning he set forth on his journey. After he had traveled for forty days and forty nights, he came upon an Arab woman who was baking bread. She had thrown her breasts over her shoulders, and she was working hard. The prince sneaked up on her from behind and sucked milk from one of her breasts. He then said, "I do not know whether to call you mother or grandmother, but since I sucked your milk, I should probably call you mother."<sup>5</sup> He then said, "Mother, will you accept me as a guest in your home?"

"I accept you as guest, but I have forty giant sons and a giant husband who is ruler of the seven surrounding mountains." When the prince entered the house, the Arab woman slapped him and turned him into a broom in order to protect him.

At sunset her forty huge sons came home--lambur, lambur.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup>Kinship is often established in Turkish tales (and to a lesser degree in Turkish life) by means of a relationship through milk. Sucking the breast of a woman from another family makes one her son as well as the milk sibling of her children.

<sup>6</sup>Onomatopoeia for the heavy sound of giants' footsteps.

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As soon as the youngest son entered the house, he said,  
"Mother, I smell human flesh here."

She then told all of her forty sons what had happened  
"The human being whom you smell is your brother, for he has  
sucked milk from my breast." She slapped the broom and  
turned it back into the prince. They all talked together  
until morning, and then the Arab woman asked the prince,  
"Where are you going? What are you seeking?"

"I am looking for three Seville oranges."

"You must continue for a great distance farther along  
the road which brought you here. You will eventually see  
the towers of a palace which is completely surrounded by  
very heavy brush. If you look carefully, you will find an  
opening in that brush and be able to reach the palace wall.  
Take these hooks and this coil of rope with you and use them  
to scale the wall. Inside that wall is a garden where you will  
find a giant lying on a bench. If his eyes are open, that  
means that he is asleep and that you can proceed safely.  
If his eyes are closed, it means that he is awake, and in that  
case you must remain motionless until he falls asleep. When  
you are sure that he is asleep, pick three Seville oranges  
from one of the trees in his garden, and escape quietly  
by using the hooks and rope again to scale the wall."

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As soon as the sun rose, the prince thanked the Arab woman and her giant sons for their hospitality and continued on his quest for the Seville oranges. After traveling for almost a month, he finally saw the towers of the palace surrounded by heavy brush. Finding an opening in that brush, he reached the palace wall, which he scaled by using the hooks and the coil of rope. He looked upon the giant lying in the garden within the walls and saw that he was asleep, for his eyes were open. Quickly picking three Seville oranges, the prince scaled the palace wall again and fled from that palace. But his picking of the oranges had awakened the giant, and that monster began pursuing the prince. As the giant drew closer to the prince, that young man tried to distract the attention of the monster by throwing at him, one by one, the hooks and the coil of rope. These objects given to him by the Arab woman had magical power, and they hampered the movements of the giant long enough to permit the prince to escape.

After outdistancing the giant, the prince slowed down and traveled homeward at a normal speed. After he had walked for forty days, he was surprised to hear the oranges

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calling him loudly. They were shouting, "Water! Water! O son of royalty, give us water!" He had no water to give them, but to quench his own thirst, he ate one of the oranges. When the oranges repeated the cry for water, the prince ate another one of them.

As he continued walking, the young man thought, "I am going to die unless I can manage to deliver one of these oranges to my mother." Fortunately he was near a village fountain when the third orange cried out again for water. He dipped it into the stone basin beneath the fountain, and immediately that orange became a beautiful girl, the most beautiful girl in the world. The prince and the orange girl fell in love with each other and agreed to be married.

The prince said, "I am the son of the padishah of this land, and there will be a large and lengthy celebration held for our wedding. Wait here in this poplar tree by the fountain while I return to the palace to make preparations for that event. I shall return for you in a few days."

When the girl heard this, she said, "Bend down, poplar tree, bend down!" After the tree had done as she had ordered, she climbed into its top branches and said, "Straighten up, poplar tree, straighten up!" Again the tree

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obeyed her order.

After the orange girl had been sitting in the tree-top for awhile, an old Arab woman came to the fountain to get water. When that woman looked into the pool of water at the foot of the fountain, she saw a very beautiful face. Thinking that it was a reflection of her own face she exclaimed, "With this beauty of mine, why should I be a slave?" In anger, she broke the water jug she had brought. But when she returned to her ağa,<sup>7</sup> she was beaten for what she had done and sent back to the fountain with another empty jug to fill.

There the Arab woman tried to smash the second jug too, but the girl in the tree shouted down, "Don't break it! What you are seeing in the water is my reflection, not yours."

"What are you doing up there in the tree?"

"I am waiting for the son of the padishah to return and take me to the palace as his bride

Filling her jug with water, the Arab woman returned to her master's home. After thinking about the girl in

<sup>7</sup>An ağa is a rural land landholder, sometimes wealthy, often powerful. The word ağa is frequently used as an honorific to show respect for an older and/or more distinguished person in any walk of life. When used in this way, the term follows the given name: Ahmet Ağa, Hasan Ağa.

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tree for some time, she decided to find some way to replace that girl as the bride of the prince. She took to the fountain a mangal,<sup>8</sup> a saç,<sup>9</sup> and a large lump of bread dough. There she pretended to be trying to bake bread, but she was purposely doing everything wrong. The beautiful girl called down, "You cannot make bread that way!"

"I really do not know how to make bread. Come down and show me how to do it," said the Arab woman.

"Bend down, poplar tree, bend down!" said the girl. Then, after she had shown the older woman how to make bread, the girl said, "Straighten up again, poplar tree, straighten up!" As the tree began to return to its normal position, the Arab woman grabbed the girl's long hair and rode upward with her.

After the two had talked briefly in the treetop, the woman asked, "What object has magical influence on you?"<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup>A mangal is a small portable stove that burns charcoal. Except for fireplaces, rural women often have only mangals to do all their cooking.

<sup>9</sup>A saç (sometimes sac) is a round, slightly convex piece of sheet metal. Yufka, an unleavened type of flat bread, is baked not in an oven but upon a saç, which is heated by a mangal.

<sup>10</sup>Some people have "life tokens," objects which control their physical condition. A person can be affected, transformed, or even killed by the removal of his/her life token. The orange girl is at this point transformed not by the removal of a life token but by manipulation of it.

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"A needle," answered the beautiful girl. Taking a needle from her own clothing, the Arab woman stuck it into the girl's arm. As soon as the needle touched the girl's flesh, she turned into a white pigeon and flew away, leaving the Arab woman alone in the treetop.

A few days later the son of the padishah led the wedding guests to the tree to get his bride. They asked the woman in the treetop to come down, but she said that she was unable to do so. Some men finally had to climb to the treetop and lower the woman down with ropes. By then everyone was making fun of the padishah's son for having been engaged to an old Arab woman. But the wedding proceeded as it had been planned.

After a month or two had passed, the white pigeon flew to the palace garden and sang, "May whatever the prince eats be delicious as honey, but whatever the Arab woman eats be filled with blood and pus." Then she flew away again.

When the padishah's son learned what had happened, he ordered the gardeners to apply pitch to the branches of all the trees around the palace in order to catch that pigeon. The next time the pigeon came to the garden, she

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could not fly away, for her wings were caught in the pitch. The prince placed that white pigeon in a golden cage.

One day when the padishah's son was away from the palace, his wife ordered her servants to cut the pigeon's throat. She said, "Now that I am pregnant, I have a craving to eat the flesh of a white pigeon. I must have that food in order to be able to give birth to my child. Be careful to clean up all of the pigeon's blood." But a drop of the bird's blood spread out upon the ground where it fell, and from that spot a poplar tree sprang up and grew very rapidly.

After the birth of the child, its mother one day said to her servants, "Cut down that poplar tree and with its wood make a cradle for my son. Be careful, however, not to allow any of the leftover wood to lie around." But while the tree was being chopped down, one small chip flew beyond the palace grounds into the street.

An old lady walking along that street picked up that fresh chip, took it home with her, and placed in her spoon holder. Later the old lady went out to milk her one cow. When she returned, she was surprised to discover that several dishes of delicious food had been cooked for her.

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She sat down and ate that meal, enjoying every mouthful of it. The old lady then returned to the stable to do some other work there. Completing that work as quickly as possible, she returned to her house, where she saw the most beautiful girl in the world. Surprised to see any creature there, she asked the girl, "Are you a jinn or any other kind of supernatural being?"<sup>11</sup>

The girl answered, "No, I am not a jinn or other supernatural being but a human child of Allah like you." The orange girl then began to live with the old lady,

The padishah's son could not forget the orange girl and their love for each other. He was not ill but he was not entirely well either. One day he ordered town criers to make this announcement: "The son of the padishah wishes to have a cup of soup from every household in this city.

Not understanding what the town criers were announcing, the orange girl asked, "Grandmother, what are those men shouting?" When the message was explained to her, the girl said, "Grandmother, let me make a soup so delicious that the padishah's son will eat it and lick his fingers afterwards

<sup>11</sup>When a stranger appears before one suddenly and unexpectedly, one may be wary of that intruder. The formulaic query is "Inmisiin, cinmisiin?" ("Are you human or a jinn?"). Today the literal meaning is altered to "Are you a jinn or other supernatural being?" There are two kinds of jinns: the large visible type which sometimes interact with people, and the invisible, spiritual kind known about only by mystics.

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When the girl had cooked the soup, she dropped into it the ring which the prince had given her.

The old lady took that cup of soup to the palace, but guards at the door would not permit her to enter the building. When the prince observed this, he said to the guards, "Leave her alone, and let her enter." The prince began at once to eat the soup, but as the third spoonful reached his mouth, he found in it the ring. "Who cooked this soup, grandmother?"

The old lady answered, "I have a daughter at home and it was she who cooked this soup."

The son of the padishah said, "I am willing to give you a bag of gold. Would you be willing to give your daughter to me in marriage?"

"Yes, I would." After the usual wedding celebration of feasting, dancing, and the playing of games, the prince and the girl from the Seville orange were at last married.

Let us see what became of the Arab woman who had so long prevented that marriage. She was asked, "Do you want forty meat cleavers or forty mules?"

Knowing that forty meat cleavers might be used to cut her to pieces, she answered, "Forty mules." They tied a rope from her body to each of the forty mules encircling

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her. When they beat those mules into a gallop, the Arab woman was punished for her evil deeds.

Three apples fell from the sky--one for the teller of this story, one for the listener, and one for me.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup>This is a frequently used formula for terminating a Turkish folktale.