

Story #292 (Tape #8, Summer 1970)

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Hürsit and Maymihri

children (saint?)

There was once a padishah who had no children. He also had a horse which had never had a colt. He was told in a dream that to get a child, he should go to such-and-such a dede in such-and-such a mountain and pray there; he would be given a child.

He went there, and the old man gave him an apple, ^{magic apple} saying, "Peel this apple and give the peelings and the seeds to your horse, and you and your wife eat the rest."

The padishah did as he was told by the old man, and after nine months and ten days, his wife was about to bear a child. But another voice, in a dream, said to the padishah, "You must take the child after it is born to the same old man to be named."

The horse had a colt while the queen gave birth to a child. The padishah took the horse and the colt, and his wife and the child, to the old man. The dede said, "Your son's name is Hürsit and your colt's name is Kamer [Arabic word for moon]." *namis* *everyday*

The padishah returned to the palace, and to protect his son from danger had him kept in a private room; he had all the

other children born on the same day brought there and had them reared and educated together. The boy reached the age of 15, but he had never gone outside. After the age of 15, he was allowed by the padishah to go out with the other boys.

One day the young prince and his friends went hunting. There were Turkomans and Yürüks who used to live in the territory of the young prince's father. There was a 70-year-old vizier by the name of Karahan who was in love with a Turkoman girl by the name of Maymihri [or Maymehri--one of the other narrators corrected the name]. A partridge flew up before the prince, who released the falcon after the partridge, and Kamer, the horse, ran after the bird. The partridge went and landed on top of a tent from which came a girl who took the partridge, leaving the falcon on top of the tent.

The young prince came and spoke to the girl angrily: "Let me have it back. It's my first game."

When the girl looked at the young man, she fell in love with him because Hürşit was a very handsome young man. The girl was so beautiful that the young man had even fainted at her beauty. There was an old woman there to whom the girl went and said, "I saw a young hunter, and when he saw me he fainted and died."

The woman, who was a witch, said, "He will come back to life whether dead or not. Just give your breast to his mouth and he will revive."

Cure

She did as the old woman said, and the young man revived. Then the girl explained to the young man, "we are grazing flocks

in your territory. My father will pay the grazing fee three or five days from now to your father. If you send a dünür to my father, he will agree to give me to you."

By the time they went to pay the grazing fee to the padishah, the prince had spent his days in ah's and veh's [oh's and ah's]. He explained his problem to his mother, who in turn told it to the padishah. The padishah showed great respect and hospitality to the father of the girl, who had come to pay the grazing fee. They finally reached an agreement about the wedding. The girl's father said, "Of course, Your Majesty, we have a daughter and you have a son, and so let them be married."

But one of the Turkoman party said when they were outside, "You know, we have made no preparation necessary for such a wedding. Let us ask for time to prepare." They got fifteen days from the padishah in which to prepare.

Fifteen days later, the young man filled his saddlebags with gold, put them on kamer's back, took his companions with him, and rode to the girl's father's camp, but he found no one there. Karahan, the vizier, had told the witch woman that the padishah's son would marry the daughter of the Yürük on such-and-such a day, and asked her to prevent it. She had promised to do what she could for him. The witch had gone to the Turkomans and said, "I was sent by the padishah, and the wedding must take place at once." They couldn't understand why the padishah should send someone to change the date of the wedding and to have it earlier than the date agreed on,

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and so they decided to see the vizier Karahan about this. They tied the girl on the back of a camel and went to the vizier Karahan. The girl took off her ring and threw it to a passing shepherd and asked him to take it to a young man by the name of Hürşit.¹

When Hürşit came, he could see no one at the camp site. Hürşit asked his friends, "Will you come with me if I go to search for her?"

They said, "No, we can't go with you."

His thirty or forty companions refused to go with him, so Hürşit set out alone on horseback, and soon he met that shepherd.

The shepherd asked, "Are you Hürşit?"

"Yes, I am."

"Well, the girl sends her greetings and this ring to you, saying, 'Let him come and find me at Karahan's camp as soon as possible.'"

He stayed that night as a guest of the shepherd. The shepherd said, "I'm grazing the stock of someone, but while waiting for you to come, many of the sheep died." The young man paid him some gold to make up for his loss. He then set out, but lost his way atop a mountain.

He thought, "I won't let people say that the padishah's son died a natural death. It would be better to die by falling

¹This story is told by a poor narrator. This kind of "flashback" indicates a weakness in command of the tale.

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from a precipice. Then people will say, 'Oh, he fell and was killed.'"

He went up a steep hill, but he couldn't kill himself. Finally, he saw a light which came from the tent of a girl named Ak Kiz whose camp had about 500 tents. She was also a Turkoman. He went to her camp ground to stay for the night. Ak Kiz had a club with one blow of which she used to kill a servant. Ak Kiz was having her breakfast in the morning. After her breakfast, she ordered her younger maid to bring water and the older one to wash dishes, and she herself went back to bed to sleep.

The younger maid went to the fountain and saw a horse grazing on the pasture there and a young man lying on the grass. When she saw him, she felt as if she had been struck by his handsomeness. The older maid shouted, "If my lady wakes up, she'll kill you. Come back quickly. Why do you stand over there?"

The younger maid said, "I beg your pardon, sister, but if you came over here, your brain would be mixed with I-don't-know-what [a euphemism for excrement]."2

When the elder maid came to the fountain, she looked and was also entranced, unable to move in the presence of what she saw. In the meantime, Ak Kiz had awakened and had seen that the dishes had not been washed and the water had not been brought from the fountain. She shouted at the maids, "Why are you standing over there?"

2 "To have one's brains mixed with I-don't-know-what" is a proverb among peasants.

They shouted back, "Lady, the matter is such. If you come over here, even your brains will be mixed with I-don't-know-what. There is such a fellow here."

Ak Kiz went to the fountain and dismissed both of her maids from the place. "Let me sing a song to this fellow," she said to herself, "and see if he will be frightened." She sang,

"Young man, are you ill? Won't you wake up?

Won't you get up and look around?

If you are ill, let me help you get up.

Let me send you back to your own country."

When the young man heard this, he awakened and wondered who it might be singing this song. He answered, singing as follows:

"Once I was high; now I am low.

Now the beautiful and wealthy are in vogue.

I will not marry you, black gypsy.

I will not marry you. I'll not embrace you."

When the girl heard this, she wondered why a stranger, far from home, should speak to her in that manner. She might have asked her people living in 500 tents to get rid of him, but instead she lifted him up and carried him to her tent.

She had slaughtered camels, oxen, and sheep, but the young man wouldn't even look at this food. She then said, "Tell me! What is your trouble?"

"Well, I was in love with a girl named Maymihri, and she is supposed to have gone to Karahan. She was my betrothed. I

am searching for her."

"All right. Karahan was once related to us. That girl of whom you speak is dead. In fact, her funeral was held yesterday. You cannot find her any more. Come and be the commander of these 500 tents i.e., households]. All this belongs to me, and there is no one above me. You can marry me."

"No, I cannot do that. I cannot promise you anything unless I see her dead body or her grave."

That evening, the girl let him go, and he reached Karahan's camp. When he was watering his horse at the fountain, he saw an old woman there. He said to her, "Sister, I'll give you a red gold lira to be your guest tonight." His purpose was to get some information from her. In fact, that night Karahan and the young woman were to be married, and he wanted to know where the wedding would take place.

"I have no need of your gold."

"Please, sister. I'll pay you five gold liras."

"Very well, then, come along," the old woman said. "It

seems that you have a problem."

She took the young man to her house. This woman had three sons, one of whom was the vizier to Karahan [the vizier's vizier, i.e.], and the second was his adviser, and the third was his treasurer. The old woman and the young man reached home, where there were three brides and a female child.

As soon as they entered the house, the young man started saying "Ahi" and "Vahi" He had a saz with him, and he started

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moving his fingers on the strings of the saz, and the old woman got up and started dancing, thinking that the young man had fallen in love with her. She said, "Well, young man, this is our custom. We dance for our guests. Now tell me what your trouble is."

"My trouble is that I am in love with Maymihri. She was my betrothed, but I lost her. I heard she was given to the vizier Karahan. My purpose is to see her

She said, "Only my sons can show her to you."

The young man asked, "Who are your sons?"

"They are now at the wedding room. The oldest is his vizier; the second is his adviser; and the third is his treasurer. I shall call them here now." She split an onion in two and gave the pieces to the female child, saying, "Smear these over your eyes and say, 'My mother calls you. She wants all three of you to come back.

The child, crying, went to the brothers and said, "Your mother is in a desperate condition and wants you back."

When the sons came, the eldest looked and saw a man sitting in the room. He said to his brothers, "What are we waiting here for? Let us kill him."

"What is he doing among our women folk?" asked the second. "Let us kill him."

The youngest son was a wise man and adviser to the vizier. He said, "We are three and we have three wives, which makes us six. Six people can kill a man, all right. But let us find out what the situation is

They went in, and their mother began to speak. "Sons, if you do not solve this man's problem, I shall not make the milk I have given you helal.³ He was once betrothed to Maymihri. Now she is given to the vizier Karahan, and the young man wishes to enter the wedding room--that's all--just to be there. Just let him enter the wedding room."

The oldest son said, "If he wants gold, I'll give him as much as he wants."

The second son said, "If he wants advice, I'll give him as much as he likes."

The third son said, "If he wants good horses, I'll give him as much as he likes."

The young man said, "I do not need anything."

³A mother's care and love, symbolized by her milk, is paid for by subsequent obedience of the child. If the child is obedient and properly respectful, then the mother cancels the debt before her death, and declares that her milk was helal, lawful, not gained in an evil way. Such a threat as the mother offers here is serious, and a son would do anything to insure that his mother make her milk helal. Ungrateful children make their mother's milk haram. They will have long tongues in Hell, on which people will trample, and other such after-life tortures. Hence children, before a trip, want their parents to make all obligations helal to them. If survivors think a dead person has not had all his obligations made helal and that they have not done what they could to absolve their sins, they may at the graveside at the funeral give a hoca 100 liras; the hoca then gives the money to ten different people. They hand it back, and it is then given back and forth many times to be sure all debts are absolved--not just debts, but obligations. The deceased often decides before death how much his debts will amount to and thus how many times the money should change hands. He usually sets it very high to be sure, and so the money will be exchanged many times. When this is all over, the hoca keeps the money, except for a small amount given to each of the hands participating. Devir is the name of the custom. Each time it is exchanged, the money is counted. Survivors fear the deceased will not lie at rest and will haunt them. This can be quite a racket for the hocas!

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They all went to the guest room of the vizier, where everyone stood up and everyone present started to make room for the newcomers. But the old woman had warned, "Don't sit where the people make room for you." She had said, "Sit at the place over which the vizier Karahan lifts his arm. There is a hole directly opposite Karahan through which the girl can be seen. The girl can see the vizier through that hole, and the vizier can see the girl. No one else can see her. But if you sit there, you will be able to see Maymihri too."

They entered the room, and everyone arose to make room, but they did not sit down. When the vizier happened to lift his arm, he left room by his side. The young man went and sat there and thus was able to see the girl. When Hürşit sat there, the girl could see him. Her hair was combed down over her face. She turned back and sat down again.

The young man dropped his saz from his hand as they moved about. When the guests saw this, they said, "Oh, this poet may have talents!"

The young man said, "I found this saz on the road coming here. I can't really play it."

The guests said, "Oh, no! You wouldn't have picked it up if you hadn't known how to play it."

The young man said, "I've come a long way. I'm tired, and my mouth would go crooked when I sing. You go on with your entertainment. Don't mind me

But the guests still insisted that he sing. "Why did you pick it up if you can't play?" they said.

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Hürşit took the saz in his hand and sang,

"Don't look, Maymihri; don't look.

Gather your locks and keep them for me.

The locks belong to Hürşit

Don't throw them into the fire

I've come to you, to you."

When the girl heard this, she gathered her locks and hid them [i.e., put her hair up]. But the vizier Karahan struck Hürşit once.

Then the three sons of the old woman arose and said, "Why do you hit the guest? Do you think you are our Allah by becoming our vizier?"⁴

The vizier said, "Didn't you hear what he said?"

"Of course we did."

"He said like this and like that . . . They argued back and forth.

They finally agreed to call the hoca, who would know what the young man meant by those words. There was a learned hoca there--like me. They called him, and the hoca came, frightened and wondering if he would be beaten.

"Hoca efendi, sit over there," they said. They then explained, "A guest came and dropped his saz. Everyone wanted him to play, but he said he did not know how to play. He refused to sing, saying his mouth would be too twisted. We forced him, finally, to sing. When he said, 'I've come to you,

⁴This is a good example of the rural Turk's respect for and commitment to the requirement of hospitality.

to you,' the vizier hit him.

The hoca said, "He was praising the owner of the house with such words."

The three sons of the old woman said, "You see how well the hoca understood the meaning of the words." They turned to the vizier and said, "who are you to behave so to a guest?" They then gave him many drinks and made him drunk. *Hospitality*
fleshed cher

During the night, the three sons united the girl with Hürşit and provided a good horse for the girl. But although the two tried hard to escape, they couldn't get away from Karahan's camp. They grew tired, and Hürşit said, "I am tired and must rest a while."

The girl said, "He has a good horse in a cage and will catch up with us and kill us. Let us move on!" Maymihri insisted, but Hürşit wouldn't listen to her imploring.

Karahan, leading his troops, started moving against them. Although they were very close and the girl was crying, Hürşit still refused to get up and move. When the vizier Karahan came close to him, Hürşit struck him with his sword and cut off his head. He then took his horse and put Maymihri on the back of the horse and escaped.

The padishah's vizier's] sons had seen their father killed. One of his sons said, "why do we stand here? See, they have run away after killing our father."

To this, the youngest son replied, "why should we [avenge his death]? How could a girl of twenty wed our father, who is over sixty? Turn back. He did well killing our father."

Heads an
Profman *yes, keep it*
Hürşit rode on till he reached the place where he had left his 39 companions. Hürşit joined his friends, but by then they had become bandits [the narrator said Arabs, people often hostile to Turks] They took Hürşit to be executed, and carried the girl away to employ her as a maid in their service.

Hürşit said, "Do not kill me, and I shall tell you something."

"Well, let us hear what you will tell."

Hürşit sang,

"I'm coming from a strange land, and my liver is scorched,

And my hands are tied among the Arabs.

My name is Hürşit, but I am the son of a sultan.

For God's sake, Arabs, do not kill me."

The bandits, when they heard this, were surprised, for they had not recognized him. They said, "We have been waiting for him for months."⁵ They asked him if he had a captive.

He said, "Yes, I have a girl with me. Take my shirt and go and see what she says. She used to say that she would never surrender to anyone but me. Go and see what she will tell you."

⁵He has not been away for months. Is this just a careless error? This is a tale that is somewhat like the Bamsi Beyrek legend in The Book of Dede Korkut and like other tales in which the hero, in quest of his betrothed, has been away for a long time and is not, upon his return, immediately recognized by his friends.

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They went and threw his shirt before her [a sign he was dead], saying, "He told us such-and-such, but we didn't listen to his song, and we killed him."

To this, the girl replied in the following manner:

"Do not quinces and pomegranates grow in our land?

Could there be any honesty in the Arabs?

Hürşit may be dead, but Maymihri will not belong to you.

What did you do to my lover, O Arab?

I darkened my brown eyebrows.

O cruel men, how did you kill my lover?

Take me to his body.

O Arab, what did you do to my sweetheart, O Arab?"

Many of the bandits were on Hürşit's side, but some of them said, "Let this girl be our servant."

They made the bandits drunk with raki, and Hürşit killed many of them and brought the girl back to her father, and a wedding took place.

Ahmet Uysal: "Where did you hear this tale?"

Narrator: "From a blind man."

Ahmet Uysal: "When?"

Narrator: "Thirty-five years ago."

Ahmet Uysal: "Did he know other tales?"

Narrator: "I don't know. He's dead."