

Story 1371 (1989 Tape 3)

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not given/

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Divinely Granted Crow Child Transformed

Star 1/18

There were once a man and his wife who had long been unable to have any children. They prayed and prayed for a child, and finally they said in their prayers, "O Allah, please give us a child, even if that child has the face of a crow!" Soon after that Allah granted their wish. The woman became pregnant, but when the child was delivered, it did indeed look like a crow. The parents were shocked at having a crow for a daughter, but because they had actually prayed for such a child, they had no choice but to bear the situation. They made a special room in their house and placed straw in it for the crow girl to sleep upon.

Child, unnatural

When the girl was several years old, the parents went one day to visit some friends. After they had gone girl changed into a normal human girl and came out of her room. She washed and dried all the dirty clothes of family. Then she ironed them and placed them in their proper closets.

Transformation
All
98, 99

But while the crow girl was doing all of this work, she was being secretly observed through a window by the son of a

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local bey.¹ He fell in love with this girl who, in her human form, was really very beautiful. Returning home, he said to his mother, "Mother, I wish to marry the girl who lives at such and such a house. Please go and ask her family to give me the girl as my bride."

His mother answered, "Son, there is no girl who lives in that house. Only a man, a woman, and a crow live in that house!" But the son kept insisting that a beautiful girl lived there. He continued to insist on that so long that his mother finally agreed to do as he had asked

The mother went to the home of the crow girl and asked for her hand. But the girl's parents said, "You must surely know that our daughter is a crow. Do you mean that you still want her as your daughter-in-law? If so, then we are willing to give her to your son."

The bey and his wife had a long and very expensive wedding celebration held for the marriage of their son. When the wedding was completed and the bride was led to the nuptial chamber, she was transformed from a crowlike

¹In Ottoman and earlier times a bey was an aristocrat and often a landowner. He was roughly equivalent to an English baron or lord. There is no longer such a title, but the word bey is still used, now as merely a term of respect. When used as such, it usually follows a man's first name: Ahmet Bey or Mehmet Bey.

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see the son
compare to
that a man

creature to a beautiful girl, [as beautiful as the fifteenth of the moon.²

One day the mother of the bridegroom was in the kitchen making katmer.³ When her son observed this, he went to his section of the house and spoke to his wife, saying, "I want you to go to the kitchen and watch the way my mother makes katmer so that in the future you can make katmer for me.

"I cannot go near your mother in my present form," said his wife. "I shall have to go in my crow form." Having said that, the girl changed into her crow form and went to the kitchen.

When the woman saw the girl enter the kitchen, she became angry, as she had been several times before, at having to have such an ugly daughter-in-law. Picking up a

²Throughout the Moslem Middle East the moon is greatly admired as a symbol of beauty. Both oral and written literature testify to this repeatedly. To compare any woman's beauty to that of the moon is to flatter the female. Although governments may use the Western Gregorian calendar, the Islamic community uses the older lunar calendar. On that lunar calendar the moon is full at the middle of the month, on the 14th and 15th days, and it is then that it is considered to be at its most beautiful phase. Traditionally Moslem men have admired plump women more than slender women, and so there is a parallel between women at their most beautiful and the moon at its most beautiful. The simile used by the narrator here is common in Turkish lore.

³A flaky and very tasty pastry.

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metal dough-pan scraper,⁴ she struck the crow girl with this implement. When the girl fled back immediately to her room, her husband asked, "What happened?"

His wife answered, "Your mother hit me with a metal dough-pan scraper."

On another day the boy's mother decided to attend a wedding. The son of the bey insisted that his wife also go to that wedding, but this time he wanted her to go in her human form. The girl responded, "I shall go in human form if you will promise not to destroy my crow covering during my absence." After the son of the bey had given her that promise, the girl went to the wedding celebration as a girl as beautiful as the fifteenth of the moon.

Those attending the celebration observed the girl and were astonished at her beauty. The girl kissed her mother-in-law's hands. The older woman, not recognizing the girl as her daughter-in-law, asked, "Where do you come from, daughter?"

The girl answered, "Oh, I come from a small village named Ekseran." As soon as she could do so after that, the

⁴The narrator uses what is apparently a dialect word, ekseran, for this kind of scraper.

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girl left the wedding party and went home.

Two or three days later the mother-in-law again set to work in the kitchen to make another batch of katmer. When the crow girl went to the kitchen to watch how she made the katmer, the mother-in-law struck her with a rolling pin and said, "Oh, cursed girl! Go and take a look at the many lovely daughters-in-law in this land! Why did Allah give me such an ugly daughter-in-law? It must be my fate!"

Later that week the mother-in-law attended another wedding celebration, and again the girl followed her there in her beautiful human form. She wore black this time. Again, the mother-in-law did not recognize her, and she asked, "Pretty girl, where do you come from?"

The girl answered, "Oh, I am from a small village called Rolling Pin."

In the meantime, the son of the bey decided to burn his wife's crow covering, for he thought that by doing so he could keep her permanently in her beautiful human form. But he did not know how burning the crow covering would affect the life of his wife.

as soon as the crow covering began to burn, the girl began to be badly affected. She grew pale and weak,

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and she knew at once what was causing her discomfort. She also knew that it was too late to save the crow covering. Rushing home, she said, "Why did you do this? You promised me that you wouldn't!"

The poor boy did not know that burning the crow covering would affect his wife so adversely. He intended only to keep her in human form, but now he learned that she could not remain in that form.

As the girl's life was weakening, and as her husband was trying to revive her, the bey's wife arrived home. "What is going on here?" she asked.

The son of the bey answered, "This is your daughter-in-law, the person whom you twice injured with your harsh treatment!" Even as he was saying this, the girl turned into a bird and flew away.