

Story 1701 (1977 Tapes 1-4) Narrator: Behçet Mahir, 68

Location: Erzurum, capital  
city of Erzurum  
Province

Date: May 21-22, 1977

Ferhat and Şirin<sup>1</sup>

Yes, I do intend to tell a story about the lives of Şirin and Ferhat. But before telling that story, as I have been doing in the coffeehouses of Erzurum for forty-three years, I should like to recite some verses and make some comments I think are appropriate

Walk only along the road of truth,

The only route that's always safe.

Though sweat may drench my other parts,

May not this empty head be good?

<sup>1</sup>This is one of the best-known Middle Eastern love stories. It survives in several literary versions as well as in several folk versions. It sometimes impinges upon history by giving as a competitor of Ferhat for the love of Şirin the late Sassanian (early 7th century) ruler Khosrow II (sometimes referred to as Khosrow Parviz). "The Romance of Khosrow Parviz and Şirin" appears in the Shahnameh (The Book of Kings) by the Persian poet Ferdowsi (Ferdowsi), who lived between c.950 and 1020. Another of the classic literary versions, Khosrow and Şirin, was written by the Persian poet Nizami (1141-1203). Perhaps the best Turkish literary version, Ferhat and Şirin, was composed by the fifteenth-century Ali Şir Nevai. In the Middle East the written and oral traditions are often mutually interdependent, and so there is no "original" or "correct" text for works that have been performed as long as Ferhat and Şirin has. See Gibb, E.J.W. A History of Ottoman Poetry, I, 321 ff. In their Oral Epics of Central Asia (pp. 283-284), Chadwick and Zhirmunsky suggest that this tale is of Özbek origin.

## Story 1701

Patience is a brave man's strength  
Though tears may flow from both my eyes,  
My patience makes my work succeed.  
May not this empty head house patience?

What I have suffered is quite enough;  
The pains of love begin and end.  
Though others may hold one's hand for a while,  
This empty head may know no sleep.

Behçet Mahir speaks these words,  
Knowing the truth is his to tell.  
Though driven mad by pains of love,  
May not this empty head be good?

(Where are those who lived before our time? Where are they who governed countries, they who ruled the world? It may seem that only their names remain, but the results of their works and deeds also remain. Those heroes who went to war and died for their country made sacrifices which still affect us. Let us not forget that. Let us remember such earlier people. Although we know that death is the end of mortal life, it is not the end of the great achievements of heroes, kings, and poets, for their work

Story 1701

lives on. Let us study their work and then give similar services ourselves. Work, sons of Turks! Work for all

is part of your tradition. This country is yours; that mother is yours; that father is yours; this government is yours; this land is yours. Work for all these things with all your heart! Love all these things with all your heart!)<sup>2</sup>

In the section of Iran known as Kīraz<sup>3</sup> there was once a sultana named Zaba.<sup>4</sup> Sultana Zaba had a very beautiful and charming younger sister named Şirin, a girl whom the sultana had never allowed out of her sight for a moment.

<sup>2</sup>Both in his poetry and in his prose Behçet Mahir retained traces of the bardic tradition. He frequently lectured, chided, criticized, or exhorted his listeners. All of his longer tales have didactic and/or moralistic passages. When these interpolated passages have little or no real bearing on the story line, we have placed them within parentheses.

<sup>3</sup>Possibly Kwarzm or Kwarazam or Khorezm. This is in Central Asia along the Amu Darya (Oxus River). In the 1920s there was a Khorezm SSR, but it was later divided between the Özbek SSR and the Türkmen SSR (now Özbekistan and Türkmenistan respectively). Though some distance now from Iran, it was once part of the Persian Empire. Shelley in his poem "Alastor" makes passing reference to the "Chorasmian shore."

<sup>4</sup>It is not always clear whether the narrator says Zaba or Saba. Most often, however, it is Zaba.

Story 1701

Wherever Sultana Zaba went, Şirin was with her. One day sultana called her viziers into her presence and said to them, "I love my sister, Şirin, very much. I should to find an architect to build a suitable palace for The palace must be as beautiful and unique as she is.

"You know best about such things, my shah," said one of the viziers.

Sultana Zaba said, "I shall draw up the plans for the kind of palace I want built. Send messages to all the great architects in the four corners of the world.

them come here to examine my plans and see if any one of them can build for Şirin the kind of palace I want."

(Turkish people should know that a great many fine architects were reared in our own country and that these architects created many excellent artistic structures.

Sinan<sup>5</sup> was especially talented. He was born with a very clever brain and an innate ability to carry on his work.

His works are considered by all to be among our finest

<sup>5</sup>Sinan (1489-1578?) is often regarded as the greatest of Islamic builders. Although he worked under three sultans, his greatest work was accomplished during the reign of Süleyman the Magnificent. Among his most distinguished achievements are two great mosques in İstanbul and one in Edirne.



## Story

pieces of antique art. Here is a good example of what I was speaking about earlier. Even though Sinan and other great architects have been gone for a long while, their works---built with honesty and sincerity--live on. We should all strive for perfection the way they did. Turkish mothers did not give birth to only one architect named Sinan. They gave birth to many Sinans. Let us use our minds. Let us not at the end lie down without having achieved something. Let us not waste our lives! This country belongs to you, and therefore you should work for it!

In response to Sultana Zaba's invitation, architects from all over the world came to her palace. When they had all gathered there, she addressed them, saying, "Welcome, O architects! I want you to consider building, according to the drawings I have made, a very special palace for my sister, Şirin. First examine closely the plans I have made." Zaba was a woman, but she was a very intelligent person. She had put on her drawing this note: "This palace to be built for my sister, Şirin, must be able to change its interior color to seven different hues within the span of twenty-four hours, and it must be 366 storeys high. That is the kind of palace I want for Şirin

Story 1701

When the architects had read that note, they all said that they could build a palace of 366 storeys but they could not build one which would have its interior change to seven different colors all in the same day. They said, "There is no one in the whole world who could build a palace capable of having its color changed so rapidly."

Sultana Zaba answered, "Very well. I hope that you have a safe journey home, and I wish you all good

The visiting architects then departed to their own countries, and there were no other famous architects anywhere else in the world. Still wishing to find someone who could build the kind of palace she had planned, Sultana Zaba asked her viziers, "Are you sure that there are no great architects in any country who did not come here to see me?"

One of the viziers answered, "No, there are no more great architects in other countries, but there is a great architect here in your own country who might be able to build the kind of palace you want. His name is Besat."

Pleased to hear this, Sultana Zaba said, "Then call Architect Besat. Have him come here to my palace to talk with me about this." A message was sent at once to Besat ordering him to come to the palace.

Story 1701

(There are two things with which you should avoid interfering. What are they? One is the work of Allah, and the other is the work of the government. You should not interfere with the work of Allah, for He knows best. Don't interfere with the work of the government, but, instead, work to earn your daily bread and to benefit your country. Try to make yourself a good man, harming no one but helping others. Do not attempt to hide your faults or bury them in deep secrecy.)

Going to the palace and being admitted into the presence of Sultana Zaba, Architect Besat said, "Yes, my shah? I have been told that you wish to see me."

"Are you the architect named Besat?"

"Yes, I

"Do you live in this country?" asked Zaba

"Yes, my shah."

"Then why did you not come to my palace before? I called here architects from all four corners of the world. Why didn't you respond to that call?"

Upon hearing these words, Architect Besat smiled and said, "O my sultana, you were searching outside your country to find a good architect. There is no reason why you

Story 1701

should not look abroad, but why did you not first look at home, inside your own country?"

(Honorable gentlemen,<sup>6</sup> think about these words of Architect Besat. They are more meaningful than they might at first seem. Why shouldn't a ruler seek first in her own country for what she wants? And, likewise, why shouldn't a person first seek within himself for the information he needs? You can find the whole universe, everything that exists, within yourself. Be well aware that if we do not carry our own light before us in our own hands, we shall be unable to proceed along a dark road. Light the way forward for yourself, and carry the source of that beam in your own hands. You cannot benefit from the light of lamps that shine behind your back. No matter how valuable your father's inheritance may be, it cannot show the way to something new. Hear the point that is being made Shine your light ahead and know that the source of that light is within yourself! <sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup>Behçet Mahir was a coffeehouse raconteur. In coffeehouses outside the major cities of Turkey the clientele is almost always exclusively male. Thus Behçet Mahir always addressed his audiences as "gentlemen."

<sup>7</sup>The folk wisdom of Behçet Mahir is often refreshing and sometimes startling. The subjective idealism of this passage is hardly consistent with the orthodox Islam that he usually espouses.

Story 1701

Sultana Zaba thought for a moment about Architect Besat's answer. She suddenly realized that she had never before heard that kind of valuable observation from those around her. It was full of good sense and meaning. She said, "Yes, Architect Besat, you have spoken the truth. I called architects from the four corners of the world without knowing that the one I really sought was right under my very nose!" Then saying, "Please overlook what I have done in the past," she placed her plan for a palace before him. "Can you build this kind of palace?"

Architect Besat examined very carefully Sultana Zaba's plan. Then smiling, he said, "Yes, I can build it with pleasure, but I have two conditions for doing so."

"Before we talk about your conditions, do you understand that the color of the interior of the new palace must be changeable to seven different hues within twenty-four hours?"

"Yes," said Architect Besat. "The palace interior will be able to change to seven different colors within any period of twenty-four hours. But, as I said, I have two conditions that must be agreed to before I undertake this assignment."

"Very well," said Sultana Zaba. "What are those

Story 1701  
conditions?"

"First, you must not come near the construction or send any representative of yourself near it until it has been completed. Second, no one is to tell me how I should proceed in building this palace, that I should put this stone over there or that stone over here. No one should say anything to me about the palace until after I deliver the key for it into your hands. If you like the completed palace, we shall both be satisfied; if you do not like it, then I agree that you may turn me over to the executioners. This palace will turn out to be even more magnificent than you ever expected it could be." Sultana Zaba accepted his conditions

Architect Besat had only one child in this narrow world, and that child was a son named Ferhat. He was now a fully grown young man, but up to this time neither Ferhat nor Şirin had seen the other. Architect Besat was teaching Ferhat his own profession, and by the time that our story starts, the son was almost as good an architect as the father. Many a master craftsman has been surpassed by his apprentice. (I know this from my own experience. Once I was a master, but now I have fallen out of favor

Story 1701

and I am more like an apprentice. That kind of thing has happened before, and it still happens. Intelligence does

depend upon age but upon one's head. That is why I keep saying, "Work, sons of Turks! Work! Work for your country!") Besat ordered Ferhat to take several workers and begin preparing a foundation for the new palace

(In our time science has become very advanced. It seems that science has a solution for almost every prob-

It has produced great advantages for all of us. Appreciate this, good gentlemen! Appreciate it! Modern ground transportation can easily take you to visit your friends, and modern air transportation can take you to any corner of this country in a breath's time. Work, sons of Turks! Continue to improve your country. Don't say "What can one person do?" Your enemies observe you constantly, and in an age like ours, you should be stronger than your enemies. If they attack from the air, you can protect yourself only if you have weapons equal to theirs. That is one of the reasons that I keep repeating, "Work, sons of Turks! Work for your government and work for your country!" I tell stories about those people of the past who worked industriously and honestly.)

## Story

Architect Besat and his son, Ferhat, began work on the palace, and Ferhat was preparing the foundation. Architect Besat had insisted upon a condition before undertaking the construction of the palace. He had said to Sultana Zaba, "You must never interfere with my work or comment upon the construction until I deliver the key to the palace into your hand."

(I should like to pause here in order to talk about the importance of such a condition. There was once a rich man who began building a house for himself and for his family. But everyone who came along interfered with his work. Everybody gave him advice. One person would say, "Uncle, this window should be that way." Another would say, "Uncle, this door should be wider." Some gave him useful advice and some gave him useless advice. If you accept everybody's advice and build your home accordingly, it will be fit for only cats to live in. If you listen to everyone's words, people can pull you in every direction. Everyone's advice offers some solution to your problem, but is this the solution that you are seeking? Use your own head. Build with your own ideas, your own strengths. Or, if you prefer, have professionals build your house. If



## Story 1701

you decide to do that, then you yourself should not interfere. If you do interfere, then once again the work will not be done properly.)

Architect Besat and his son, Ferhat, were working on the new palace for Şirin. Days passed, weeks slipped away, whole months disappeared, and the structure grew and grew. You may say, "Your story will turn to dust on the tongue, and all years will become nights before you finish." Finally Architect Besat, Ferhat, and their many helpers were able, by working together, to complete the outside of the structure, but they still had a great amount of very hard and very precise work to do inside it.

To fulfill the requirement that the interior of the palace would change in color seven times during a day, Architect Besat put different colors of glass in the windows that would face the sunlight at different times of the day. Then he placed mirrors inside each of these windows to reflect the colored light throughout the interior of the palace. This was what Sultana Zaba wanted. This was what she meant when she requested that the interior of the palace would have different colors at seven different times during the day.

## Story

(The work of Architect Besat can teach us much. It shows us that we are not stationary any more than is the earth, which is turning all the time. We should not say that we want to stay forever the same, that we never wish to change. There is a great power that rotates the earth and alters the universe. We should all observe closely where the sun rises and where the sun sets. All such facts are before our eyes if we will but look at them. Architect Besat could build a palace with changing interior colors because he had observed the changing positions of the sun. The sun's positions differed, the colors in the palace differed, and people differ too. Do all people have the same height? No! Do they all have similar faces? No! Are flowers all the same? Do they all have the same color? No! Do they all have the same scent? No! Great Allah created them different from each other. Let us recognize the power of great Allah.

Yes, the exterior of the palace was almost finished, and the craftsmen were beginning to work on the interior of the building. The construction had gone far enough so that Sultana Zaba was becoming impatient to examine the new palace. Many of the people of her country were open-mouthed with amazement at what they could see of the palace.

Story 1701

They said to everyone they met, "What a work of art! its sides are different from each other! Different lights shine at different times of day from its windows!"

Architect Besat and Ferhat, his son, were by then carving designs into the marble. Architect Besat was working on the right side, and Ferhat was working on the left. They were chiseling elegant designs into the stone. But while this was going on, Sultana Zaba, her sister, and her viziers could not control their impatience to see the palace. The sultana finally sent a message to Architect Besat that they were coming to visit the palace. When Architect Besat received her message, he said to his son, Ferhat, "Be very careful with the carving I am about to ask you to do next, my son. Sultana Zaba is coming here. When she enters this room where we are now working, we shall carve the words Welcome, our Sultana. She will read those words, and her viziers will read those words. Instead of saying, 'Welcome!' with our tongues, we shall say it with our chisels."

Ferhat nodded and said, "Yes, Father, I shall be glad to do that."

When Sultana Zaba entered the room with her sister

## Story 1701

and her viziers, she opened her mouth to say, "Hello. But before she could utter that single word, "Welcome our sultana" appeared on the wall. When Sultana Zaba saw this, she was astonished. She said to her viziers, "What a great craftsman! What a great artist! He wrote his welcome to me on stone before I could utter a word!" viziers were equally amazed. When coffee was brought to the sultana, the words Hearty appetite!<sup>8</sup> appeared on the wall before she could take even a sip of the beverage. When Sultana Zaba and the viziers saw this second expression appear on the wall, they understood at last how able was the ability of these architects. The exterior and the interior of the palace were each more beautiful than the other.<sup>9</sup>

While Sultana Zaba was admiring the palace, Ferhat saw her sister, Şirin, standing beside her, and he immediately fell passionately in love with this girl. His body

<sup>8</sup>The Turkish expression Afiyet olsun may mean Hearty appetite or May you enjoy it or Good health to you. It is a greeting that accompanies the gift of food of any kind.

<sup>9</sup>This is a common paradoxical construction in Turkish folktales. Several ATON tales include such statements as this: "There were twelve princesses, each more beautiful than all the rest." It is a device used for emphasis.

Story 1701

was at once shaken with the great pain of love, an incomparable pain.

(The pain of love is not like any other pain. Because of the pain of love, many brave young men have sacrificed their wealth, their flesh, and even their lives. The only treatment, the only cure for pain of love is the possession of the loved one. There is no doctor in the whole world with any other medicine to cure the pain of love.

The love pain rises like a rushing flood. A man or woman who suffers such pain views the beloved as the most important thing in the whole world. The only cure is the consummation of love. There is a proverb which says, attain one's love, even Baghdad is not too far to go."

He who yearns for the beloved will sacrifice everything for her. They say that love is blind. It is also a consuming disease which will take your sleep, your appetite, your money, your intelligence, and even your wisdom. That is the way it is. They say, "If a miserable owl could enjoy the world, it would not fall into a filthy place. If the moth did not love the fire, that unfortunate creature would not circle round it and endanger its life. The fire is the moth's beloved. It turns and turns around the

## Story 1701

fire until it falls into its flames. The rose and the nightingale fall in love with each other. Throughout its life the nightingale sings to the rose. He cannot survive his love for the rose, and he flies against her thorns and wounds himself fatally. We cannot help falling in love, and once we have fallen, there is no way by which we can extricate ourselves from it.)

Ferhat burned with love of Şirin. Even while he still held the chisel in his hand, the love of Şirin passed through Ferhat with a flash. Even while he stood there, he was smitten by the pain of love. The love of Şirin struck Ferhat without warning and caught him without a weapon for defense. Architect Besat noticed that some strong emotion had gripped his son, Ferhat.

let us turn now to Şirin. When her gaze first fell upon Ferhat, a very handsome man, she fell in love instantly and collapsed in the arms of Sultana Zaba. It was almost as if arrows had flown from the chests of Şirin and Ferhat and entered the chests of Ferhat and Şirin. These stories which I have taken from here and there often have hidden meanings. They sometimes give hints of the unknowable intentions of Allah. The arrows that flew

## Story 1701

from the chests of Ferhat and Şirin are like other arrows that connect people. We each have an arrow protruding from our heads. I cannot see the arrow on my head, and you cannot see the arrow on your head, but I may be able to explain what they are. Sometimes that arrow carries thought to another; sometimes it carries emotion to another.

In the old days there was a servant who had been working for an ağa<sup>10</sup> for seven years.<sup>11</sup> One day while the ağa and his wife were talking to each other, his wife said, "Will our good servant work for us all of his life? Let us do something for him to show our appreciation of his years of service. Let us have him married. He needs a

<sup>10</sup> An ağa (English, agha) is a rural landowner, sometimes wealthy, often powerful. The word does not indicate an official title but describes an economic status. They are often the principal employers of farm workers, and they are often viewed by their employees as harsh, driving, and abusive. The term ağa is also used in a complimentary way, as an honorific, for a distinguished or just older person than the one using the term. Thus an older brother is called ağa bey by his younger siblings. Ağa bey may be used as a deferential term to one older or more prestigious than the speaker. A taxi driver may refer to his passenger as ağa bey; a salesman speaking to a male customer may call him ağa bey.

<sup>11</sup> The interpolated story which begins here was also inserted into Behçet Mahir's rendition of a famous Middle Eastern tale about a champion of early Islamic times titled "Hamzai Sahip Kıran" (ATON No. 1700); No. 1700 was performed five months earlier in January 1977. Because what is here an interpolated story is also a folktale in its own right, we have given that story separate status in "The Sword of God and the Faithful Servant" (ATON No. 1581).

## Story 1701

family like everyone else. He will have children, and in later years he will pray for our welfare in the next world."

The ağa found his wife's suggestion very reasonable. He said, "Yes, my lady, you are right. Find a suitable girl for him, and I shall have preparations made for a wedding feast. This will earn us merit in the eyes of Allah

On the following morning the ağa's wife called the servant and said, "My son, get the carriage ready to take me and some of my friends down to the bank of such and such a stream. We shall spend part of the day there in that beautiful place enjoying ourselves.

The servant said, "Yes, my lady." He was a good man--honest and trustworthy. He not only worked for his master, but he also protected the ağa's wealth, his honor, even his life. (We should all work like that. We should all be conscientious. Today you may be concerned about your rights, but in claiming your rights, pay for what you get, and deserve the rights you claim. Don't be lazy, and don't deal in lies.

The servant prepared the carriage, and then he drove the ağa's wife and a few of her friends to the bank of the stream. There he pitched a tent for them. When the women



Story 1701

decided to go swimming in the stream, the ağa's wife took off her jewels. Instead of putting them in the box which she had brought for that purpose, she absentmindedly wrapped them in her handkerchief and placed them inside her blouse. As she left the tent to go swimming, the ağa's wife said to the servant, "My son, while we are gone, get the pilaf<sup>12</sup> and the meat dishes ready for lunch."

The servant answered with respect, "Yes, my lady."

As the woman was walking toward the stream, she stumbled over a rock, causing the handkerchief full of jewels to fall from her blouse onto the ground. She did not notice this. Soon afterwards a mule passed that way and defecated upon the handkerchief, covering it up completely.

After the women had swum for a while in the stream, they dried themselves, got dressed again, and returned to the tent. As the servant was getting ready to serve the pilaf and meat for lunch, she entered the tent to get her jewelry from the box. But when she looked inside the box she found there nothing at all. Calling the servant, she said, "Ahmet, my son, where is my jewelry?"

<sup>12</sup>pilaf (or pilav) is a rice dish which contains flecks of meat and sometimes a few pine nuts and/or currants. It is a staple of diet in much of Turkey.

## Story 1701

"I don't know, lady," Ahmet answered.

The woman was confused by this response. "Why don't you know?" she asked. "I put my jewels in my handkerchief, and I placed the handkerchief in this box before I left the tent to go swimming. But now I cannot find my jewels."

"Lady, I did not open the box," Ahmet said.

"If you didn't open the box, then who did?" she asked.

"Did anyone else come here?"

"No. No one came here and no one entered the tent while you were gone.

"Very well. Then who took my jewels? Did birds carry them off?" Because the jewelry was very valuable, the argument was becoming heated. The ağa's wife grew so upset that she lost her appetite and was unable to eat any of the lunch. As they were riding home afterwards, the ağa's wife said, "My son, don't tease me. If you hid my jewels, please give them back to me now."

"My lady, how can you say such a thing? You are my master's wife and you are my elder. Do you really think that I am capable of doing such a thing? I am working under your orders. How then could I play such a joke on you?"

## Story 1701

That evening when the ağa arrived home, his wife told the whole story from beginning to end. The ağa as well as his wife questioned the servant about this matter they both got the same answer from him every time. At they decided to take Ahmet to court. (I am telling you in this story about the arrow of the Great Power /Allah/.

(Courts in those days looked the same as today's courts. Before a witness said anything, the judge asked that person, "Do you swear to tell the truth and only the truth?" Be careful, sons of Turks! Think what honor really is! Think what conscience really is! Think carefully! If you have information concerning what the judge asks you about, give him that information. If you are going to refuse to take an oath to tell the truth, then do not act vain by offering to be a witness. You are alive now, but someday you will die. That is true of all of us. After you have gone from this world, you will not have the opportunity to tell the truth, to provide information for the sake of justice.)

The judge said to the servant, Ahmet, "Son, come closer to me. Tell me what you did with the jewelry of the ağa's wife."

Story 1701

The servant said, "Judge, Efendi,<sup>13</sup> I didn't take those jewels; I didn't touch those jewels; I didn't even see those jewels. I do not have any knowledge about what happened to them.

"All right, son. Will you take an oath that you didn't see them, didn't touch them, didn't take them?"

"Yes, I shall take such an oath," said Ahmet.

After the servant had taken ritual ablutions,<sup>14</sup> the judge said to him, "Come here near me, place your hand on this Koran, and take that oath.

When the servant approached the judge, he saw a sword hanging from the ceiling directly over the head of the ağa. He was the only person in the court who saw that sword. Neither the judge nor the attendants who stood around all four sides of him could see that sword. As the servant approached the judge, the sword was descending closer and closer to the ağa's head.

<sup>13</sup> A mild honorific, comparable to Sir, it usually follows a first name: Hasan Efendi. At one time it was used to show respect to distinguished people, but it has become so devaluated in the twentieth century that it now is used only for servants and children.

<sup>14</sup> It is customary in Islam to purify oneself with ritual ablutions before performing any religious act. This is of the greatest importance if that act involves any communication with the Deity such as saying prayers or taking an oath in the name of the Deity.

Story 1701

When the servant seemed to falter, the judge said to him, "Don't be afraid, my son. If you do not know anything about the jewelry, nothing will happen to you. Come closer to me and take your oath.

But the closer Ahmet got to the judge, the closer the sword above came to the head of the ağa. Ahmet thought, "If I take the oath, the sword will cut off the head of my master. They have accused me falsely of stealing the jewels, but if I swear before Allah that I did not steal those jewels, then my master will be killed by Divine Justice. The ağa will then be gone; his family will be broken up; and his home will change hands. I cannot let those things happen. He supported me while I worked for him so many years." Ahmet then said to the judge, "Judge, Efendi, I cannot take the oath. Please tell my ağa that I will work for him without wages until I have paid him for the jewels.

Going to the ağa, the judge said, "Your servant was the thief who stole your wife's jewels. Because he denied your earlier accusation, he cannot now accept the crime openly. He wants to work for you without wages until he has repaid you for the jewelry. Can you accept this arrangement?"

## Story 1701

The ağa thought for a minute, and then he said, "Yes."

The judge asked, "How many years of his work will it take to pay for the jewels?"

"He will be required to work for just three years."

The judge then turned to the servant and asked, "What do you think about that? Do you accept the ağa's requirement that you work three years for him without receiving any money?"

"Yes," answered Ahmet. He made this sacrifice for the ağa because the ağa had supported him for seven years and because he could not allow the ağa to be destroyed. The judge pronounced an official verdict, and a written record was made of the case.

The ağa took the servant back into his home, but the ağa and his wife felt that they could no longer trust the servant in the way they had before this incident. They no longer loved him or even liked him. They said to themselves, "He is working without pay because he stole the jewels." In fact, however, Ahmet knew nothing about the jewels. But observe now how the Mirror of Fortune will reflect the truth.

After a full year had passed, the ağa's wife said to

## Story 1701

herself, "Last year at this time I went on an outing to bank of the stream, but it turned out to be a dreadful experience in which I lost all my jewels." But the woman desired keenly to return to the stream to swim again. said to herself, "I hope that such an unpleasant thing will not happen this time." She called Ahmet and said, "Get the carriage ready so that I can go to the stream again to swim."

After the carriage had been prepared, the ağa's wife again took four or five friends with her to the bank of the stream. When Ahmet pitched the tent there on the same spot it had been located the year before, he thought, "O my great Allah, You are the only power which knows and sees everything that happens. I pitched the tent right here last year, and then I was unfairly accused of theft. But again I have pitched the tent at the same place. Whatever comes from You is good." Then turning to the ağa's wife, he said, "Lady, before you leave the tent, count jewels one by one and then give them to me. Don't put them in the box, but instead just give them to me. When you return, I shall give them back to you one by one. In that way they will be kept safe." This was exactly what the woman did, and when she left to go swimming with her

Story 1701

friends, she handed Ahmet her jewels enclosed in a handkerchief.

(Allah always helps an honest person, and truth will always prevail. When the truth is revealed, it is strong enough to stop even the flowing of a stream. Gentlemen, do not separate yourselves from the right way. Never abandon the truth, for the truth will never hurt you. The truth always lifts you to a higher level.

The mule manure which a year earlier had covered the handkerchief full of jewels had soon dried and become as hard as a shield. The ağa's wife struck her foot against this heap of hardened manure and shattered it. Observe here the work of Allah! The woman looked down and saw a yellowed handkerchief. When she tried to lift it up, it tore apart, for it had rotted in the soil, but the gold and jewels still glistened. (There are many descriptions of gold in proverbs and riddles. "Gold is gold every time. "What is it that does not rust under the ground?" "A dead body cannot speak on horseback, but lifeless gold can do so." "Gold is like sunshine in that it is never lost when it falls into the water." --Yes, there are in this country thousands of expressions in proverbs and riddles about gold.



## Story 1701

When the ağa's wife saw the jewelry, she recognized it as her own right away. She immediately called the servant, "Ahmet, son, come here!"

"What is the matter, lady?" Ahmet called back.

"Come here quickly! Come here!"

The servant ran to the spot where the jewelry upon the ground. The woman had not touched it. She said, "Ahmet, my son, I have found all of my lost jewelry." Then feeling guilty about what had happened, she confessed, "It was all my fault. I had put the jewelry inside my blouse, and when I stumbled over a rock, it must have fallen out. We blamed you very unfairly."

Ahmet answered, "I told you that I hadn't taken it. Even though I had done nothing wrong, you blamed me the loss." (Behold the Mirror of Fortune Behold revelation of Allah! Behold the truth made known at last!) At that moment all of the misunderstanding, confusion, and bad feeling toward Ahmet disappeared from the heart of the ağa's wife. But Ahmet said, "Lady, this jewelry on the ground is rightly mine. I have worked a year for it without pay, and I shall have to work another two years for it without pay. It belongs to me!" But the poor though honest-hearted servant put the recovered jewelry with the woman's new jewelry and guarded them for her.

## Story 1701

The ağa's wife swam in the stream with her friends. After a while she came out of the water, dried off, dressed herself again, and returned to the tent to eat lunch. When sat down to eat, the servant went to her and said, "Lady, here are your recovered jewels and your new jewels. They are all yours, and you can decide whether any of them should be mine. You know best about such things.

At the end of the day they returned home, and the ağa's wife did so very happily. In the evening when the ağa himself got home, his wife said to him, "Listen, Efendi, listen! I found the jewelry that was lost.

Quite surprised, the ağa asked, "How did that happen?" When his wife told him the whole story from beginning to end, he was quite amazed. Calling Ahmet to him, he hugged the servant and kissed his eyes.<sup>15</sup> He asked, "Inasmuch as you really did not know where the lost jewelry was, why didn't you take an oath to that effect?"

The servant answered, "I cannot tell the reason to I must tell it to the judge who asked me to take the oath. Please take me to the court tomorrow, where I shall

<sup>15</sup> Kissing of the eyes--actually the eyelids--is a Turkish practice for expressing affection--quite often a patronizing affection. When greetings are sent to the family of a friend, the speaker often says, "Kiss the eyes of your children for me."

Story 1701

tell it to the judge, and you will hear what I say there."

The ağa said, "All right." On the following morning they went to the court again and asked to speak with judge. When they were admitted into the judge's presence, the ağa repeated the whole story his wife had told about the recovery of the missing jewels.

When the judge heard this, he said to the servant, "Come sit here beside me, son. Come! Since you did not know anything about the lost jewels, why didn't you take an oath to that effect? Why did you seem so afraid to do so?"

The servant answered, "Efendi, neither you nor my master was given the vision to see the sword of the Great Power that was present in the court then. I glanced at the ceiling that day, and there I saw that sword steadily descending, lower and lower. It was not your fault, you were simply the judge with whom my ağa filed a complaint against me. He brought me to this court, and he wanted me to take an oath to prove that I had not done such and such a thing. Because his complaint was based on false evidence, he would have been beheaded by the falling sword if I had taken an oath to prove my innocence.

Story 1701

That was the reason that I finally decided not to take the oath. I thought that it would be better to take the blame than to have my ağa killed, his home destroyed, and his family ruined. I had by then worked for him seven years, and during that time he had supported me. I could not allow my ağa's life to be so badly damaged."

The judge was touched by these words. He too kissed the eyes of the servant. Then he said, "You are a very loyal helper, my

Yes, that was the truth. That is what it was. Kind gentlemen, repeat everywhere the words that I am about to utter. Repeat them now, and may they be repeated for centuries. Do not consider them useless words. Say them, write them, print them. Do not accuse anyone of anything without careful consideration. Weigh and measure carefully before you cut. Give such a matter very careful thought. If you do not, the sword of the Great Power may cut off your head or pass through you. Whether the Great Power uses a sword or an arrow, the effect is great.

Ferhat and Şirin were struck not only by the arrows which flew from each other's chests but also by the arrow of the Great Power. But the message reflected by the Mirror of Fate was pale to those around Ferhat and Şirin.

Story 1701

Şirin fell in love with Ferhat, but she was too shy to tell her sister about this. Ferhat fell in love with Şirin, but he was unable to explain this to his father. But there can be a strange and almost miraculous relationship between sensitive and perceptive people, a relationship that is imperceptible to others. Architect Besat knew that there was something that had greatly affected his son, and he asked, "Ferhat, my son, what happened to you? Tell me!"

But Ferhat was unable to disclose his secret. He simply said, "It is only that I am sick, dear Father."

Sultana Zaba asked Şirin, "What happened to you, my dear sister?"

But Şirin answered, "I do not know, lady, but I think I am sick." She did not disclose her secret, either.

But Ferhat and Şirin were thinking of each other day after day, night after night. They dreamed about each other, and the image of each never faded from the mind of the other. Lovers instinctively know each other's thoughts and actions. They can even talk to each other in their dreams. Lovers' souls cannot be separated from each other. They are kept in contact with each other by the Great Power, by Allah.

### Story

Very worried about her sister's condition, Sultana Zaba invited doctors from all over the world to come to her palace and find a cure for Şirin's unidentified illness. She said to them, "Doctors, examine my sister, Şirin, and find a cure for her illness. Give her the appropriate medicine for her illness."

(Gentlemen, be well aware of the importance of doctors and judges. Thanks to great Allah, our country has never been without good doctors and judges. They find the right remedies for our illnesses and other difficulties. They show us how to solve our problems. There is no country that can survive without doctors, scientists, and judges. People in these three professions are needed everywhere. Great Allah never creates anything without reason, and He never sends us anything that we cannot bear.

Some of the doctors said, "Şirin has contracted an illness that no doctors can cure. It is incurable by ordinary medical means. Şirin can be cured by attaining only what she is seeking--whatever that may be. Until her wish is fulfilled, she will never recover."

But other doctors said, "Şirin needs clear air and a different climate. She should go to live in a place where

Story 1701

the weather is quite different from what it is here."

(Gentlemen, the body needs more than food in order to function well. It needs many different things. Among those things are clean air and clean weather. Food and drink are necessary, but there are often other physical requirements that the body has.

When Sultana Zaba heard the doctors' recommendation about a change of climate, she took her sister and moved about from one yayla<sup>16</sup> to another. In those places they found a very different climate. Tents were pitched and tents were struck as they moved from one yayla to another. Their trip grew longer and longer as they visited different high plateaus and mountains. Every mountain, every plateau had its own flowers and its own climate. After

had eaten and drunk, pitched their tents and struck their tents, they had been in many different places where

cold water ran from all the springs. That water was said to be very healthful, and it was hoped that it would be like medicine for Şirin. But this was a vain hope, and the special water was wasted upon Şirin. However, Sultana

<sup>16</sup>A yayla is a summer pasture in the mountains. Pasturage is free or very cheap in the highlands where crops cannot be cultivated. Ample grass, cool air, and cold water there are considered healthful for men and livestock alike.

## Story 1701

Zaba asked her viziers, "If this water were to be run to our city, what effect would it have?"

One of the viziers answered, "Our sultana, if this water were run to our city, it would make our city three times as beautiful a place as it is now. And the quantity of water here would be more than enough to supply our city.

She then asked her viziers, "Is there any way in which this water could be made to flow to our city?"

The viziers said, "Oh, our shah, that would be a very difficult thing to accomplish. To reach our city, this water would have to pass through seven mountains. It would seem to be an almost impossible job to do that, but perhaps Architect Besat could accomplish it

Sultana Zaba said, "Yes, you are right! I shall talk with Architect Besat when I get home again. Strike the tents, and we shall start our return journey right now."

Let us now turn to Ferhat and his parents. Architect Besat said to his wife, "My dear lady, our son is very ill. Take good care of him. You are his mother, and so you may be able to discover most easily what his secret problem is. You can therefore help to find a cure for him."



Story 1701

(Whether children are daughters or sons, they are usually closer to their mothers than they are to their fathers. A child will confide in his mother, for the mother is also a friend. A child can talk more comfortably with his mother than he can with his father. Furthermore, children are willing to tell more of their thoughts and feelings to their mothers than they will tell to their fathers.)

After a short while, Ferhat revealed his secret to his mother. He said, "Mother, my problem is my love of Şirin. If her hand can touch mine, I shall become well. Otherwise this pain will eventually kill me. You should know this."

The hopeless mother said, "Be patient, my son! Be patient, and don't tell your secret to anyone else. Many things can happen before daybreak." Why did she say such a thing? She said it because she knew that Şirin was the sister of Sultana Zaba while Ferhat was only the son of Architect Besat. How close can the sky and the land get to each other? Ferhat and Şirin were that far apart. But let us not hesitate. The great Allah opens a thousand doors.

Ferhat's mother told her son's secret to her husband, too. She said, "The cure for our son's pain is the love

Story 1701

of Şirin

The Architect Besat nodded his head very sadly and said, "Yes, I suspected that. I knew that whatever had happened to him occurred while we were on that scaffold in the palace built for Şirin. I remember the precise moment when that happened to him." After a few minutes, he added, "Let us be patient. Let us wait and see. Whatever is to happen will happen." They then kept this secret among themselves. No one--not Ferhat or his father or his mother--said anything about this to anyone else.

(Why? Ah, do not tell your secret even to your brother, for he might put poison into your dish. He will not help you in your troubled days. Secrets should not be told to everybody. If you tell a secret to anyone, you should first be sure that you are telling it to the right person. Don't tell it to a friend who is close to another friend, for they will share it between them. You will recognize who is your true friend during a time of trouble. The true friend will help you find a solution for your trouble. He will hold your hand and try to console you, to cheer you up. There are not many sincere friends, and often people in trouble discover that they have no real

## Story 1701

friends at all. Oh, there are still good men. Find one and tell your secret only to him. If you tell your secret to someone who does not really care for you, he may simply laugh at your trouble. Do not say, "Amen," if you know that your prayer cannot possibly be accepted.)

After discussing the matter, Sultan Zaba and her viziers decided that water from the last yayla they visited should somehow be made to flow to their city. They all said, "This job must be assigned to Architect Besat. Only he can do something as nearly impossible as this." Having made those decisions, they returned at once to their city.

As soon as she arrived home, Sultana Zaba gave orders to have Architect Besat report to her palace at once. When Architect Besat received this order, he said to messenger, "Of course I shall go to the palace. It will be my pleasure to do so."

(Recognize that an order is an order and that a is a law. Do not resist the one or object to the other. Accept your government as a government, your laws as laws, and your nation as a nation. Never listen to what may be bad advice of others about these matters. Apply your head

Story 1701

to such considerations and listen to your heart's response.)

Architect Besat went to Sultana Zaba's palace and said, "Yes, my shah? You wanted me?" Sultana Zaba ordered

to sit down and drink coffee with her. Then she told him about the medicinal waters which they had discovered in such and such yayla. She said, "I traveled to many high plateaus and mountains looking for a more healthful climate for my sister, Şirin. I finally found some wonder-

curative water which flowed down a mountainside, and that water was not being used by anyone. It is located at a great distance from here, and seven mountains lie between that stream of water and this city. However, I want to have done whatever is necessary to cause that water to flow to our city. Can you do that?"

Architect Besat suddenly felt very pleased by this proposal. He thought, "By undertaking this difficult task I may be able to get the hand of Şirin for my son, Ferhat. Then to Sultana Zaba he said, "Yes, my shah, I can do that but I have one condition to be met before I shall agree to do it."

"What is that condition?" Sultana Zaba asked. "Tell me about it."

## Story 1701

Architect Besat explained his condition. He said, "You want to have me bring that medicinal water to this city, and I want something from you in exchange for doing that. I want the hand of your sister in marriage to my son, Ferhat. If you say, 'Yes,' to that condition, then I shall say, 'Yes,' to your request. But if you say, 'No,' to my condition, then you will have to find another architect to do this work."

After Architect Besat had spoken in this way, Sultana Zaba and the viziers looked at each other, but for a moment none of them was able to say a single word. Şirin was secretly very pleased by what she heard Architect Besat say, for Şirin wished to be married to Ferhat. It was not proper in those days, however, for a girl to talk about getting married. Finally Sultana Zaba responded to Architect Besat by saying, "Let me think about this for a short while. I shall give you my decision tomorrow." After receiving Sultana Zaba's permission to leave, Architect Besat departed from the palace.

Sultana Zaba had had a nursemaid since the time of her infancy,<sup>17</sup> and she decided now to consult that woman

<sup>17</sup>In earlier times Turkish children were often assigned servants who protected, counseled, and helped them in many ways. A girl would be given a nursemaid, and a boy would

## Story 1701

about the condition imposed by Architect Besat. Unfortunately, that nursemaid was a witch,<sup>18</sup> and a very bad witch, but Sultana Zaba was completely unaware of that fact. Nor did anyone else realize what a terrible witch that nursemaid was. (When people become more educated than most others, they often misuse their knowledge. The uses to which they put their knowledge can be very dangerous to those around them.) Sultana Zaba went to the home of her nursemaid to consult her about Architect Besat's condition. After explaining that condition to her nursemaid, Sultana Zaba asked the woman, "What do you think about this? I told Architect Besat that I needed twenty-four hours to consider his condition. What should I say to him?"

be given a lâla. Such servants were actually in charge of the children to whom they were assigned. Often, however, the services of these tutor-valet-guardian personnel were retained by the "child" himself/herself after he/she had grown into adulthood. Lâlas figure prominently in several ATON tales.

<sup>18</sup>The word witch in Turkey has connotations different from those it may have in other places. Occasionally Turkish witches may be in league with forces of evil and may also have at their command magical and supernatural powers. Occasionally they may be ghouls who exhume and devour newly buried corpses. In most cases, however, witches in Turkish folktales are simply shrewd, worldly-wise, and manipulating old women who will sell their services to help implement plots, conspiracies, or other nefarious undertakings.

## Story 1701

(Gentlemen, the bad man will teach you evil ideas. He will teach you, certainly, but he will teach you to act in a bad way. A good man will give you words of good counsel. Often the bad man does not even recognize goodness, and so he is unable to teach others about goodness.)

The witch nursemaid said to Sultana Zaba, "We should not miss this opportunity. You should say, 'Yes,' to this condition. Tell Architect Besat that you will give your sister to his son, Ferhat, as his wife. However, you should require that you must first see the medicinal water running into this city before Ferhat is permitted to see the face of Şirin.<sup>19</sup> State your answer to Architect Besat's condition in exactly this way."

It was not a good piece of advice which the witch nursemaid gave to Sultana Zaba, but the ruler did not know that. She trusted the witch as much as she would have trusted her own mother; she trusted her white hair. Before Sultana Zaba left her house, the witch nursemaid added to the requirements that were to be placed upon Architect Besat. "Order him not only to conduct the medicinal water

<sup>19</sup> This comment is more in keeping with tradition than it is with the situation in this tale. Ferhat had already seen the face of Şirin at the time that the two had fallen in love with each other. Traditionally the bridegroom in arranged marriages never saw the face of the bride until she was delivered to the nuptial chamber. The unveiling of the bride at that time was part of the whole wedding ritual.

Story 1701

to your city, but also have him build forty fountains from which it will flow. Two of those fountains should be in front of your palace, and two of them should be in front of my house, with the other thirty-six placed in appropriate places around the city. Each fountain should have three spouts. Until all the spouts of all the fountains are flowing with medicinal water, Şirin and Ferhat should not see each other's faces

(Gentlemen, time is passing rapidly. The Tuesdays, the Thursdays, and the Fridays are passing, but the weeks and months are disappearing, too. Be careful, sons of Turks! Our time upon this earth is very short. But we should work as if we have a very long time to live and will never die.)<sup>20</sup>

Architect Besat went to Sultana Zaba's palace again at exactly the same time he had been there the day before. After they had asked about each other's health, Sultana Zaba said, "Architect Besat, I have thought about your condition, and I have accepted it. Your wish is very reasonable and quite appropriate in our opinion, but I have my condition, too. My condition is that I shall give

<sup>20</sup>This echoes an old proverb often attributed to Mohammed: "Work as if you would live forever; live as if you would die tomorrow."



## Story 1701

Şirin to Ferhat in marriage only after the medicinal water has been brought to our city and is flowing from forty fountains, each of which will have three spouts. Two of the fountains must be built in front of my palace; two must be built in front of the home of my nursemaid; and the other thirty-six can be built in suitable places throughout the city. This is the task I want you to complete. When you have done so, you may take Şirin's hand and lead her to your son, Ferhat. That is my plan. What do you say about it?"

When Architect Besat heard this arrangement described, he was entirely satisfied with it. He said, "This is a perfect plan, a perfect solution for our problem, and I accept it with pleasure. It is suitable for both our needs."

Sultana Zaba was equally pleased with the agreement that had been reached, and she said, "Good luck! May it go well!"

Neither the viziers nor anyone else knew that Sultana Zaba's nursemaid was a witch. Their thoughts were honest, and they supposed that before long the medicinal water would flow from many spouts in their city and that when that happened, Şirin and Ferhat would be married. But the

## Story

truth was very different from what they supposed.

Taking the good news home, Architect Besat went happily to Ferhat, entirely unaware that they were entangled in the plans of a witch. Architect Besat said to Ferhat, "My dear son, do not be sad any longer. Do not harm yourself by yearning for the love of Şirin. I have secured Şirin for you." He then told Ferhat about the plan on which he and Sultana Zaba had agreed. Then he added, "But, as you must be aware, Son, this will be a very difficult task to complete, for the water channel will have to pass through seven mountains to bring the water all the way from that distant yayla to this city. It will take a long time, and we shall have to work very hard. Yes, we shall need time, a great amount of time, and we shall have to work with heart and soul. For this job, we shall have to hire ten thousand men instead of a thousand. In order to get Şirin for you as soon as possible, we shall have to begin our work immediately. We do not yet know how long our work will last. It may last for three years, but it could last even longer than that."

Ferhat said, "Dear Father, thank you very much! You know that I am deeply in love with Şirin, and I shall do

Story 1701

everything necessary in order to win her." Ferhat was delighted, even though he knew that all those mountains had to be passed through and that the job would be exceedingly difficult.

That evening Ferhat went to a desolate place where a little stream of water flowed along peacefully. He sat by that stream, placing his elbows on his knees, and spoke to the stream. He said, "O flowing water, you have seen the face of Allah. You are flowing in behalf of Allah. For the sake of Allah, help me to see the face of Şirin for a moment. Give me the power to see her. Out of love for Şirin, I shall be able to cleave all those mountains. May I be able to do three days' work every twenty-four hours. Tell me that I can do it, and I shall in fact do it." With tears in his eyes he took his ablutions and turned toward Mecca. He then performed four rekats<sup>21</sup> of prayer service. He then said, "My dear Allah, my great Allah, You are closer to me than I am to myself. You know best; You know everything; You are everywhere. You are the Great Power. Please provide a solution for my problem."

<sup>21</sup>A rekat is a series of physical movements and gestures performed during prayer. The number of rekats performed varies with the particular services of which they are part. At a service at which a dozen or more rekats are required, there is a considerable amount of energy expended.

Story 1701

Ferhat prayed fervently and sincerely, and his prayer was accepted by Allah, Who sent Hızır<sup>22</sup> to him. Hızır Dede<sup>23</sup> asked the young man, "Ferhat, son, why are you crying?"

When Ferhat straightened up and saw a very old man standing before him, he said, "Oh, dear grandfather, I am seeking a resolution to my problem." But poor Ferhat was so confused that he did not even wonder how this old stranger knew his name.

Hızır Dede asked, "What is your problem, my son?"

Ferhat answered, "It is neither something that you can inquire about nor I can answer adequately. It is beyond description. I wish to acquire special strength, special power from Allah."

Hızır thought for a moment and then said, "My dear son, you have a great amount of suffering to endure. You will have severe trials to endure. But it is for something

<sup>22</sup>Once a water deity and fertility god--and still both those figures to most farmers in southern Turkey--Hızır is more widely known now as a granter of wishes, a last-minute rescuer from disaster, and a special messenger and agent of God. In these latter three functions he appears fairly frequently in Turkish folktales. Not mentioned by name in the Koran, a chapter of that work was later named after him. He is assumed to be the person instructing Moses in Chapter XVIII of the Koran, where he is referred to by God simply as "our servant."

<sup>23</sup>Hızır usually appears in folktales as a white-haired long-bearded old man. The word dede means grandfather.

## Story

that you wanted with all your heart. You bared your soul to Allah about this matter. You asked the Judge of judges for help. We all walk about only by His orders. None of us can do anything without His orders. We cannot go anywhere unless it is by His orders. Arise, my son, arise!" Hızır Dede then lifted Ferhat from the ground, stroked his back three times and his chest three times, and said, "My son, great Allah has granted you the special power that you desire. He sent me to deliver this power to you. Now all the hard rocks of the mountains will seem to you as soft as sand. Consequently, you will be able to do a whole month's work in only twenty-four hours." Then Hızır Dede disappeared suddenly, and Ferhat realized that he was a spiritual guide sent by Allah. Beginning at that moment, Ferhat sensed a certain new power within himself. When he grasped a rock, it crumbled within his hand into a powder like sand.

Pleased to discover this new power than he had been given, Ferhat approached his father with a smile of delight that went from one ear to the other. He told his father all the details of the experience that he had just had. Then he said, "Father, all of those seven mountains with

Story 1701

their strong, hard rocks are no longer a problem for me Allah has given me a special power for the sake of my love for Şirin. I can do almost anything now. Oh, I am happy happy!" He began at once to build a blacksmith shop in which he could make drills, pickaxes, and the other tools that would be needed to tunnel through the seven mountains

Gentlemen, lunch time is now approaching. While Ferhat is making his iron tools, let us take some time out for lunch.

/May 22, 1977/

Before I continue with my story, I should like to recite a poem to you <sup>24</sup>

Come, heart, be not deceived by worldly views.

Things of this mortal world cannot endure.

<sup>24</sup>Tales as long as this one are, of course, told in several sections. In all his tales Behçet Mahir began every section with something other than a continuation of the central plot--sometimes with a bit of didacticism, sometimes with a poem. This is not a matter of mere sprezzatura but rather a device to cope with the demands of coffeehouse storytelling. Amid the clatter of cups and glasses and the conversation of customers (only a few of whom may have come there to hear him) the raconteur must call attention to his performance and command substantial (if not complete) attention before he narrates his tale. It may take several minutes to quiet the crowd and gain its attention, and it is strategic not to sacrifice material important to the plot while doing this.

## Story 1701

The grave lies at the end of every life.  
 Not even Lion Ali<sup>25</sup> could escape.  
 And not the wisest man in all the world,  
 Who heard the sky and all the oceans speak,  
 Who understood the tongues of wolves and birds--  
 Solomon could foil the waiting grave.  
 could the shepherd Veysal<sup>26</sup> cling to life  
 Bareheaded and barefoot he used to herd  
 Tall camels by the thousands every day,  
 For which he earned one akçe<sup>27</sup> daily pay.  
 He mentioned Allah's name a thousand times,  
 But even he could not evade the tomb.

<sup>25</sup>Ali, the fourth caliph. He achieved relatively little during his caliphate, but both then and earlier he had been a great warrior for Islam.

<sup>26</sup>This is probably a reference to Veysal (Üreys in Arabic) Harani, a contemporary of Mohammed. He died in approximately 657. For an additional ATON reference to this early Islamic saint see ATON No. 701.

<sup>27</sup>The akçe was at one time, long ago, a small silver coin worth a third of a para. Because of the incredible devaluation of Turkish currency during the twentieth century, it is necessary to overview the monetary scale. The para was formerly the smallest monetary unit. There were 40 paras to the kuruş and 100 kuruş to the Turkish lira. By mid-20th century, devaluation of Turkish money had eliminated from use the para, and by the 1970s the kuruş also fell out of circulation. When the lira fell to the value of 1/10 of a U.S. cent (and much lower in the late 1980s), the kuruş became utterly meaningless.

## Story 1701

This heir of haloed Ibrahim's descent.  
 This hero of two worlds<sup>28</sup> could not escape.  
 There's no escape, my beys,<sup>29</sup> no, none at all  
 No man can hope to live forever more.  
 All born into this world must leave again  
 Life ends in death as does the day in dusk.

Ferhat was working in the blacksmith shop to prepare the iron tools that would be needed for their job. Most naked hands can do little by themselves. They need tools.

to do a good job, you need the proper tools. Ferhat worked for two years making the tools that would be required to tunnel through the seven mountains in his quest the love of Şirin.

At last the actual work began, and they started to tunnel through the first mountain on their route. Archi-

Besat ordered all his men to work hard and remain as busy as bees. Ferhat was in front of all the laborers,

<sup>28</sup>This may be a reference to the sainthood of Veysal Harani.

<sup>29</sup>In pre-Republican times beys were equivalent to English barons or lords. Titled, landed, and often wealthy, they were often assigned administrative posts in the Ottoman government. The word bey is today an honorific used as a gesture of respect. It is often used after the first name of a male: Hasan Bey.



## Story 1701

and he worked steadily without looking back. He worked night and day to split the rocks and force his way through the mountain. While this tunneling was in progress, Architect Besat was back in the city constructing the forty fountains and putting them in place. Two of these were set up before Sultana Zaba's palace, one on the right and the other on the left. Two more were set up in a similar way before the home of Sultana Zaba's nursemaid. The remaining thirty-six were built at those places throughout the city that had no other source of water. Both the crew commanded by Architect Besat and the one commanded by Ferhat were working very hard and remaining as busy as bees. All of the citizens wanted very much to have the medicinal water flowing in their city, and so they were helping Ferhat and Architect Besat. Everyone from seven to seventy was delighted at the idea of having the curative water available. A city is usually founded at a place where there is water, and as long as that city exists, it is dependent upon an adequate supply of water.

(Always look to see what the Mirror of Fate is reflecting. Remember also to keep your trust in Allah, Who created you. Depend upon Him. No mortal can escape his fate.

Story 1701

No matter what we might do to alter its course, fate al-  
takes its destined way.

Ferhat kept working with a sincere heart for the sake of his love of Şirin. When he struck the side of the mountain, its rocks were shattered into bits as fine as sand. In some cases they were powdered into what looked more like ashes. He worked day and night, resting for only two or three hours out of every twenty-four. He worked like a crazy<sup>30</sup> man for the love of Şirin

(We all know very well that any serious undertaking can progress only by means of hard work. Whether the venture concerns material goals or spiritual goals, the chances for its success can be furthered by dedication and hard work. The Moslem religion was founded and maintained by the great efforts of many people. Every country can develop and improve only by the great exertion of its people. Great Allah ordered us to work, and half of all our worship involves the expenditure of effort.)

<sup>30</sup>The Turkish word deli used here can mean mad or demented. It can also mean wildly reckless in one's dedication to a cause. Those battling in a holy cause may be so fervid that they give no thought to either danger or fatigue. This connotation of deli may possibly apply here to Ferhat, for his love of Şirin clearly has spiritual overtones.

## Story

When years drag on, a story can become dust on the tongue. Let us therefore summarize all of the work that was being carried on. Ferhat worked day and night for three years. Like the ant, he worked very hard without stopping. Finally he was able to conduct the medicinal water into the city. All forty fountains, each with three spouts, had been built, and the people of the city were waiting in great excitement for the moment when the medicinal water would begin to flow from those spouts. The residents of that city were grateful to Sultana Zaba for her plan to bring this special water to them. They were daily praying for their shah for doing this

Sultana Zaba and Şirin went every day to the home of the nursemaid without even suspecting that she was a witch. That witch was continuously making evil plans and thinking of troublesome things that she could do. She said to herself, "I know my work! Just wait until the medicinal water begins flowing in this city. Then they will see what I shall do!" Only she and her secret heart knew what those plans were. She never mentioned them to Sultana Zaba or Şirin but kept them within herself. She was an especially bad witch, for all of her time was given to thinking evil thoughts

## Story 1701

During the three years when Ferhat was tunneling through the mountains and his father was working on the fountains, Ferhat had another idea about the medicinal water. He thought that a great tank should be built in the city where all of the unused medicinal water could be stored, and he finally said to himself, "This work that we are engaged in will not really be completed until we have such a tank."

At last, at the end of three years' labor, it was announced that at a certain time the water would start flowing into the city through the channels that had been constructed. Both the palace people and the ordinary residents of the city prepared to slaughter many animals as sacrifices upon that occasion. It was decided that the sacrifices would be made at the very moment that water began flowing from the spouts of all the fountains. After that, Ferhat was to lead Şirin by the hand to his own home for the beginning of their wedding ceremonies. Sultana Zaba said to the witch, "Dear nursemaid, within two days the medicinal water will be flowing in this city. Then we shall give Şirin to Ferhat."

But the evil-minded witch nursemaid was not thinking

Story 1701

about this in the same way that Sultana Zaba was. She answered, "Yes, my daughter, yes. But we still have not seen any of that medicinal water here in the city. We should not give Şirin to Ferhat before actually seeing the water. We cannot depend upon them, and so we should proceed exactly the way we had agreed to do. Not until the medicinal water actually flows from the fountains will Ferhat and Şirin be united

To these words Sultana Zaba responded, "Yes."

The people of that city always considered the nursemaid an honest and good person, but she was not that at all. Nobody realized that this woman's tongue and heart were not in agreement. The tongue said one thing, but the heart was thinking something else. And what was in her heart she told to no one for fear that her secret would be disclosed to

Listen carefully to my stories, for they contain many meaningful passages, many lessons. I worked for many years to acquire these stories, and I am now telling them to you in their original form. Yes, human beings are often very different on the inside from what they appear to be on the outside. Yes, some people look good on the surface

## Story 1701

may be evil within. Those who are evil within usually their secrets to no one, but even those who may be good both inside and outside should learn to guard their secrets. Not every man is able to keep secret anything may tell him. Reveal your secrets only to a man who is able to do so. The man who cannot keep a secret will steal words from your mouth and use them to harm you. It is better not to disclose your secrets even to a brother.

I should like to tell you a story about Alexander the Great,<sup>31</sup> who crossed the world three times and filled people with fear. Alexander the Great had a haircut and shave once a week, but each week the barber who provided this service was killed immediately after his work was completed. Why? What was the reason for this? Alexander the Great had two horns, a fact known only by himself, his barber, and Allah. But each barber who discovered this was killed just a few minutes later, and so the fact was actually known only to Allah and to Alexander himself. He did not want anyone else to know about his horns.

One week a very young barber was selected to cut

<sup>31</sup>This interpolated story is a complete folktale in its own right. We have therefore given it separate status in ATON as Tale No. 1604.

### Story

Alexander the Great's hair. This barber was both very young and very handsome. When that young barber was cutting Alexander's hair, he saw the two horns on his head, and this frightened the young man so badly that he could not speak a single word. When Alexander the Great observed this, he felt deep sympathy for the young barber, and he said to him, "I shall tell you something, but it should be kept inside of yourself and never told to any other person."

The young barber answered, "Yes, my king, whatever you say," and he took an oath that he would never reveal that secret.

Then Alexander the Great spoke to the barber again, saying, "Only you, I, and Allah should know that I have two horns. Nobody, absolutely nobody, else is to know that. Since you are so young, and since you have sworn to keep my secret, I shall not kill you as I killed my other barbers." The barber thanked him very much and left the palace.

Days passed, and the young barber told no one about Alexander the Great's secret, partly because of the oath he had taken not to do so and partly because of his fear

Story 1701

of Alexander. But he kept thinking about the secret of two horns every day, and keeping this completely inside himself made him more and more uncomfortable every

He said to himself, "Thinking about this secret and never letting it escape from within me will eventually kill me. My difficulty began on the day when I first saw

horns. What should I do to relieve myself of this discomfort?" He finally decided to tell his secret only to a well.

The young barber went to a nearby well, bent down over the well mouth, and yelled into the well, "Alexander the Great has horns! Alexander the Great has horns! Alexander the Great has horns!" He poured all of his secret out of himself and into the well. Oh, yes, dishonorable people usually fail to keep their promises. They tell everybody whatever they know. Allah has told us, "Do not keep dishonorable people around you. Get rid of them! They will destroy all of your friendships!"

Just as the young barber had finished shouting the secret into the well, a reed began to grow alongside that well. Soon a devil came there, cut the reed, and made a



Story 1701

zurna<sup>32</sup> out of it. When the devil started to play the zurna, the zurna informed everyone, "Alexander the Great has horns! Alexander the Great has horns!" As a result, everyone--even I--learned of Alexander the Great's secret.<sup>33</sup>

(O Sons of Turks, wisely keep your secrets to yourselves! Don't talk with troublemakers! Don't talk with those who are treacherous to your government or your country. They always end up bringing grief to themselves, and they may well bring grief to you, too. Sooner or later they may hurt you badly. If a problem has no possible solution, do not try to solve it. It is useless action and a waste of time to ponder over insolvable problems. There is a saying which we inherited from our forefathers: "The building which has no foundation will eventually collapse."

<sup>32</sup>Short (12-inch) double-reed instrument, somewhat similar to an oboe but with a more blatant tone. The zurna is an immensely popular folk instrument which, accompanied by drums, is played endless hours throughout the several days of a rural wedding.

<sup>33</sup>Bodily peculiarities of noted people which are discovered and reported to the public constitute a widespread theme in folktales. It is not always horns that are revealed; King Midas was revealed to have the ears of an ass. For citations to this motif of bodily freakishness, see ATON Notes, Vol. IX. See that same location for listing of various versions of and theories about the alleged horns of Alexander the Great. The Alexander story appears in several major literary works.--In Arabic sources Alexander is referred to as often by his epithet, Dhu l'Katnain (The Two-Horned One), as he is by his real name.

## Story

As we should all know well, Great Allah first created water. But at first the water did not flow at all. It began to flow only after it had seen the face of Allah. It started flowing then and will continue to do so until Great Allah shows His face to it a second time. Here is the point I am making: The human mind is not capable of understanding the power of Allah. We work only according to the orders of Allah. Do not involve yourself in matters larger than your mind is capable of handling, and do not undertake any task more difficult than your strength can accomplish. Your body will suffer if you do. There are some people who are liars; don't be deceived into thinking that their words reflect the truth. Both worshipping and sinning should be done in privacy. We should consider all people and treat them in kindly fashion. This means that we should not be rude to them. Don't hurt them in any way. We have in common the fact that everyone who enters this world will also depart from it. Don't deceive yourself by thinking, "I am strong. I am in a position superior to that of others." Your strength and position are nothing in the eyes of Allah. Such things can disappear. They were given to you by Allah, and He can take them from

## Story 1701

in a moment. Although you may have been very happy to get them, always remember that they can easily be withdrawn.)<sup>34</sup>

Yes, at long last the medicinal waters of the distant yayla arrived in the city. The people were delighted, and they carried out sacrifices before each of the forty fountains. This water was very cold and had a refreshing flavor. When a sick person took just one sip of that water,

condition began at once to improve. The ordinary citizens were pleased by the arrival of this special water,

Şirin was even more pleased than they. She was thinking

"At last my dream has come true. Now I shall be allowed to marry Ferhat."

When Sultana Zaba heard the sound of water flowing from all the spouts, she took Şirin with her and went to visit her nursemaid. She said to that woman, "O my dear nursemaid, our wish has been fulfilled! The time has now come to hold Şirin's wedding ceremony."

The evil witch nursemaid said, "Sit down! Sit down!"

<sup>34</sup>This lengthy piece of didacticism rambles among thoughts that do not always have any logical sequence or even relationship. Some of Behçet Mahir's personal intrusions into the narrative are organized and incisive, but this passage lacks both of those qualities.

Story 1701

Then, after closing all of the doors and windows, she spoke very harshly to Sultana Zaba. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself? I thought that you were a shah! How can give your sister to the son of an architect?" When Sultana Zaba heard these words, she stared with a disapproving look into the face of her nursemaid. But the witch asked her, "Why are you looking at me in that way? Why? Am I saying something wrong? Don't you have any sense of honor, of dignity? How could you forget that you are a shah?"

Sultana Zaba was now very confused. She did not know what to do or even how to express her feelings. She finally replied, "Lying is never proper for any honest person, whether that person is a shah or not, but it is especially unsuitable for one in my position. We made an agreement to give Şirin to Ferhat, and I consulted you about this matter. I took your advice on this. What can I now say to Architect Besat? What can I now say to my people? My subjects from the age of seven to seventy have waited three years for the arrival of the medicinal water. Now the water is flowing from all of the spouts, how can we go back on our word? We cannot do that."

Story

The nursemaid then grew very angry at Sultana Zaba's remarks. She shouted, "Be quiet! I don't want to hear you speaking that way. You are the shah, but you know neither how to act like a shah or think like a shah!"

Think of that, sons of Turks! Don't be deceived by those who can deceive you and trick you. Don't! Your country could be destroyed by treachery. Your government could fall as a result of trickery

But the heartless witch nursemaid succeeded in changing Sultana Zaba's mind in the wrong direction. She said to Sultana Zaba, "I can find an easy way for you to handle this matter. Don't hesitate to take action. Don't worry about lowering your prestige or losing your good reputation! Don't pay attention to what people say! Right now they are in agreement with you, but after a while they will begin talking against you. You will hear! People's mouths are not sacks with drawstrings. You can't stop people from talking. They will say, 'Look at what our shah has done! Look at her sense of justice! Is her action fair to Şirin? Does Ferhat deserve Şirin?' You cannot prohibit people from talking in this way. After a while their talk will turn in a different direction." Talking

Story 1701

in this way, the witch nursemaid was able to change Sultana Zaba's mind.

After thinking about this for a while, the shah asked, "Yes, but what should I say to Architect Besat?"

The nursemaid then said, "Don't you really know what to say to Architect Besat? Why should you be at all afraid of an architect and his impoverished son? All the soldiers and their weapons, the whole army, are in your control. Can't you have the heads of just two men cut off? How could you be a shah if you couldn't do that? Simply tell

that you will not give Şirin to Ferhat. If anyone disputes your words, cut off that person's head! Don't be afraid! I shall help you, too. But in fact no one would have the courage to resist your wish." The witch was very pleased with herself for having changed the mind of Sultana Zaba.

Poor Şirin! She was utterly hopeless and completely helpless. She cried continuously, but she was unable to do anything else

When Architect Besat went to the palace to get Şirin his son, Ferhat, Sultana Zaba said to him, "How dare you? Do you want me to give my sister, Şirin, to your

Story 1701

son? Shame on you! She is my sister, the sister of the shah. Does your son deserve to be married to the sister of a shah? I shall not give my sister to your son! If you have enough courage, come ahead and try to take her

But when people heard these words of Sultana Zaba, they began looking into each others' faces. They asked one another, "What kind of shah is she? This matter should not be resolved in such a way." Others said, "We have never until now seen Sultana Zaba make such a great mistake. Why is it that she has now reached such an incorrect decision?" But the more intelligent people sensed immediately what had happened. They said, "We are absolutely certain about one thing, and that is the fact that Sultana Zaba's mind has been changed by someone. has come under the influence of somebody else. Who is Then after some further thought, they realized who that other person was. They said, "Yes, it must have been her nursemaid. She was the only one who could have changed Sultana Zaba's mind in this way!"

All of the people from seven to seventy supported Ferhat. They shouted, "Sultana Zaba, you are wrong! It is not fair Your decision is entirely unjustifiable!"

Story 1701

Sultana Zaba had no support among the people for what she had done. But who could help Ferhat?

Ferhat had little hope of being able to do anything to change the situation. He said to the many people who gathered around him, "Please do not shed your blood for me. Don't be killed for my sake. I shall try to solve this problem by myself. If I can do so, that will be wonderful, but if I cannot, then please do not endanger your lives for me." He then went home, where he kissed the hands of his mother and father. Then, saying, "I shall either get Şirin or die for her," he grasped his sword, mounted a red horse, and rode through the center of the city to the palace of the shah to get Şirin.

When the witch nursemaid saw Ferhat approaching, she said to Sultana Zaba, "What are you waiting for? Order your army to kill Ferhat!"

After the army had been called out, troops surrounded Ferhat on all four sides. But the people could not accept the unfairness of such action, for it was perfectly obvious who was wrong and who was right. A great mass of people surrounded the army forces. But the army commander ordered both the troops and the people to desist, and in



Story 1701

doing so he averted a very bloody crisis.

After that dangerous incident had passed without injury to anyone, the prominent people of the city went to the palace of Sultana Zaba to talk with her. They said, "Our beloved shah, you are in error. You are acting very unfairly in this matter." Sultana Zaba knew that they were right, but the influence of the witch nursemaid was so strong that it was unbreakable. Her only response to the leading citizens of the city who had come to see her was that she needed twenty-four hours to consider their comments

As soon as the leading citizens had left her palace, Sultana Zaba went to the home of her nursemaid. She said to that witch woman, "Oh, my nursemaid, are you pleased with what you have done? Much blood may yet be shed and many people killed. Actions causing such disasters are completely inappropriate for anyone in my position. I am convinced with all my heart that I am acting unfairly. I shall remember forever how wrong I am!

But the witch nursemaid paid no attention to the words of Sultana Zaba. She said to the shah, "Listen to me very closely. You never seem to know very much. How did the

## Story 1701

universe begin? What is happening throughout the universe? You do not know the answers to these questions, but I know of them. Therefore you should not be afraid but should trust me. No one can harm a single hair of either you or Şirin. Tomorrow I shall show my real power to Ferhat and to the people."

Twenty-four hours passed quickly. On the following Ferhat and his friends rode toward the palace with their swords unsheathed. But as they were approaching the palace, the witch nursemaid used her magic power to cause a terrible hailstorm to descend upon them. The storm was so fierce that it caused everyone outside to run back to his home or to some other covered place. Nobody, not even Ferhat, could remain outside for even a short time, for the hailstones were so large and so hard. Many windows were smashed; many men's heads were broken; and many people were injured. Even though the people were driven under cover, their minds remained unchanged. They still supported Ferhat, and they were still convinced that Sultana Zaba was wrong. There was no excuse for the wrong that had been done, and therefore the witch nursemaid was unable to stop Ferhat.

## Story 1701

That night when Ferhat was praying on his knees, he said, "O my great Allah, You are capable of doing anything. You know everything. You can see everything. Tell me whether I am right or wrong. You gave me courage and helped me bring water to the city. You know my trouble, and You know who is doing what is right and who is doing what is wrong." He was praying with a crying heart

Hızır then appeared to him and said, "Don't cry, my son; don't cry. Your fate was written before you were even born. That is the way things are designed to happen. A mortal cannot know what will be; only Allah can know that Everything that will happen has already been decided by Allah and depends upon the will of Allah. Your ordeal is not yet finished, but from now on, it will be easier. Draw your sword from its scabbard and give it to me." Ferhat drew his sword and placed it in the hands of the old man. Then Grandfather Hızır said, "Bismillah,"<sup>35</sup> and wrote magic words on the sword with his magic finger. He then said

<sup>35</sup>Bismillah (In the name of Allah) is the first part of the expression with which the Koran opens, Bismillahir-rahmanirrahim (In the name of Allah, the Compassionate and Merciful). The full expression is used at the beginning of prayer services. Bismillah is usually uttered at the beginning of any undertaking in order to gain divine approval (or good luck) for that venture.

Story 1701

to Ferhat, "You can now go to the home of the witch nursemaid and attack her. Her magic will no longer be able to affect you, for the words of greater magic on your sword will destroy her power. Do not be afraid to go and get Şirin. Remember, however, that you will still suffer great-

That is your fate, and one should not complain about fate." Ferhat was pleased and grateful for this aid advice, and he wished to give Hızır some gift. Hızır had, however, vanished suddenly. By then daybreak was slowly approaching

(Gentlemen, the prophet Noah lived for 950 years, and prophet Adam<sup>36</sup> lived for 1,000 years. When Prophet Noah was in his 950th year, people said to him, "You have lived upon this earth for all those years. What have you seen in that long time? What have you had to face? What was the most pleasant experience you have had upon this earth? Tell us."

Noah answered, "I have tasted three great pleasures here on earth. I received my utmost pleasure from these three experiences, but all other experiences amounted to

<sup>36</sup>Turkish raconteurs credit all Biblical characters with having been prophets. In the Hebraic-Christian tradition, Adam is not usually considered to have been a prophet

Story 1701

nothing. They gave me no enjoyment."

"What were those three things?" the people asked

Noah answered, "They were the spring of the year, the break of day, and iftar.<sup>37</sup> I never tired of experiencing these three things, and my desire for them was never fully satisfied. I always yearned for them."

gentlemen, these are fine experiences. In the spring every tree and every plant looks beautiful and has a beautiful scent. Filled with growing life, spring is the best season of the year.

at every daybreak the earth becomes alive in a different way. Trees, streams, even the ants all come to life again after the end of the night. Eighteen thousand universes return to life and begin to speak. There is a secret power, an incredible force, at work to cause this. That much we know, but we do not know all of the things done by that force. Female dogs give birth two or three times a year, and each time they may produce four or five puppies. But the population of dogs does not seem to increase. Why is that? On the other hand, the ewe gives

<sup>37</sup>The evening meal, just after sunset, which breaks the fasting of a day of Ramazan. Legendary Noah belongs to a time several thousand years before the establishment of the Ramazan ritual, but neither peasant narrators nor peasant audiences are a bit fazed by such glaring anachronisms.

### Story

birth only once a year, usually to just one lamb. Considering this low birth rate and the fact that we eat thousands of sheep every year, one would suppose that the sheep population would decrease, but it does not. We eat the sheep's flesh but not the dog's; we use the sheep's hide but not the dog's; and we spin the sheep's hair, though not the dog's, to make cloth. But the population of both animals remains steady. Why is this? Perhaps the answer lies in the different ways in which these two animals greet the dawn. At daybreak every sheep awakens and remains awake all day long until nightfall. But dogs place their tails beneath them and sleep on until mid-morning. Human beings are sometimes more like dogs than like sheep. They know the truth but do not wish to wake up to it.)<sup>38</sup>

As Ferhat and all his friends were riding toward the home of the witch nursemaid, she tried to put a curse of some kind upon them. She was unable to do so, however, for the inscription on Ferhat's sword protected him

<sup>38</sup>This long authorial intrusion was triggered by the word daybreak in the account of Ferhat's awaiting dawn after his conference with Hızır. It was the custom of Behçet Mahir to make such narrative detours whenever a situation, an image, or even, as here, a word stimulated his memory or his imagination. Unfortunately, free association spontaneously delivered sometimes led him into less than logical passages of didacticism.

Story 1701

his companions from her power. As her home was being surrounded, she was powerless to do anything about it. Not only was she trapped in her home, but so too were her guests, Sultana Zaba and Şirin. Sultana Zaba said to the witch nursemaid, "Have you done well? Look! See what has happened to us! What shall we do now?"

The witch nursemaid answered, "Girl, do not be afraid, and do not worry. Whatever else they may do, they cannot touch us." But the witch knew that her magic could no longer harm Ferhat, and she herself feared greatly the sword he bore. She therefore used her witchcraft to turn herself, Sultana Zaba, and Şirin into air. In this way become invisible and unable to be captured or even attacked.

Ferhat's friends informed him that Şirin, Sultana Zaba, and the witch nursemaid had disappeared. All three of them had suddenly vanished. When poor Ferhat was given this bad news, he was shocked, and felt quite hopeless. "Whom am I supposed to kill now?" he asked. "The evil witch nursemaid has gone. I think that Allah will take life and give her heavy punishment in the next world. I do not care about her or about Sultana Zaba, either, but

## Story 1701

I grieve that my Şirin, my love, has gone." Then he said to his friends, "No one can travel with me on the road ahead. It is my individual destiny, my individual fate." That was the message he had received from Grandfather Hızır: "Accept your fate! It was written before you were even born. Don't complain about it or condemn the decision of Allah." (Yes, this is something which we should all recognize. We must accept our fate, whatever it is. Sometimes sorrowful people say, "If I can conquer and possess the whole world, why then can I not escape the painful parts of my destiny?" But who determines this fate, whether it be pleasure or agony? Not you; not I. This is determined by the Great Power, the Creator of all. Yes, the fate of everyone was decided upon long ago, and there is no one who can change it. No, nobody can do that. Nobody

Ferhat, riding on his red horse, searched day and night for his beloved, calling repeatedly, "Şirin! Şirin!" Along the route he took, he opened new paths and built new roads through the mountains and over rocky areas. Why? He was doing that because he thought, "If I achieve nothing else in my search for Şirin, I can at least make passageways for future travelers."



## Story 1701

Yes, good gentlemen, we should all leave something good behind us when we die. Our government builds a great roads and highways for our safety and comfort, but we must work hard for our government, too. Hard work has been essential to almost every achievement. That was the reason that Ferhat kept searching for Şirin without getting tired or discouraged, and he did even more than that in building paths and roads for those who would pass that way after him. Ferhat dedicated his life to searching everywhere for Şirin.

At long last, Ferhat caught a glimpse of the three women, but it was only a glimpse, for the witch nursemaid was so fearful of Ferhat's magic sword that she took Sultana Zaba and Şirin and disappeared again. They kept fleeing Ferhat, but he kept getting closer and closer to them.

Throughout all this time, Sultana Zaba was growing sadder and sadder until she could no longer tolerate her sadness. She could no longer avoid the fact that she had made a serious mistake. She understood that and admitted to herself now. She had been extremely cruel in separating Şirin and Ferhat. She finally reached the point one day where she could no longer cooperate with the witch

## Story

nursemaid, and she said to that witch, "Oh, you heartless woman, look at what you have done to us! You have caused us grief and pain, and all our sacrifices have been in vain. You have separated me from my kingdom, my comforts, and my happy life. But your worst offense has been to separate two young and honest lovers. Too large a part of our lives has been spent on the road, spent running away from what is right." Although she spoke these words very angrily, she discovered that once again the witch nursemaid was not even listening to her.

(This has meaning for us, too. Those who believe the words of treacherous people may lose their position, their country, and even their lives. There are in this world many false and evil people capable of destroying without any mercy both people and the countries in which they live. Let us not listen to such villains. Let us pay no attention to evil clad in human clothes. We can discover whether people are good or bad by listening not to them but to our own heads and hearts.

Sultana Zaba was deeply dejected, and she regretted greatly what she had done, but it was now too late to turn back. Regret is futile. She could no longer sleep, for

### Story

her mind was too full of shame at what she had done to Şirin, her own sister. She could no longer stand the sharp pangs of conscience, and her shoulders could no longer carry the heavy load of guilt. As a result of her suffering, she died one night in her sleep.

After the death of Sultana Zaba, the witch nursemaid continued to flee from the sword of Ferhat. But Ferhat was always able to discover her and Şirin's tracks and pursue them. He kept reminding himself, "I shall either find Şirin or die in the attempt to do so." Day and night, for weeks, months, and even years he pursued them, but every time that he had almost reached them, they fled farther

After the death of her sister, Şirin grew even sadder and more and more miserable. She cried steadily day and night, but the witch nursemaid could not understand her pain, and she kept saying to Şirin, "Why are you crying, girl? Enough of that!" They traveled through much of the world until they finally came to the Anatolian village of Prinç /Piringç? and pitched their tent near a large rock named Kalor.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Even if such places do exist, there is very little chance of locating them unless we know what kaza or other administrative unit they lie in. At the time this tale was recorded, there were still some 30,000 villages in Turkey, far, far, too many to be shown on even the largest maps.

## Story 1701

(Our fathers used to say, "Even though the mosque may lie in ruins, the mihrab<sup>40</sup> may still be standing." Just as gold never remains on the ground, a cornerstone does not remain apart but supports a corner of the building. Nobility of character never gets lost.)

The witch woman and Şirin pitched their tent near the great rock of Kalor. Şirin was never left alone but was watched by the witch nursemaid day and night. But Ferhat had again found their tracks and had followed them to the Kalor rock. He came upon them so suddenly that this time the witch had to flee immediately, with no thought of Şirin, in order to save her life. She fled alone to escape Ferhat's magic sword

Şirin was almost overcome with joy. She saw that Ferhat was before her and the witch nursemaid had fled. No one in the entire world felt greater happiness than she did at that moment. She first gave thanks to Allah. Then, putting her arms around the neck of Ferhat's horse, she began to cry for joy.

Ferhat's feelings were inexpressible. His situation had changed so much that he felt like a newly born baby.

<sup>40</sup> A niche in a mosque wall indicating the direction of Mecca; in a sense it corresponds to the altar in a church. All worshipers in a mosque face the mihrab and, by extension, Mecca.

## Story 1701

He was ecstatic. He, too, gave thanks at once to Allah. He said, "My great Allah, a thousand thanks are due to You. I traveled through the entire world, but at last I was rewarded for my efforts by finding Şirin. My dream has come true!" Then looking around, he saw green grass stretching almost endlessly away from the Kalor rock. He thought, "I shall build a room for Şirin in this beautiful place. Because I was not able to kill that wicked nursemaid, she will surely return and try to separate us again. While Şirin is resting in her new room, I shall track down the witch woman and kill her. Şirin must not leave her special room until the witch is dead." He began at once to build a room for her on the Kalor rock while she waited him in the tent.

While Ferhat was constructing the special room for Şirin, the witch woman had changed her appearance completely and had returned in the form of a very old woman. There were many villagers gathered to watch Ferhat at work, so when the old woman approached, crying and pulling hair, he thought that she was one of the villagers. He therefore asked her, "Why are you crying so loudly, grandmother? Why are you sad?"

## Story

When the witch heard Ferhat's question, she began wailing even more loudly, and cried out, "Oh, my poor boy my poor dear boy, if you knew what has happened, you would not be so happy. Oh, your Şirin, your beloved Şirin, is dead. She had waited for so long for your love that she could not bear waiting for you any longer, and so she passed away."

Poor Ferhat! When he heard this news, he was shocked into deep sadness. He said, "If there is no Şirin in this world, then there should not be any Ferhat, either. I cannot live without Şirin." After having said this, he threw his ax high into the air. As the ax descended, he placed his head in its path, and the ax split his skull into two equal parts. When Ferhat collapsed in a pool of blood, some of his blood splashed on the roof of the room he had been building. That blood seeped through the roof and stained the ceiling inside, and its mark still remains there. People now visiting that room can see the real evidence that there was once a Ferhat who lived in this world and then passed away from it.

In his last moments Ferhat lay suffering greatly as he lay in a pool of his own blood. At first, Şirin knew

Story

nothing about this. She remained happily in the tent as she waited for Ferhat to finish her new room. But the wicked witch nursemaid went to Şirin's tent to tell her of Ferhat's condition. Şirin did not recognize the witch, either, for she had disguised herself perfectly as a much older woman. The witch nursemaid said to Şirin, "How can you be so happy? How can you seem so joyful? What kind of lover are you? Ferhat is dying of an injury from an accident. His head was accidentally broken by an ax, but you remain here lost in your own happiness."

Poor Şirin! When she received that information, she ran to the new room where Ferhat lay close to death in his own blood. She could not bear the thought that Ferhat was dying. She said, "With Ferhat gone, life would be useless and meaningless to me. O world, you have never allowed me to have any real happiness! Why did you consider me deserving of such treatment? What could I do without Ferhat? How could I live without him?" She then snatched Ferhat's knife from its sheath and plunged it into her chest. Bleeding, she fell into Ferhat's arms and died.

Even then the witch nursemaid was not finished with her evil actions. She ran to the nearby village and shouted

### Story

at the people there, "Why are you standing around here doing nothing? Over yonder, two young people have wounded themselves fatally for love of each other. Are you Moslems or not? Why do you do nothing when lovers try to commit suicide? Come quickly and help them!" She then started to run off again, but the villagers would not let her escape. Some of them had talked with Ferhat and Şirin about the witch nursemaid, and they knew that she had kept the lovers separated for many years. They killed her immediately there in their own village with their fists.

Then the villagers rushed to the room Ferhat had been building, and there they found the two lovers dead in each other's arms. They then dug a grave in the floor of the room and buried Ferhat and Şirin there close to each other. They buried the witch nursemaid in a grave nearby, but when a thornbush grew from her grave, the villagers concluded that the witch was still trying to separate the lovers even in the other world. They therefore dug up her body again and threw it from a distant precipice.

The grave of Ferhat and Şirin can still be seen by the Kalor rock. Everyone has a time to live, and when that time has ended, one must go. Great Allah, grant that



Story 1701

we may enjoy happiness during our time here. Ferhat and Şirin entered into this world to live in sadness and die in sadness. The world is filled with problems that never end, but the story of Ferhat and Şirin has ended