

Story 1177 (1976 Tape 4)

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Location: Yakacık village, Söğüt
kaza, Bilecik Province

Date: August 1976

Goat Girl

Once there was and once there was not a woman who had been married for fifteen years but still had no children. As went on, she grew more and more frustrated by this situation. One day in her prayers she said, "This has gone on long enough! I want to become pregnant regardless of the kind of child I might have. I shouldn't care if it were a goat or an antelope!"

Not long after this that woman did in fact become pregnant.

When her child was delivered, it was discovered to be a very unusual child, for it was a female goat. When this goat child had grown old enough to help with the housework, she was signed to do the family laundry each week. On wash-day the girl hung a cauldron on one horn and the dirty clothes on her other horn, and then she proceeded to the brook.

When she arrived there, however, she would remove her goatskin and become an unusually beautiful girl. As she did the family wash, she also cleaned her goatskin. When she had finished doing the laundry, she would put her goatskin back on and return to her home. One day as she was washing the clothes and her goatskin, this girl was observed by the son of the bey.

Hidden behind a clump of trees, this young man saw her doing her work, and he also saw how beautiful she was

When the son of the bey arrived back home that day, he said to his mother, "Go and ask such and such a woman for the hand of her daughter for me."

Upset by this request, his mother said, "Son, that woman's daughter is a goat! How could you possibly marry a goat?"

"I don't care what she is! I want that daughter," insisted her son.

The bey's wife, accompanied by several other women, went to the girl's home and asked for her hand in marriage. They succeeded in making the necessary arrangements, and after a short while the son of the bey and the goat girl were married. Whenever her husband was at home with her, the bride removed her goatskin and walked about in their quarters in the form of a beautiful girl. But when he was away from home, she always wore her goatskin, and that was the only way the other members of the family saw her.

One day the goat girl walked into the kitchen where her mother-in-law and her sister-in-law were rolling very thin sheets of dough. When they saw the goat girl there, they struck her with their rolling pins and drove her out of the room.

At that time there was a lengthy wedding ceremony¹ going on in one of the houses of that village. Leaving the goat girl at home eating chickpeas and smelling of goat excrement, the other women of the bey's household went to join the wedding festivities. Removing her goatskin, the goat girl washed dressed carefully, and then proceeded to the same wedding. There she danced, laughed with the other women, and was the center of much attention. "Who is that beautiful girl?" asked several of the guests

Not recognizing the girl, her own mother-in-law asked her, "Where are you from?"

"I am from such and such a village," she replied.

On the following evening the wife of the son of the bey again drew the attention and won the praise of many guests at the wedding celebration. Again her mother-in-law observed this but failed to recognize the beauty as the goat girl. When mother-in-law returned home that night, she said to her son, "Oh, you should have seen what a beautiful girl attended the wedding celebrations today! As the son of a wealthy bey, you should be married to such a girl instead of to a goat!"

¹Wedding celebrations may continue for several days in a village, though hardly for the forty days and forty nights often claimed in folktales.

"That is all very well, Mother, but let the goat girl remain my bride."

The next evening the whole family attended the wedding, including the son of the bey and his wife in her goat form. The mother-in-law was both mortified and angry when the goat girl befouled the festivities by leaving goat dung on the floor.

When they returned home from the wedding activities, the son of the bey immediately began to pull off his wife's goatskin. Sensing his real intention, the girl refused to allow him to do this. "You want to take my goatskin and burn it. Don't do it, for if you do, it will bring down a curse upon you!"²

"I shall burn it anyway! My mother saw you in your human form at the wedding yesterday and the day before, and she admired you greatly. She did not recognize you, for all she knows about is your goat form. I want her to like you, and therefore I shall burn the goatskin." And that is what he did.

When his mother and sister reached home shortly after this, they were amazed. They asked, "Where is the goat? You have brought here that beautiful girl whom we saw at the wedding!"

²In such tales of transformation--the Swan Maiden story may well be the best known--the animal girl (swan, deer, goat) is often protective of her animal skin even after she has ceased to wear it. The curse involved in such a tale usually derives from the violation of a taboo. Usually the animal girl agrees to marry a mortal if the mortal will take an oath never to

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"Mother, that girl and the goat were really the same person. The girl wore a goat costume here in the house until now. But we have just burned that costume."

When the mother heard this, she rushed to the bride of her household, and the two women embraced. Now they all live together happily.

reveal her origin. When he does violate his oath, thus breaking a taboo, the wife finds her hidden animal skin, dons it to return to her original form, and disappears. As she leaves, she may kill several members of the family. Whether or not there is such violence involved, the husband's life is ruined--a curse, in a sense, for having broken his promise and violated a taboo.