

Story 1333 (1988 Tape 7)

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c. 35

Location: Ortahisar village,
Ürgüp kaza, Nevşehir
Province

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Pomegranate Seed - 41-46 = Snow white

Once there was and once there wasn't,¹ when the sieve was
XEX in the straw,² when things were thus and so but the world
seemed to be a lie to those who came and went without knowing
the details. Back in that time long ago there was a padişah
who had a daughter named Pomegranate Seed. This girl's beauty *Beau*
was so great that there was no match for it in this world. *most* *Good*

The mother of Pomegranate Seed was also somewhat beau-
tiful, and she was very vain about her beauty. Every day this
woman consulted an *Araby* *seer*, whom she kept in a room in the
palace, about her own beauty. She would say, "The moon,³ I,

er)
known as symbol
of beauty

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 further threshing. So the straw is in the sieve, not the sieve in the straw.

³Throughout the Moslem Middle East the moon is greatly

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or you--which is beautiful?

The Arab would answer, "All are beautiful." Hearing this, the woman would close the door and leave.

One day when Pomegranate Seed was wandering about the palace, she accidentally entered the Arab's room. When the Arab looked at this girl, he fell in love with her immediately.

On the following day the girl's mother returned to the Arab seer to ask her usual question: "The moon, I, or you--which is beautiful?" This time the Arab gave a different answer. He said, "The moon, you, and I are all beautiful, but none of us is as beautiful as Pomegranate Seed.

Hearing this, the woman left quickly and returned to her own room, where she began to cry. "Oh, what am I going to do? The Arab has seen Pomegranate Seed. But no one can be more beautiful than I am!" She then began to think of some way in which she could again be the most beautiful. One day she said to Pomegranate Seed, "My daughter, let us take a walk together." After the two had walked for some distance, their path led them into a forest. By the time they were deep in the forest the mother suggested, "Let us lie beneath this tree and

admired as a symbol of beauty. Both oral and written literature testify to this. To compare any woman's beauty to that of the moon is to flatter the female.

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for
yⁿ rest for a while." Pomegranate Seed was tired and fell asleep quickly. When the mother was sure that Pomegranate Seed was sound asleep, she started home, leaving the girl in the forest.

When the girl woke up, she found herself alone in the forest. Looking here and there for her mother, she then began to shout, "Mother! Mother!" After a while she gave up all hope of finding her mother. She sat down and began to cry. The princess cried so loudly that it might have awakened the whole world. Because Pomegranate Seed had never left the palace before, she did not know where to go or what to do.

There were three brothers who lived in that region of the country. On that particular day they were wandering about the forest hunting. By chance they happened to come upon Pomegranate Seed, who was still crying loudly. Seeing these three men approaching, the girl grew even more frightened. She said to them, "Please do not touch me. Let us be siblings in this world and the next." Then she continued to cry.

The three brothers accepted her request and treated her as their sister. They took her to their home, where she began to live. The brothers would go hunting each day, and whatever game they brought home she would cook. Then they would eat and drink and get along happily together.

This had not gone on very long, however, before word of Pomegranate Seed's beauty began to spread, first to the neigh-

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bors of the three brothers and then to many other people. "The so and so brothers found an exceptionally beautiful girl and they took her home as their sister to live with them."

It was not long before this account reached the ears of the padişah's wife. She was very annoyed at the news that her daughter was still alive, for she had supposed that the girl would be torn apart by animals and wild birds. Not knowing what she could do to get rid of Pomegranate Seed, the sultana consulted a witch⁴ woman. After explaining her situation, she asked this witch woman what she should do.

The witch woman prepared two enchanted pins. She gave these to the sultana and said, "If you stick these pins into the girl's head, she will die immediately."

The wife of the padişah took these pins and returned to the palace. There she dressed in shabby clothes and then set out at once for the home of the three brothers with several small bundles in her hand. When she reached the home of the three brothers, she knocked on the door. There was no response

⁴In Turkish folktales the word witch has several connotations. A witch may be a corpse-eating ghoul. She may be associated with the world of the supernatural and be able to use magic, fly through the air, and cast spells. The witch of this tale is like the second type. It should be observed, however, that in the majority of cases the so-called witches of Turkish tales have none of the above characteristics. Rather they are simply shrewd old women who are willing, for the right price, to carry out covert nefarious activities.

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from inside. She then called out, "My girl, why don't you open the door? I have come a great distance in order to bring my sons a few small presents."

The girl peeped through a small opening in the door and said, "There is no way that I can open the door. My brothers the door every day before they leave to go hunting.

Her mother, disguised as an old woman, said, "My girl, I heard that you had become my sons' sister, and so I brought a present. Put your head by the opening in the door so that I can put these beautiful pins in your hair." Seeing no harm in doing this, the girl put her head into the opening, but when her mother pressed the pins into her head, Pomegranate Seed died immediately. Her mother then ran back to the palace

When the three brothers returned from hunting, they entered the house and found the girl lying dead just inside the front door. "Oh, our one and only sister has died!" they exclaimed. After they had lamented in this way for a while, they calmed down and began to think about what they should do. The oldest brother said, "There is no sense in our crying any longer. But we simply cannot bury our beautiful sister. Instead of putting her in the earth, let us build a golden coffin for her and then hang that coffin between two tall trees." The other brothers agreed with this plan, and they carried it out as quickly as they could.

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One day soon after that the son of a padişah of a neighboring country passed through that area on a hunting trip. Seeing the golden coffin swinging between the two tall trees, he became curious about its meaning. Lowering the coffin to the ground, he opened the lid and looked inside. When he saw Pomegranate Seed, he fell in love with her immediately. Placing the coffin on the back of a packhorse, he took it to his father's palace. Unable to trust anyone there, he secretly put the coffin in his own room. Whenever he left his room he would always lock the door securely. When he returned in the evening, he would gaze at the face of Pomegranate Seed for the rest of the night.

One day the padişah of that land decided to make war against a distant enemy, and he prepared to lead his troops in that war. But his viziers protested, saying, "Our padişah, is it suitable for you to lead a military campaign when you have a grown son who is capable of doing that? That is something that the prince should undertake."

After considering this proposal, the padişah decided the viziers were correct. He called the prince to his side and gave him orders to lead the military campaign that was now necessary. The prince accepted these orders and then returned to his room to gaze at Pomegranate Seed's face for the rest of

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the night. In the morning he locked the door of his room and gave strict orders that it should not be opened again until return. Then, mounting his horse, he led the army toward country of the enemy.

Before the prince had discovered Pomegranate Seed in her golden coffin, he had for some time been engaged to another

One day after the prince had gone away to war, his fiancée went to the palace and tried to enter his room. For some time she was unable to open the door to that room, for it tightly locked, but finally one of the servants found a that would open the lock and gave it to the girl. As soon as she entered the room, she saw the golden coffin. Opening the lid, she was surprised to see a dead girl lying inside.

the prince had a lover who died! The many nights I did not see him must have been spent with her." Seeing the beautiful pins in the hair of Pomegranate Seed, the fiancée pulled one of them out. As soon as she did this, Pomegranate Seed turned into a bird and flew away. Frightened by this sudden change, the fiancée closed the coffin, locked the door again, and left the palace. She decided not to say anything to anyone about what had happened.

Some time later the war ended and the prince returned. When he arrived at the palace, he went straight to his room and

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lifted the lid of the coffin. He was shocked to find the coffin empty. He questioned everyone in the palace to find out who it was who had entered his room during his absence. One of the servants revealed that it had been his fiancée who had opened the door and gone into his room. Unwilling to tell anyone about Pomegranate Seed, the prince looked everywhere for her himself, but he was unable to find her.

In the meantime the padişah decided that it was time that his son, now home from the war, should be married. He therefore had wedding celebrations started. After these celebrations had gone on for forty days and forty nights, the young couple were married and began to live a quiet life together in the palace.

Soon after the marriage a bird began to appear every morning in the rose garden and speak to the gardener. It said "What is the prince doing? Is he well?"

The gardener always answered, "He is well and he is living comfortably in the palace."

Then the bird would say, "Very well. May he stay in good health and live comfortably, but may the branch on which I am standing wither and die."

When branches upon which the bird had alighted dried out and died, the gardener realized that unless something was done to save the rose garden, it might wither away entirely. Going

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to the prince, he reported to him what had been happening.

"My prince, every morning a bird comes to the garden, lands on a branch of a rosebush, and calls to me. It asks how you are. I tell it that you are fine and that you are living comfortably. Then the bird says, 'May he remain in good health and live comfortably, but may the branch on which I am standing wither and die. As a result of this curse, all of the bushes in the rose garden will dry out and die. I thought that it was my duty to tell you about this

The prince wondered what sort of bird this might be. He had traps made and placed in the rosebushes to catch this unusual bird. The very next time that the bird came to the garden it was captured in one of these traps. The prince had a golden cage made for the bird, and then he took it to the palace.

As soon as the bird arrived there, the prince's wife recognized it. She said to herself, "What can I do to get rid of this bird?" After thinking about this matter for a while, she decided that it would be best for her to kill it. One day when the prince left the palace for a while, she wrung the bird's neck and twisted off its head. Then she threw its remains into the backyard. No one had witnessed what she had done.

When the prince came home and found the cage empty, he

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asked his wife, "Where is the bird?"

"It somehow managed to escape," his wife said. The prince cried when he heard this news, but after a while he realized that there was nothing he could do about it, and so he tried to put the whole matter out of his mind.

After the prince's wife had killed the bird and thrown it into the backyard, a number of (rosebushes) sprang up from the ground onto which the bird's blood had spattered. These bushes soon produced many beautiful roses. One day an old woman came along and admired those roses very much. When she asked the (gardener) for some of them, he picked a bouquet and

it to this old woman. She took them all home and placed them in a vase filled with water. A few days passed, and the old woman noticed that all of the roses in the vase had faded

one, and that single flower was as bright as it had been on the day it was picked. "What sort of rose is this that doesn't fade?" she thought. It was such a lovely flower that she could not resist smelling it. Just as soon as she did so, the rose turned into a bird and began flying about in the room. Astonished at this, the old woman asked, "Are you a (jinn) or some other supernatural being?"⁵ But when her fear subsided

⁵ If a person appears suddenly in an unlikely place, the viewer quite understandably becomes wary of the true nature of the intruder. The formulaic query in Turkish is inmisiin cinmisiin?--are you a jinn or other supernatural being? In some

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and she had calmed down, she caught the bird and held it in hands. As she stroked the bird, the old woman noticed a diamond gleaming on its head. When she pulled the diamond pin of its head, the bird suddenly turned into a girl. The old woman was even more astonished at this second transformation. She almost collapsed. When she was able to speak, she asked, "Who are you? Tell me who you are."

The girl then told the old woman all the things that had happened to her, one by one. The old woman listened carefully to everything that the girl said, and when she had heard Pomegranate Seed's whole story, she went secretly to the palace and repeated that story in every detail to the prince. The prince was so stunned by what he heard that he fainted. When he came to himself, he gave the old woman a handful of gold and said, "Keep that girl with you. I shall come to your house tonight

The old woman returned happily to her home with the money she had received. She said to the girl, "The prince will come to see you tonight.

The prince arrived there after dark, and when he saw Pomegranate Seed alive in human form for the first time, he fainted

early interpretations of the word in, it seems to have meant human being, and so the response then is "I am human and not a jinn." But in most uses of this expression in Archive holdings, the question seems to be that given in the text above.

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come from. Pomegranate Seed then told him about all of her past life from the time that her evil mother had abandoned her in the forest.

After taking leave of the old woman, the prince and Pomegranate Seed started to walk to the palace. On the way, however, they came across a monkey. The prince wanted to catch this monkey, but the monkey fled. The prince pursued it, and the monkey fled, but the prince continued to pursue it. Forgetting all about the beautiful girl he had tried so hard to attain, the prince chased this monkey into a large tree, and then he began climbing that tree in order to capture it. Meanwhile, the girl, tired of waiting for the prince to return, fell asleep by the side of the road

After all the time that had passed, the mother of Pomegranate Seed still feared that the deadly spell which she had put upon the girl might somehow be broken, allowing the girl to live again. She had heard about the golden coffin into which the three brothers had placed Pomegranate Seed, but she

⁶In Middle Eastern countries sherbet is not the icy confection that it is in some other countries. Instead, it is a cold fruit drink.

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did not know what had become of her after that. Learning that the coffin had been taken from the area where the three brothers lived, she began searching for the girl in city after city. It was only by chance, however, that she found the girl sleeping alongside the road on which she was traveling to still another city. She recognized her daughter at once. Under her breath she said to the sleeping girl, "You swine! You are still trying to cast a shadow over my beauty! It is lucky for me that I found you." She then began to cast a different kind of spell on the girl, a spell which she had learned from the witch woman. As she was attempting to do this the prince returned.

End of that

The prince had forgotten all about the girl as he started chasing the monkey, but as he began to climb the tree into which the animal had fled, he suddenly remembered Pomegranate Seed. "How terrible! I left my love all alone along the road. What might happen if someone should find her there?" He rushed back to her and discovered beside her a woman whom he had never seen before. "Who are you?" he asked.

Pomegranate Seed's mother did not answer the question. Instead, she asked, "My son, is this girl your friend? Where have you been, leaving her here all alone? Who knows what might have happened to her if I had not come along? Thinking that she must have come here with somebody, I decided to stand guard

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over her until that person returned. It is good that you came when you did, however, for it would soon have been necessary for me to leave

"Who are you?" asked the prince.

"I live nearby all by myself. I have no family."

"Then come with us," said the prince, "and I shall help you after all that you have done for me."

Pomegranate Seed was awake by now, and she recognized at once that the voice of the woman was her mother's voice. As they traveled along toward the palace, she secretly informed the prince of this. They continued to travel along, however, and the prince continued to act as though he knew nothing of the woman's identity. But shortly after they arrived at the palace, the prince called his wife and Pomegranate Seed's mother to him, and then he had them both hung from the ceiling by their hair

The prince then explained to his father everything that had happened. The padişah ordered that a wedding celebration be started for his son and Pomegranate Seed, and after it had continued for forty days and forty nights, the couple were married. Then the prince and his bride moved to another city, where they lived happily for the rest of their lives. They attained all of their wishes, and may all unfortunate people have similar success