

Story 1332 (1988 Tapes 6-7)

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Location: Ortahisar village,
Ürgüp kaza, Nevşehir
Province

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Gender *Delayed*
The Princess Who Became a Prince

Stanley *TE^m* Once there was and once there was not,¹ when the sieve was in the straw,² when it was an offense to talk too much and a merit to listen quietly. In that far distant past there was a padişah who was very powerful but he was also very sad. For much of his life he had longed to have a son, but no son was born to him. He at last decided that the only way he was ever going to have a son was by marrying another woman, and so he took another wife.

Shortly after the marriage the second wife became pregnant. The padişah was very hopeful when he heard this news, but he was also very stern with his wife. He said to her, "This

¹Formulaic opening for many Turkish folktales, this is known as a tekerleme. A full tekerleme may run to several lines, though most narrators nowadays use only one or two parts of a tekerleme. The tekerleme is a nonsense jingle filled with paradoxes and other comic incongruities. It is meant both to amuse and to alert the audience to the fact that a tale is to follow. Some of the humor is lost in translation because it is difficult to reproduce in English the rhyme scheme.

²The sieve is never in the straw. While threshing grain, workers pass the detached grain and finely ground straw through a large-mesh sieve. Longer pieces of straw which may still have grains attached to them do not pass through and will need fur-

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I want a boy, and if the child you are bearing turns out to be a girl, I shall have you beheaded.³"

The poor woman was greatly frightened by these words. Every day she wondered and worried about what her child would be. Finally, after nine months and ten days, the woman gave birth to a girl. When the doctor and midwives told her that the child was a girl, she began to cry. The doctor asked her "My sultana, why are you crying?"

"Oh, who but I should be crying? If the padişah hears that I have brought a girl into this world, he will have me beheaded."

The clever doctor thought about the difficulty for a moment, and then he reached a solution for it. He disguised the child as a boy and sent word to inform the padişah that he had a son. Overjoyed that he now had a son, the padişah sent the doctor a very pleasing gift.

The child grew day after day, and as she increased in size, so did her mother's problem. Up to the time that the child was sixteen years old, the padişah had said nothing to it about ther threshing. So the straw is in the sieve, not the sieve in the straw.

³The padişah says literally, "I shall give your head to the executioners."

Doctor 2:

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circumcision, for he did not wish to frighten his only son.⁴

But when the child had reached that age, the padişah sent word to his wife that they were to make arrangements for the circumcision celebration.⁵ When this message arrived, the child's mother again grew terrified and began to cry.

Her daughter, seeing this, asked, "Mother, why are you so sad?"

Now the poor woman had no choice but to tell her daughter about the difficult situation that involved both of them child, your father thinks that you are a boy. He had for many years wished for a son, and when I became pregnant with you, he said, 'If the child you are bearing is a girl, I shall you beheaded.' Both the doctor and I pretended that you were a boy baby, and from the day you were born your father has always thought you a boy. Now he has ordered your circumcision and therefore it will very soon be discovered that you are a girl. When that happens, I shall be beheaded, and I do not know of anything I can do to prevent that."

⁴Boys in Turkey are usually circumcised at an earlier age, between six and twelve years of age being the most common time for the event.

⁵Circumcision in Turkey is not the minor medical procedure that it is in many countries. In Turkey it is part of one of the rites of passage, and it is accompanied by an extended cele-

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The girl embraced her mother and said, "Do not worry, Mother. Let preparations for my circumcision celebration proceed and then just before the operation is supposed to occur, I shall ask my father to allow me to ride on my magic horse.⁶ At just one word from me, my horse will gallop over the mountains, and in that way I shall disappear. Perhaps at some in the future my father will forgive us both so that I can turn." The mother and daughter cried together and said goodbye to each other.

By the following day all of the preparations for the celebration had been made. The child's bed was elaborately decorated and covered with gold-embroidered blankets. The ground was covered with the most valuable carpets. Silk tents were erected all over the village square. Famous musicians were hired to play for the occasion. From the very comfortable attractive corner of the square the padişah called his child to
bration. This celebration usually lasts for three days, attended by all the relatives and friends of the boy's family. Guests bring gifts for the boy, but the expense of feeding and entertaining so many people for so long puts great strain on the purse of the boy's father. Music is played almost continuously, and several times throughout the day and evening guests participate in folk dancing.

⁶The narrator has not in any way prepared for the sudden appearance of a magic horse.

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him and said, "My son, today is the happiest day of my life. Don't worry about this operation. It will not be very difficult for you.

After hearing her father's words, the girl said, "My dear father, I have just one request. Before I am circumcised, I should like to ride around the square on my horse, which is the same age that I am.⁷ After my circumcision I shall probably not be able to ride my horse for weeks. That will be difficult to bear, and so I should like to ride it now."

The padişah agreed to this, saying, "All right, my son. Ride around as you wish and then be circumcised."

When the horse was brought, the child pulled it aside by its halter and began to plead with it to take her away from there. Feeling sorry for the girl, the horse began speaking quietly to her. "Do not be upset, my sultana. I shall fly like a bird, blow away like the wind, and carry you anywhere you wish to go."

⁷This is a clue to the presence of a very unusual horse. In tales that involve childlessness, pregnancy is often brought about by supernatural intervention. A saint or dervish gives a magic apple to the husband and orders that he and his wife should each eat half of the apple and then give the peelings to his mare. Both wife and mare become pregnant, and despite the different periods of human and equine gestation, both give birth on the same day. Most of the time, horses born under such circumstances have supernatural abilities: the ability to fly, the ability to go beyond the human world into the fairy

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The girl sprang onto the horse's back and held tightly to its mane. The horse trotted twice around the square then leaped over the village wall. It now sped away like the wind and disappeared from the sight of the people in the square. The padişah and his men stared in amazement as both child and horse vanished. Let us leave them there in the square and see what the girl and the horse are doing.

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Riding on the horse, the girl traveled little; she traveled far. She went across rivers and plains and over mountains.⁸ After some time, the horse said, "Now open your eyes, my sultana." When the girl opened her eyes, she realized that it was night where they were, and she was barely able to see that they were in a broad meadow. The horse began speaking again. "Having brought you this far, my sultana, I shall leave you now. Do you see that light over there? Well, go toward that light, and I shall disappear now; but before you leave me, take these two hairs of mine. If you are ever world or the world of jinns. Did the narrator simply forget this part of the plot, or did she unconsciously merge two different tales here?

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⁸This is about half of a narrative formula used for describing a long journey briefly via figurative language. The rest of the formula says, "She went six months and a summer, but when she looked back, she saw that she had gone no farther than the length of a grain of barley."

in trouble and need help, just rub these hairs together." /At this point Tape 6 ends, and the story continues on Tape 7.7

The girl left the horse and began running in the direction of the light. As she drew nearer to it, she discovered that it was a light shining from within a mansion. When she reached that mansion, she knocked on the front door. A man opened the door and asked, "What are you doing here?"

The girl answered in a pleading voice, "Please, uncle, you take me into your service?" Feeling sorry for the girl, the man hired her as a dishwasher. The man was a retired padişah.

Beginning on that day the girl worked in the kitchen of the old padişah's mansion. She not only washed the dishes, but fore very long she also began to do most of the cooking. One day when the old padişah was especially pleased by a meal he had been served, he sent word to the kitchen that he wanted to see the person who had prepared that meal. The cook sent the girl to see him.

The girl dressed to make herself look like a boy and then went to the padişah's presence. Not recognizing her as the girl he had hired to wash dishes, the padişah asked, "My son, where are you from? Whose son are you?"

The girl answered, "Efendi,⁹ I am the son of a wealthy

⁹A mild honorific, comparable to Sir, it usually follows a first name: Hasan Efendi. At one time it was used to show respect to distinguished people, but it has become so devaluated in the twentieth century that it now is used only for servants and children.

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merchant. One day while I was wandering about in the forest, I became lost and had to spend the night there. The next day I tried to find my way home, but no matter how hard I tried to do so, I remained lost. This was the place at which I finally arrived."

21 The old padişah was very pleased with this young man. After they had talked together for a while, the old padişah said, "Son, it is apparent from your face that you are a gentle and courteous person, and it is apparent from the way you speak that you are also quite well educated. I have three daughters. If you will look at all three and then choose one, I shall have you married to that girl. I should warn you, however, that my youngest daughter is stubborn and willful. She does things she has been told not to do, and she fails to do those things she has been told to do. She does not mingle much with people, and she rarely speaks to anyone. Beware of her!"

On the following day the girl again dressed as a boy and went to a place in the palace where she was permitted to serve the padişah's three daughters. After watching them for some time, she decided that she liked the stubborn youngest daughter best, and this was what she reported to the padişah.

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He was surprised at what she told him. He said, "Oh, my son, do you like her most? I told you how stubborn and will-she is. What will you do now? You are in a difficult situation, for, having made your choice, you cannot now change your mind." Then calling his youngest daughter to his presence later that same evening, he said to her, "Look here, my girl! This young man has asked for my permission to marry you. What do you think about this?"

"Very well, Father. I shall think about this and return tomorrow with my answer."

The stubborn daughter went to her room and began to think deeply. A few minutes after she arrived there, the cook's assistant, still dressed as a boy, went quietly to the door of the stubborn girl's room and looked through the keyhole. At midnight the stubborn girl placed a golden basin and a golden ewer in front of the open window. After five minutes a pigeon flew through the open window and settled on the edge of the basin. The stubborn daughter then poured some water from the ewer over the pigeon. The bird shook itself once, shook itself twice, and then changed into a young man as handsome as the fourteenth day of the moon.¹⁰ He and the princess

¹⁰It is very unusual to describe the attractiveness of a

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then sat together upon the silk sofa that was in the room and began talking to each other. The girl told her lover about what had happened the day before. "O my love, you cannot imagine what happened this past day! A wretched boy asked my father for permission to marry me. My father is ready to give me away as soon as I consent. They are awaiting my reply. I do not know what I should say. Can you give me some advice about this?"

Her lover thought about this for a few minutes and then he answered, "Say this to your father: 'The man who wishes to marry me must first bring me the most beautiful mirror in the world. I shall marry him only if he can bring me that mirror.' That mirror is in the palace of the giants, and it is unlikely that the man would find that palace even if he

male with this allusion. Although the allusion has been applied to women a number of times up to this point in ATON, this is one of the rare times it has been applied to a man.

Throughout the Moslem Middle East the moon is greatly admired as a symbol of beauty. Both oral and written literature testify to this repeatedly. To compare any woman's beauty to that of the moon is to flatter the female. Although governments may use the Western Gregorian calendar, the Islamic community uses the older lunar calendar. On that lunar calendar the moon is full at the middle of the month, on the 14th and 15th days, and it is then that it is considered to be at its most beautiful phase. Traditionally Moslem men have admired plump women more than slender women, and so there is a parallel between women at their most beautiful and the moon at its most beautiful. The simile used by the narrator here is common in Turkish lore.

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searched for forty years. But even if he learns where the mirror is kept and then manages to locate that palace, he will find the palace almost impossible to enter. But even if he should succeed in getting inside, it would be his last act, the giants would immediately tear him to pieces. Thus, no matter what should happen, you will be saved."

The next morning the stubborn daughter went to her father and told him what her lover had instructed her to say. The padişah then called the suitor to him and said, "I warned you that my youngest daughter was stubborn and willful. She has just told me that she will marry you only if you can first bring her the most beautiful mirror in the world."

The girl, still dressed as a boy, already knew this from eavesdropping of the night before. She now laughed and said, "Don't worry about that, my padişah. I shall start searching for that mirror immediately and bring it to you after I have found it."

The girl left the palace and entered the nearby forest. There she rubbed the two hairs together, causing her magic horse to reappear. After she had explained her difficulty, the magic horse said, "My sultana, this is not an easy task to accomplish, but I shall help you with it as much as I can."

magic object

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Climb on my back and close your eyes."

The girl climbed upon the horse's back and closed her eyes. When she opened them a moment later, they had already arrived at the garden of the giants. There the horse gave her careful instructions about how she should proceed to get the most beautiful mirror in the world. "There is a stream in this garden in which the flowing water is filthy. Bend down and after drinking from this stream, say, 'What good water this is!' The stream will then allow you to jump over it and pass on. At the front door of the palace there is a lion chained on one side and a ram on the other. There is grass in front of the lion and meat before the ram. Change these foods around, so that the meat is before the lion and the grass before the ram. Then you can enter the palace. You will be met by one of the giants, who will take you upstairs into the living quarters of the palace. A few minutes after your arrival this giant will say, 'I am going downstairs to cook some soup.' He will go downstairs not to cook soup but to sharpen his teeth. While he is absent, you should take the mirror from a closet and flee with it. Run past the lion and the ram, which will not attack you, and leap over the stream, which will not try to stop you. Come here to me and I shall

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ram
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take you home again."

The girl followed all of the horse's directions, one by one. The giant took her upstairs and then, a few minutes later, he said, "I am going downstairs to cook some soup," but he really went there to sharpen his teeth. As soon as the giant had left the room, the girl took the mirror and left noiselessly. When the giant returned a few minutes later found that his guest had gone, he started out in pursuit of her. Knowing, however, that he had started too late to catch her, he called out to the ram, "Ram! Stop her!"

The ram answered, "Why should I stop her? She fed me grass, but you gave me nothing but meat, which I cannot eat."

Then the giant shouted, "Lion! Stop her!"

"I cannot do so!" answered the lion. "She was good to me and gave me meat to eat. You never gave me anything but grass."

Then the giant called to the stream, "Stream, that child has stolen my mirror! Do not allow her to pass!"

The stream answered, "In all of the years that I have flowed through this garden, have you ever bent over and drunk any of my water? That child drank from my water and said it was good. I shall not even touch her."

Knowing by that time that he was not going to be able to

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catch the girl, the giant decided to ~~curse~~ her instead. He called to the fleeing girl, "I shall say only one thing more. May you be a boy if you are now a girl, and may you be a girl if you are now a boy."

He is her father (a giant)
The girl at that very moment became a boy, and she was very pleased that this change had occurred. Holding the mirror tightly, he rode the magic horse straight to the palace of the old padişah. Entering the presence of the ruler, he gave the mirror to the padişah. The padişah at once called his stubborn youngest daughter and handed her the mirror. The girl took the mirror but said nothing.

At midnight the lover of the stubborn daughter came to the palace again as a pigeon and then turned into his human form. When the lover was shown the most beautiful mirror in the world, he was very surprised. After thinking deeply for a few minutes, he said, "You should demand one more thing from your suitor.

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marry him."

On the following morning the stubborn daughter went to her father and told him her second condition for marrying the

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suitor. When the old padişah reported this to the suitor, that young man again went into the forest. He called the magic horse to him by rubbing the two hairs together, and then he told the horse of his present difficulty. The horse and the boy thought about this difficulty. What could they do to obtain the laughing quince and the weeping pomegranate? As they were walking about discussing this matter, they came across a child carrying a cap, a sheepskin, and a whip. They asked, "My child, what are those things in your hand?"

The child answered, "They are magic objects. When you wear this cap, nobody can see you. When you sit upon this sheepskin and strike it with this special whip, it will carry you quickly to any place you wish to go.

The boy bought these three objects from the child, giving him a whole bag of gold for them.¹¹ Then he sat upon the sheepskin, struck it with the special whip, and said, "To the garden where grow the laughing quince and the weeping pomegranate!" The boy closed his eyes, opened his eyes, and found himself before a garden. Putting on the cap that made him invisible, he entered the garden and immediately saw a

¹¹This is neither a convincing nor traditional way to acquire magic objects. Usually they are acquired (1) from a saint or other holy person, (2) from a mortal or animal ruler, as rewards for services performed, or (3) from dull-witted

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quince bush on which a single quince was growing and a pomegranate tree with one pomegranate. To his great relief, the thought, "I have found very easily what I am looking for." He picked the quince with one hand and the pomegranate with the other hand. As soon as he did this, however, the quince began to laugh and the pomegranate began to weep.

The lover of the stubborn daughter had been standing guard in one corner of the garden. When the laughing quince the weeping pomegranate seemed to disappear by themselves, he said, "Oh, my sultana, may your ears be ringing right now were mine until today, but from now on you will belong to someone who is more clever and more courageous than I am. He has the right to marry you

When the boy arrived back at the palace, he showed the laughing quince and the weeping pomegranate to the old padişah and then gave them to the little sultana. The little sultana was so filled with admiration for the cleverness, courage and patience of the young man that she decided to marry him.

After all of the necessary preparations had been completed they were married during a wedding celebration that lasted for giants or adult numskulls, via trickery. Heroes take neither candy nor magic objects from children.

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forty days and forty nights. Shortly after the wedding, the bridegroom called his magic horse and had it carry him his bride to his father's country. His padişah father was delighted to see his son again, and his mother was amazed and delighted that her daughter had become a boy after

There the young couple had a second wedding which, like the first, lasted for forty days and forty nights. They attained all of their wishes and enjoyed their lives, and let us enjoy this story.