

Story 1181 (1990 Tape 4)

Narrator: Unidentified woman

Location: Malatya, capital of
Malatya Province

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The Abused (Youngest Sister)

3 sisters

Once there was and twice there was not, and back at such a time, there was a woman who had three daughters. They were all so poor that they spent most of each day thinking about ways in which they could get enough food to keep themselves alive.

One day the padişah had town criers announce that that evening no one in the city was to light lamps in his home. the three daughters of the poor woman lighted their lamps anyway. While the son of the padişah was patrolling the streets that evening to see that his father's order was obeyed, he the lights in the home of the three girls. He went to the door of their house, but he did not knock, for he heard the girls talking inside, and he listened to what they were saying.

The oldest daughter said, "Aman!"¹ If the son of the padişah should marry me, I would prepare such a huge meal that all the members of a military camp could not eat it."

"Aman!" said the middle daughter. "He would soon dismiss you. Then if he should marry me, I would sew a tent for him, a tent

¹A mild expletive which may mean Oh, goodness! or Oh, mercy! or Alas!

so large that all those members of a military camp could sleep in it

Then the youngest daughter spoke. "Aman! If the son of the padişah should marry me, I would bear him a boy and a girl, one of whom would have golden hair and the other silver hair.

When the son of the padişah heard these comments, he remained there no longer but ran back to the palace. There he said to his mother, "In such and such a section of the city there live three sisters. Arrange to have one of them married to me."²

"Very well," said his mother. She then went to the home of the poor woman and made arrangements to have that widow's oldest daughter marry her son. A large wedding celebration was held, and when it was completed, the young couple began living together. After a few days, the prince said to his bride, I want you to cook the huge meal you said you would prepare if we were married.

"Oh, I was just joking when I said that. I have never in my life prepared a single meal, not even a small one," said the oldest sister.

"In that case, you will go to the kitchen and spend all of your time slicing onions and garlic!" Having given her that

²Most marriages in Turkey were once arranged by the families of the prospective bride and groom, and in rural areas of Turkey this is still often done. Such arrangements always follow a set pattern, and much of the rhetoric involved is formulaic.

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order, he went to his mother again and requested that she go to the poor woman's house and ask for the hand of her middle daughter for him. This arrangement was made, and, as before, a large wedding celebration was held, and the middle daughter was married to the son of the padişah.

A few days later, the prince said, "Now I want you to sew the very large tent you said you could make--a tent large enough to hold an army."

"I was only joking when I said that. I cannot make even a small tent."

"Then go to the kitchen and help your older sister slice onions and garlic!" After she had gone to carry out his order, the prince went to his mother for the third time with the same request. "Now I want to marry the youngest daughter of the poor woman who lives at such and such a place."

Just as there had been for his first two marriages, a large wedding celebration was held for his marriage to the youngest daughter. And just as the prince had asked the two older sisters to do the things they had boasted they could do, he now said to the youngest sister, "I want you to bear me the two children of the kind you said you would."

"With the permission of God, I shall bear you ten children like that," answered the bride.

"All right! Then you will remain here in the palace as my wife."

The older sisters were very jealous about the good fortune of the youngest of their family. One day the oldest sister to the wife of the prince and said, "Yesterday I saw a beautiful necklace for you. It was exactly suitable for you, so I bought it for you. When your husband comes to you, get from him the amount of money I paid for it.

But when the prince came home, his wife said nothing to him about it. Instead, she had servants inform him indirectly. She had given them these instructions:

"Let servants be telling servants,

So my husband can overhear:

'Let her husband give her money

For such and such a necklace.'"

When he heard this remark, the prince gave his wife money with which to pay for the necklace. The oldest sister failed to embarrass the youngest sister by having her ask her husband for money.

A few days later the middle sister tried to humiliate the youngest sister in much the same way. She too wanted to make the youngest sister look bad in the eyes of her husband. She came to the palace and said, "My sweet sister, I saw in a jewelry shop two bracelets which I could not resist buying, but they seem more suitable for you than for me. Get such and such an amount of money from your husband, and I shall give them to

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Again the youngest sister gave instructions to her servants:

servants be telling servants,

So my husband can overhear:

her husband give her money

For certain bracelets.'"

This time the prince used the same means of informing his wife of what he wanted her to know. He gave the same kind of instructions:

"Let servants be telling servants,

So my wife can overhear:

'There is money for her in the large drawer;

She may use it for what she will.

On the following day the middle sister returned expecting to discover she had caused some bad feeling between the prince and his wife. She was astonished when her younger sister handed her the large sum of money for the bracelets.

Not long after that the youngest sister became pregnant. After the required number of months and days,³ she gave birth to a boy. As the child was about to be delivered, the two older sisters went to the palace as midwives to help during the time of labor and childbirth. When the boy was born, they substituted

³Folk medicine in Turkey says that the time of human gestation requires 9 months, 9 days, 9 hours and 9 minutes. This may be the reference here.

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for it in the cradle a young puppy which they had secretly brought with them to the palace. They then went to the son of the padişah and announced, "Your wife gave birth to a puppy."

"I accept whatever God has sent us," he said.

When the youngest sister bore a second child about a year later, her jealous older sisters substituted a kitten for the infant girl. They then reported to the prince, "Your wife bore a kitten this time."

"I accept whatever God has sent us," he said again.

When the third child was born and the older sisters again substituted another kitten for it, the prince at last grew angry. He said to his attendants, "Take this woman somewhere and bury ^{Buried} her up to her neck in sand." The attendants did that, and we shall leave her there for a while.

After some time the three babies of the padişah's son and the youngest sister grew up to be children. There were two boys and a girl. The girl cooked for her brothers and kept clean the small house in which they lived. The two boys worked in a barber shop. One day the son of the padişah saw them there and felt very attracted toward them. He did not know that they were his own sons, but he desired to have them close to him. When he returned to the palace, he reported, "There are two boys working at so and so barber shop. For some reason that I do not understand, I feel very close to them." He visited them often at the barber shop, and he sometimes had them come to the palace.

yaşın 8
kız
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¶ When the older sisters heard about this, they became afraid. They feared that the prince might somehow discover that they were his own sons. In order to prevent this, they made a plan to have the boys killed. The oldest sister went to the small house where the three children lived. She knew that during the day only the girl would be there. She said, "My girl, is it true that you and your two brothers live alone here with no one to take care of you?"

"Yes, we are alone. We do not have any parents," replied the girl.

"Aren't you afraid to be here alone when your brothers away?"

"No."

TASH "But you shouldn't be here alone. Let me give you some advice. In such and such a place there is the magic tree of Ahelifim-Vahelifim,⁴ which can talk and sing. Send your brothers to get that tree for you. It would give you company, and you could also use some of its leaves in your cooking." The woman thought that the boys would be killed by giants.

⁴Ahelifim-Vahelifim is the name of a fairy girl. It is a curious name not here explained. Elif is the first letter of the Arabic alphabet, and, by extension, can mean the first of other sequences. It is also sometimes the name of a girl, especially if she is the first child of her family. Ah and Vah are expressions of grief, meaning roughly oh and alas respectively. Finally, -im is the first-personal pronominal adjective suffix my. So, literally, the name translates into Oh, My Elif-Alas, my Elif.

"That would be nice, but my brothers would not go there," said the girl.

"If they refuse to go, then do not cook for them or do any of the housework," said the oldest sister. "Just sit here and do nothing."

The girl followed the woman's advice, and when her brothers returned home, she did just as she had been advised to do. Finally the brothers agreed to go and get her the Ahelifim-Vahelifim tree

On the following day the boys set out to find such and such a place in order to secure the tree for their sister. Along their way they met an old man. "Selâmünaleyküm,⁵ father," they said.

"Aleykümselâm, boys. Where are you going? What are doing here?"

"Ah-h-h, we have no parents. We live alone with our sister, who does all of the housework for us. That sister was visited by an older woman who told her about a magic tree of Ahelifim-Vahelifim that grew in such and such a place. She advised my sister to have us go and get that tree, and that is what we are now doing."

⁵Selâmünaleyküm/Aleykümselâm --traditional exchange of greetings between Moslems not well acquainted with each other. It means roughly May peace be unto you/And may peace be unto you too. If Selâmünaleyküm is not responded to, the speaker should be wary of the one so addressed.

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"Boys, don't go there," said the old man. "It is a very dangerous place, for it is occupied by giants. They may kill you."

we have come all this distance just for that purpose," they said. "We cannot now simply turn around and return home empty-handed."

"If that is the situation, then you will probably go on, but take this bowl, this pitcher, and this seal with you. If you are pursued by giants, throw out behind you first this bowl, then this pitcher, and finally this seal.⁶ The giants will pick up these objects and examine them with great curiosity, which will give you time to separate yourselves even farther from them. When you reach the garden where the tree grows, look first at the giants' eyes. If their eyes are open,⁷ do not attempt to steal the tree just then, but return later."

*Magic
objects*

The boys continued on their journey after thanking the old man. When they arrived at their destination, they found that the giants' eyes were shut. They therefore said, "Bismillâh,"⁸

⁶The three gifts given the protagonists to help them escape pursuing monsters are usually magic objects: a bar of soap which becomes a slippery mountain, a needle which becomes a tangled thicket of thorns, a knife which splits the earth between pursuers and pursued. Here the objects are less varied.

⁷This is the reverse of the usual folktale situations. Various supernatural beings in folktales are said to sleep with their eyes open but lie awake with their eyes closed.

⁸Bismillâh is the shortened, more convenient form of Bismillâhhirrahmanirrahim, which means "In the name of the most

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uprooted the tree, mounted their horses, and rode away

As soon as the tree was uprooted, the giants somehow knew this, and so they all awakened at once and rushed after thieves. As they did so, they shouted, "We are coming after you! You cannot possibly escape us!"

The boys immediately threw the bowl toward the giants, and the place just ahead of them was suddenly awash in water. While the giants were running around this water, the boys ran farther from them. But before long, the giants were again catching up with them. The boys therefore threw the pitcher toward the giants, and again a great flood stopped them briefly.⁹ When the giants once more were about to overtake them, the boys threw the seal in the path of the monsters¹⁰ and in that way made their escape.

When they came to the place along the road where they had seen the old man, they found him still there. "You have succeeded!" he called to them.

"Yes, with your help," they answered. After they had

merciful God." It is a word used audibly or silently by many devout Moslems before starting any undertaking, great or small, and it then signifies "I begin this act by mentioning the name of God as a sign of respect." It is widely believed that saying this aids success and failing to say it may bring failure in any undertaking.

⁹There is a common folk belief that witches, giants, and other supernatural creatures cannot cross water, especially the flowing water of rivers.

¹⁰We are not told by the narrator just how the seal deters the progress of the giants.

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thanked the old man several times, they continued on toward home. They took the magic tree to their sister, but she was disappointed with it. There seemed to be nothing magic about it, for it did not talk or sing. They complained to the woman (the oldest sister) about this.

She said, "Of course it does not seem magic, for this tree is nothing when it is apart from Ahelifim-Vahelifim. You must bring her here too!"

The elder of the two brothers went alone this time to get Ahelifim-Vahelifim. Along his way, he again saw the old man, who asked, "Where are you going?"

"This time I am going to get Ahelifim-Vahelifim herself," said the boy.

"My son, do not attempt that! No one who has gone there for that purpose has ever returned. Forget all about it and go back to your home."

"I have come a great distance to get even this far, and I shall confront my destiny, whatever it may be," answered the boy.

"This Ahelifim-Vahelifim you are seeking is a fairy girl," said the old man. "When you come to the garden where she lives take this bowl that I am giving you and fill it with water. Then place this seal in the bowl of water. But you must be careful never to stand still in that garden. Always keep moving about, at least a little."

The boy proceeded on his way, and not long after he had left the old man he came to the place where he was supposed to find Ahelifim-Vahelifim. There he filled the bowl with water and placed the seal in it, and while he was doing this, he remembered to keep moving about. After he had called three times, "Ahelifim-Vahelifim," a girl appeared on the surface of the water. Grabbing this girl around the waist, he ran with her to his home

As soon as the girl was taken into that house, the magic tree began to sing beautifully. Ahelifim-Vahelifim then told the children that the woman buried in sand at the edge of the city was their mother. All together, they went to the edge of the city and pulled the children's mother out of the sand and took her home to live with them.

News about the magic singing tree and the beautiful girl began to spread about the city. Everyone wanted to see them. Even the son of the padişah heard about them, and to satisfy his curiosity, he too came to the house where she was staying. He knew the boys living in that house, for he had previously found pleasure in being near them, but he still did not know that they were his own sons.

When the son of the padişah came to visit, Ahelifim-Vahelifim said to him, "I have something private to tell you but I shall wait until all the other guests have left to talk with you." After everyone else had left, the fairy girl said to

the son of the padişah, "Don't you have a wife?"

"No, I no longer have a wife."

"What happened to your wife?" she asked

"She died."

"Don't lie! Speak the truth! I am waiting to hear it!"
said the girl very sternly.

After remaining silent for a moment, the son of the padişah
said, "My wife has long been buried to her neck in sand.
gave birth to three offspring, all of whom were animals--a dog
and two kittens."

"O mad and stupid man! Has it ever really happened that a
human being has given birth to any kind of animal?" asked the
beautiful girl.

"That was what was reported to me by people close to

"Well, it is not true, for this girl is your daughter, and
these two boys are your sons. This woman here with them is your
wife--is she not?"

"Yes, she is indeed my wife," said the son of the padişah

"Since it has never been proven that a human being gave
birth to an animal, how could you give enough belief to such a
report to allow you to treat your wife and children in this
cruel way?"

After recognizing them, the son of the padişah hugged and
kissed all of the members of his family, crying all the while
he was doing this. He then took them to the palace, where he

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called together all of the palace people. "Who has done this thing to me--causing me to be separated from my wife and children?" he demanded.

"We do not know anything about it," said the two older sisters. "It must all have been the result of your wife's bearing a puppy and two kittens."

"Is that so?" asked the prince, becoming even more upset than he had been. Then turning to his attendants, he said to them, "Bring two mules here and tie these women to their tails."

Two mules were brought, and the two older sisters were tied to their tails. Then the mules were struck and driven out of the palace yard. As they ran over rocks and through brush, they dashed the women to pieces.

All the rest of the family lived happily in the palace after that.