

Story 2047 (Transcribed from
Atatürk İlkokulu tape.)

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town of Bursa
Province

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The Family of Fools

Once there was and once there wasn't, when the sieve was in the straw,¹ there was a family of seven fools.² There was a girl in that family who had silver hair, golden teeth, and black eyebrows. One day that girl was milking a cow on the roof of the cow shed. She accidentally tipped over the milk pail and spilled all of the milk onto the ground below. She feared that the cow would reveal what had happened to the milk, and so the girl gave the cow all of her gold to prevent it from telling others what had occurred.

¹Reference to a sieve in the straw is frequently made in tekerlemes, comic formulae with which Turkish folktales are sometimes opened. It is an absurd reversal of an element in the traditional method of threshing. After grain-laden sheaves have been chopped into small pieces, the whole mass is placed in large-mesh sieves. The grain and ground straw pass through the sieves, but longer pieces of straw with kernels of grain still attached do not pass through. These are recovered from the sieves for further threshing, usually by hand. Thus, the straw is often in the sieve, but the sieve is never in the straw.

²Although there are several foolish people in this tale, only four members of the titular family appear in the action

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Shortly after that, the girl's mother climbed up to roof of the cow shed to get some milk. The girl told her mother what had happened. After the mother had heard this account, she too gave the cow all the money she had in order to keep it from talking about the spilled milk. The girl's father then came to the cow shed, and he too paid the cow to remain silent about the lost milk.

But when the girl's older brother learned about the loss of the milk and about the three bribes given to the cow to keep it silent, he was so ashamed of his family that he decided to leave home. He ran away, and he kept running until he reached another village. What do you suppose he saw when he entered that village? He saw a grandmotherly woman trying to carry sunshine into her house in a sieve. The boy asked, "What are you doing, grandmother?"

The old woman answered, "Son, there is no sunshine in my house except what I carry there." Hearing that, the boy took a mattock and knocked a hole in one wall of her house. As a result, the building was filled with sunshine. The old woman thanked the boy and patted his back.

The young man then continued his travels. After

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he had walked a long way, he came upon a crowd of people. They were all concerned about a bride's entry into the home of the prospective bridegroom. The bride was too tall to ride through the gate of the courtyard. The man who would be the father-in-law of the bride suggested that the top of her head be cut off to reduce her height. Others thought that they should shorten the legs of the horse she was riding. But when the young traveler heard these suggestions, he said, "Stop! Stop! Neither of these ideas should be used. Simply have the bride bow her head as she passes through the gate." When the people heard the young man's solution to their problem, they all agreed that he was a very intelligent person. They also agreed that he should be the one to marry the bride rather than the man to whom she had been engaged. The wedding of the young traveler and the tall bride lasted for forty days and forty nights.

After they had lived together for awhile, the young husband decided to seek some kind of work to support them. He boarded a ship to a certain city where he thought he could find a job.

After the young man had not returned for some time, the bride and her sister became concerned about his welfare

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They decided to search for him. Carrying water bucket by bucket, they made a pool in their garden. They placed a small boat on that pool, and in that boat they began to search for the missing young man. By coincidence the boy was on his way home at that very time. As the women saw him approaching, they said, "Here he is! We have found him!"

When the young man heard what they said and saw what they had been doing, he asked himself, "Must I live all my life with fools and unstable people?" Then he broke down and laughed and laughed until he choked with laughter.