

Story 942 1977 Tape 26)

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Location: Yeleşli village,  
Göle kaza,  
Kars Province

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Collected by  
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4. (The Substitute Bride)

Once there was and once there was not a family consisting of a mother, a father, a son, and a daughter. After a while the father died, and the children were fatherless for a while. Then the mother remarried, but her second husband did not love her children

This family was very poor, and no matter how hard they worked on their farm, they never had quite enough to eat. The mother complained about this often, saying, "We keep sowing and sowing and sowing seed, but it never produces enough wheat for our needs

One day after she had said this, her second husband said to this woman, "Near the edge of our land there is a tunnel into a hill. It is said that God often speaks through that tunnel to people who ask him questions. Why don't you go to that tunnel and ask God what we should do to make our farm more productive?"

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simple woman went to the mouth of the tunnel and said, "O God! Our crops of wheat yield very little grain. What should we do to have better wheat crops?"

From the other end of the tunnel her husband answered, pretending that he was God speaking: "O woman! If you want to have better crops, you must kill your children for my sake. Let them be a sacrifice for you

The woman returned home in great sadness. Her husband asked, "Well, what did God tell you?"

The woman did not answer him at first, but when her husband repeated his question, she said, "Oh, nothing. God did not answer my question

knowing exactly what had been spoken through the tunnel, the man said, "Do not lie to me

The helpless woman then had to tell what she thought was the truth. She said, "God told me to kill my children for his sake. He said that by doing so we would be able to get a good crop

"Very well, then," said the man. "Give them a good meal, and then we shall kill them.

The grief-stricken mother cooked some bulamaç<sup>1</sup> for the children. While they were eating the bulamaç, a bird came

<sup>1</sup> Bulamaç is a pudding made with flour, butter, and sugar. It may also have among its ingredients grape juice or some other fruit juice.

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to the window and said to the children, "If you will give me some bulamaç, I shall tell you something very important.

The boy answered the bird by saying, "This bulamaç is hardly enough for the two of us. We cannot give you any of it."

But his sister said, "Don't say that, Brother. Of course we can give some to this bird!"

After eating the bulamaç they gave him, the bird said to the girl, "Take your brother's hat and run away. Your brother will chase you to recover his hat, and in that way you can both escape. It is important that you do this, because your mother and father have planned to kill you both."

The girl did as the bird had directed. She took her brother's hat and ran away with it. The brother started to chase her, and in this way they escaped from their home. After walking some distance, they came to a forest. There the girl climbed up into a poplar tree and hid herself in its upper branches. The boy turned into a lamb and hid in a bush beneath that same tree

The next morning the son of the padişah rode his horse to a stream that passed beneath that poplar tree. He wanted to water his horse there, but the horse seemed frightened and kept shying away from the stream. Curious about this,

*Transformation*  
Beauty, seen  
reflected from water  
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the son of the padişah looked about for some reason for the horse's strange behavior. Then he noticed a human shadow on the surface of the water. When he looked up into the poplar tree, he saw there a girl as beautiful as the moon.

The son of the padişah called up to her, "O Sister! Who are you? Are you human being or jinn?<sup>2</sup> Come down, for I should like to see you better." *la'î eşi'î*

The girl answered, "I am <sup>(2) Jinn</sup> not a jinn but a human being I cannot come down."

The son of the padişah decided that he could bring her down by cutting down the tree in which she was perched. But every time he cut a slash into the truck of the tree, the girl's brother licked that slash, and the wood grew back together again. Finally the son of the padişah decided that the best way to bring the girl down from the treetop was to hire a witch<sup>58-59</sup> woman for that purpose.

Very soon a witch woman came to the foot of that tree. There she pretended to sift flour onto some dough she had on a pastry board. She also pretended that she could not see very well, for as she sifted the flour, most of it fell on the ground instead of on the pastry board. When the girl

<sup>2</sup> Whenever one meets, unexpectedly, an unknown person, one inquires about his/her identity with the formulaic query İn misin? Cin misin? (Are you human being or jinn?)

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what was happening, she called down, "Oh, grandmother, you are sifting the flour on the ground!"

The witch woman answered, "Oh, my dear daughter, I cannot see very well. That is why I am sifting the flour upon the ground. Come down and help me!"

When the girl climbed down from the poplar tree to help the old woman, she was immediately caught by the son of the padişah. He said, "Now I shall take you to my father's palace."

The helpless girl said, "Very well, but I have a brother hidden here in a bush, and I must take him with me.

girl picked up the lamb, and then they all went to the padişah's palace, where the girl and the padişah's son were soon married.<sup>3</sup>

The days passed along swiftly. After some time, the wife of the prince and her lamb brother went to the stream to wash clothes.<sup>4</sup> While they were there, however, a gypsy<sup>5</sup> girl came along and pushed the wife of the padişah's son into the stream. The gypsy girl then went to the palace and pretended that she was the prince's wife. But she was very

<sup>3</sup> There is obviously a great amount of truncating here. Folktale marriages, especially those of princes, are not passed over so quickly.

<sup>4</sup> The peasant narrator and the peasant audience see no incongruity in having the daughter-in-law of a ruler do the laundry along a stream bank.

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ugly, and when the prince saw her he was shocked. He asked, "What has happened to you to make you so ugly?"<sup>5</sup>

She answered, "My dear husband, I did all of the laundry under the hot sun, and that is what made me so ugly."

she added, "It is time now that we kill this lamb and eat its flesh

Very confused by this remark, the son of the padişah said, "But, my dear, you told us that this lamb was your brother. Now you are suggesting to me that we kill the

How can you say such a thing?" From that time onward, the prince began to grow more and more suspicious of the girl's behavior.

Meanwhile the lamb ran away in order to search for his sister. He finally found her inside a fish.<sup>6</sup> After he had

<sup>5</sup> The narrator has in this tale scrambled unbelievably one of the world's best-known stories, that known as "The Substitute Bride." The poplar-tree episode was the scene in which the gypsy girl ordinarily dispossesses and replaces the true bride. It was, according to the gypsy girl, her long wait in the poplar tree and not the laundering episode that damaged her beauty. Although several ingredients of "The Substitute Bride" are present in this tale, they are confused, distorted, and misapplied!

<sup>6</sup> Just how and why the brother is a lamb has never been explained. How he, in lamb form, could just simply find his sister inside a fish is not in any way explained, either. In some tales sisters are pushed into streams and swallowed by fish. Quite often the brother is the rescuer. But there is usually some explanation of how this is all accomplished. Dîlfülöz Yolcu, both here and elsewhere, more often sketchily outlines a story than she tells it!

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taken her back to the palace, the two of them told the son of the padişah about the treachery of the gypsy girl

When the son of the padişah learned the truth, he asked the gypsy girl, "Would you prefer to have forty mules or forty meat cleavers?"<sup>7</sup> *fourteen mules*

"I should prefer forty mules

*Heard this* So they tied her to the tails of forty mules, and then they beat the mules. As the animals ran away, they dashed the girl against rocks until she was killed.

The padişah's son and his true wife then ate and drank and had their wishes fulfilled.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> This is a traditional folktale choice of one's manner of execution. Ordinarily, however, when the condemned person chooses the mules (or horses), he or she adds, "Cleavers are of no use to me, but I might be able to ride home on one of the mules."

<sup>8</sup> The terminal formula here is not just an announcement that "they" had their wishes fulfilled but also the hope that we (narrator and audience) will also have our wishes fulfilled.