

Story 1194 (1990 Tape 9)

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To Each His Own Life Style

TEK
Once there was and once there was not, when the camel was a town crier and the flea was a barber,¹ there was a great padişah who spent much of his spare time hunting. He not only liked hunting but he also liked to organize large hunting expeditions. 80,82

Beauty on
key factor
Law at
first sight
80
One day while they were hunting, he and his companions came upon a gypsy tent from which emerged a strikingly beautiful gypsy girl. The padişah took a look at that girl and at once fell in love with her. He ordered some of his retainers, "Take this gypsy girl to my palace at once. Have her bathed and dressed in appropriate clothes, for I intend to marry her."

The people at the palace bathed her in water scented with perfume. After she had been cleaned and fittingly clothed, looked like a magnificent lady. As soon as the padişah returned from his hunting trip, he had a wedding celebration prepared

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.

At the end of the celebration, he and the gypsy girl were married.

The marriage was very satisfactory to the padişah except for one thing, and that was the fact that his wife always ate her meals alone. Although he repeatedly invited her to dine with him, she always declined his invitation. This puzzled ruler, and he often asked himself, "Why is it that this new wife does not join me at mealtime?" He decided to observe her secretly during one of her meals in order to see what her eating habits were.

When the girl's meal was brought to her room, she ordered the servants to place it on the table and then leave. After they had gone, she took the food and distributed it to various corners of the place. After she had done that, she took a plate and returned to the places where the food had been placed and begged for her meal. Going to one corner, she pleaded, "For the love of Allah, will you give me a dish of meat to eat?" At another corner she asked, "For the love of Allah, will you give me some bread to eat?" After she had filled her plate in this manner, she returned with it to her table and ate her meal.

When the padişah observed all of this, he was both amazed and annoyed. He said to himself, "It would probably be better for her to live in the fashion to which she has been accustomed all of her life. We brought her to the palace and made her a princess, but she cannot adjust to this way of living. She must

Begging

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be sent back to her gypsy tent." And he then gave orders that she be banished from the palace.

This same padişah had a sister who was an unusual girl, for she enjoyed hunting fully as much as her brother did. One day while she was a member of the padişah's hunting party, she saw a very handsome shepherd⁸²⁻⁸³ and she fell in love with him. He was an Albanian^{82 83}. She sent word back to the palace to her servants ordering them to make preparations for her wedding, and after the hunting expedition had ended, she did in fact marry this Albanian shepherd

The newlyweds got along well together except on rainy days, when the husband always became very melancholy. As soon as it would rain even a small amount, he would begin to complain and moan, "Oh, for the pleasures of a shepherd's life!" He said this once; he said this five times; he continued to say it hours.

Annoyed by this, the padişah's sister finally asked him "What do you mean when you speak of the pleasures of a shepherd's life?"

"Oh, alas! I mean a herd of sheep, a felt coat,² and a

²Known as a kepenek, a shepherd's cloak is made of felt so repeatedly fullered that it may be as much as a half inch thick. This very heavy wrap is so thick and windproof that it serves as both coat and tent. A shepherd can lie on the ground and sleep comfortably in his kepenek even during snow flurries.

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Kaval flute.³ Give a shepherd those things and he has all of the pleasure he wants."

The padişah's sister was not at all sympathetic with husband's problem. Instead, she was very annoyed at him herself she said, "This shepherd wants to live the way he is accustomed to live. He is not pleased to be living here in a fine palace. Well, if that is the way he feels, then open the doors and let him go and live as he pleases." Soon after that she had him banished from the palace.

Thus the padişah was unable to keep the woman he loved and married, and his sister could not keep the man she loved and married. They were accustomed to living in a palace, and they remained there. The gypsy girl and the Albanian shepherd were not accustomed to living in a palace, and so they both returned to their original ways of living.

³Turkish shepherds play the kaval, a fipple flute similar to a recorder. This is a handmade folk instrument. The shepherd plays this not only for his own pleasure but also to give either soothing comfort or directions to his flock. Certain tunes are used to prompt the sheep to behave as the shepherd wishes them to behave. A given tune may cause the sheep to gather closely around him. Another tune may urge them to drink their fill when they are taken to a watering place. It is widely believed in rural Turkey that livestock will not drink enough water unless their drinking is accompanied by the appropriate tune.