

Story #123 (Tape erased)

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The Daughters of the Broom Thief

Once there was and once there wasn't, a man had three daughters whom he was unable to support. In order to feed them, he went to the palace of the padishah each day and stole three brooms; he sold the brooms, and with the money he bought food. After a while this became a regular practice with him, and he ceased doing any other work at all.

The palace attendants noticed that each day three brooms were missing, and finally one of them reported this to the padishah: "Your majesty, three brooms disappear each day from the palace, but we cannot discover who takes them."

"We shall set a trap to catch the man," said the padishah. Then he ordered his vezir to hide a soldier near every broom in the palace in order to catch the thief. In this way the man was finally caught and brought to the presence of the padishah.

"Your majesty, this is the man who has stolen all the brooms," the attendants said.

Looking at the man, the padishah said, "You are a fine, strong man. Why do you steal?"

"Your majesty, I have three daughters whom I cannot support. I sold the brooms that I stole from the palace in order to buy food for them. I could not help this."

"Only if your daughters are in an advanced state of pregnancy could this kind of theft be pardoned. If you do not bring them to me in that

condition within three days, I shall have you hanged."

The man went home, sat down, held his head between his hands, and thought about what he should do. As he sat there pondering, his oldest daughter came to him and asked, "Father, why are you thinking so deeply?"

"Unless I take you and your two sisters in a state of pregnancy before the padishah within three days, I shall be hanged."

"Oh, is that it?" said the girl. "I thought perhaps the butcher had sent a matchmaker to ask for my hand."

After a while the second daughter came and asked, "Father why are you thinking so deeply?"

"Go away, you dog! You will say the same sort of thing as your sister did."

"No, I won't, father. Why are you thinking so deeply?"

"Unless I take you and your two sisters in a state of pregnancy before the padishah within three days, I shall be hanged."

"Oh, is that it?" said the girl. "I thought perhaps the son of the boatmaker had sent a matchmaker to ask for me in marriage. (He was a boatmaker at whom the second daughter had once winked.)"

The second daughter went away, and finally the youngest daughter came to her father and asked, "What are you thinking about, father?"

"Get out of here! You will act in the same thoughtless way your two sisters have. Go away!"

"No, I won't, father. Tell me your trouble and perhaps I can help you."

"Unless I take you and your two sisters in a state of pregnancy before the padishah within three days, I shall be hanged."

"Don't worry about that, father. It is easy," said the youngest daughter. "Go and buy three kilos of cotton wool."

The man went out and bought three kilos of cotton wool. The girl then stuffed a kilo of this under the shirt of her older sister and a kilo under the shirt of her second sister, and finally she shoved a kilo under her own shirt. "Now we have become pregnant," she said. "Take us before the padishah."

the man presented himself at the palace, the padishah asked, "Have you brought your daughters along?"

I have, your majesty."

"Then call in the oldest daughter." The oldest daughter was brought in, her belly almost touching her chin, and she stood before the padishah. "What wish can I grant you, my girl?" he asked.

"I want to marry the butcher," she said.

"Take her out," said the padishah to his attendants, "find out which butcher she wants to marry, and see that she is married to him."

When the second daughter was brought in, the padishah asked her, "What wish can I grant you, my girl?"

"I want to marry the son of the boatmaker," she said.

"Take her out," said the padishah, "find out which boatmaker she wishes to marry, and see that she is married to him."

Then it was the turn of the youngest daughter. She came into the room with her belly up to her nose. Just as before, the padishah asked, "What wish can I grant you, my girl?"

"You cannot give me what I want," answered the youngest daughter.

"Why don't you speak your wish? You are the daughter of a broom thief and I am the padishah. It would be a shame upon me if I could not give you what you want

you would not be able to find it, your majesty.

"You must name it," said the padishah

"Very well, then, I want watercress from the sea, lemons from a poplar tree, and oranges in the winter. Those are the things I wish."

"Why don't you wish for something sensible? Is it possible to have watercress in the sea, lemons from a poplar tree, or oranges in winter?"

"Your majesty, is it possible to bring three girls here nine months pregnant in three days?" asked the youngest daughter.

The padishah thought about this. Then he ordered that the broom thief be given a job at the palace and the girl be sent home. A little while later the padishah sent two of his attendants to the youngest daughter with two parcels. "Take these to the girl and report to me everything that she says," said the padishah.

The two attendants went to the home of the former broom thief and knocked on the door. The youngest daughter called through the door, "Who is it?"

"Tell your father to come out," said one attendant.

"My father is in the roses," she said. *Fig, her*

"Let your older sister come out, then," they said.

"My older sister has gone to make one thing two," she answered. *g*

"Well, then, let your second sister come out," they said.

"She has gone to make the ugly beautiful," answered the girl. *Fig, her*

"What have you been doing?"

"Well, I have just finished cooking up and down," she said. *kg*

"What are you doing now?"

"I have a four-footed horse and horseshoes but I have no nails to fasten them and no way to get nails. *r*

One of the attendants said to the girl, "We have left the things you wanted on the steps, from where you can get them after we leave.

They left the parcels on the doorstep and started to leave.

The girl opened the door quickly, took the parcels, and unwrapped

them quickly. Then she raised the window and shouted after the attendants, "Come back! Come back!"

"What are you saying, madam?" they asked her.

"Take greetings from the hawk to the falcon. From time to time things are revealed to the dung-spattered crow. Our time was twelve years, and has it now been reduced to ten?"

The attendants asked each other if they had heard all of this correctly. Then they went to the padishah to report what she had said.

"We have delivered the parcels, your majesty."

"What did she say?" asked the padishah.

"When we asked her to send her father out, she said that he was in the roses.

"Ah," said the padishah, "he must be working in my rose garden."

"Then we said, 'Let your older sister come out,' but she said, 'My older sister has gone to make one thing two.'"

"I see," said the padishah. "She has gone as midwife to deliver a child."

"Then we asked her to send out her second sister, and she said, 'She has gone to make the ugly beautiful.'"

"She had probably gone to have the hair taken from her face, then," said the padishah, for he knew that this was an expression used when hair is pulled out with resin patches.

"We asked her what she was doing, and she answered, 'I have just finished cooking up and down

"Ah, that means that she had been cooking lentil soup," said the padishah.

"Then we asked, 'What are you doing now?' and she answered, 'I have a four-footed horse and horseshoes but I have no nails to fasten them and no way to get nails.'"

"Ah, I see," said the padishah. "She was embroidering. The four-footed horse was the embroidery board; the horseshoes were sequins; and the nails were the silver threads used for sewing on sequins. Did she say anything else to you?"

"As we were leaving, she called us back and said, 'Take greetings from the hawk to the falcon. From time to time things are revealed to the dung-spattered crow. Our time was twelve years, and has it now been reduced to ten?'"

"You scoundrels!" said the padishah to his two attendants. "She is the hawk, I am the falcon, and you are the filthy scavengers. The twelve years represent the twelve pieces of gold which I sent to her, but you delivered only ten. Return the other two pieces of gold to her. Then buy silver thread so that she can sew sequins on her wedding gown. A wedding was then held for forty days and forty nights, and the daughter of the broom thief became the wife of the padishah, and the two lived happily ever after."