

Story 1893 (1996 Tape 3)

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The Girl Hatched from a Chicken Egg

There was once a woman who had no child. She wanted so badly to have a daughter that she decided to have a chicken baby. She placed an egg in a chest and left that chest in a warm place. She waited for the egg to hatch. Chicken eggs usually hatch in twenty-one or twenty-two days. From the egg came a creature that was really human, but she looked exactly like a chicken. The woman was pleased, and she took the chicken with her wherever she went. The chicken followed her about in the way a child would. The woman talked to her, asked her questions, and treated her just as she would a child.

Time passed and time passed, and the chicken became much older. One day she wandered over onto the property of the next-door neighbor. who was the son of a wealthy bey.<sup>1</sup> In the neighbor's garden the chicken

<sup>1</sup>In Republican Turkey there are no beys. The term

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saw a pool. She said to the gardener, "Let your head be down and your legs be up." As soon as she said that, the gardener was petrified, like a statue, and stood motionless. The chicken removed its feathers and turned into a beautiful girl. She swam in the pool for awhile and then climbed out of it and put her feathers back on again. Before leaving, she released the gardener by saying, "Now let your head be up and let your legs be down."

Day after day the chicken girl returned to the garden to swim, and she stayed for longer and longer periods of time. While she was there, the gardener was enchanted and unable to tend the garden as he had done formerly. As a result, one day the son of the bey said to him, "All of the plants are turning yellow, and all of the flowers are wilting. Why are you not tending the garden properly?"

The gardener answered, "Efendi,<sup>2</sup> some strange things refers to Turkish aristocrats of Ottoman, Seljuk and pre-Seljuk times, and goes back to the 8th or 9th century--and perhaps even earlier. The bey was a landed nobleman, sometimes wealthy and often politically powerful. In the 10th-century Book of Dede Korkut he was a tribal leader.

<sup>2</sup>In earlier times the word efendi was a term of respect used in speaking to distinguished men. By the mid-20th century, however, its prestige had so eroded that it was used only while speaking to children or servants.

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have been happening in this garden. Something comes up to me and says, 'Let your head be down and your legs be up.' After that I cannot move, and I become senseless. All the time that I am in such a condition I am incapable of doing my usual work in the garden."

On the following day the son of the bey went to the garden early and hid himself there. He thought that he saw a chicken enter the garden, take off her feathers, and become a very beautiful girl. That girl seemed to go swimming in the garden pool, after which she put on her feathers, became a chicken again, and then left. He could not believe what he had seen. He asked all the servants in his house, "Have you seen a very beautiful girl enter our garden each day?"

they said. "The only thing we have seen entering your garden is a chicken owned by the woman who lives in the next house."

Nevertheless, the son of the bey went next door and said to the woman there, "I should like to have your daughter as my bride."

The woman replied, "No, no! She is not a girl. She is just a chicken. How could you manage with her as

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your bride?"

"Never mind that. I still want her." But the woman would not agree to this.

On the following day the chicken girl returned to the pool again. After removing her feathers and becoming a beautiful girl, she then removed ten rings from her ten fingers and laid them beside the pool. While she was looking in another direction, the son of the bey took one of her ten rings. When the girl had finished swimming, she began to replace the rings on her hands, saying, "This ring is for the first finger, and this ring is for the next finger." But after she had put on all of the rings that lay at the edge of the pool, there was still one finger for which there was no ring.

Now that the son of the bey had one of her rings, he was certain that he had actually seen a real girl swimming. He therefore sent some of his people to bargain with the mother for the hand of that girl. But again the mother said, "That is impossible! She is not a girl. She is a chicken."

The matchmakers pleaded with her, saying, "But the son of the bey can do many good things for both you and your daughter." With arguments like this, they finally

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persuaded the woman to give her daughter to the young man. Soon after that a large wedding celebration was started. Music was played and drums were beaten day after day. Many people feasted and danced in honor of the bride and groom. After all of these activities had ended, the bride was placed in a cart and taken to husband's home

Almost immediately the bride began to have difficulty with her mother-in-law. One day when the woman was baking some pastry, the chicken bride pecked some of the dough with her beak. The mother-in-law drove her out of the kitchen with a rolling pin. On another day when the bridegroom's mother was cutting up vegetables to cook, the girl pecked some of this food too. The mother-in-law became so angry that she chased the bride of the kitchen with a knife.

When the son of the bey and his mother were away from the house, the bride would remove her feathers and become a girl. She would make pastry and cook food herself. She would then clean the house. But before anyone else could return, she would put on her feathers and become a chicken again.

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The mother-in-law could not understand who had done all of this work, but the son of the bey knew very well that it had been done by his bride. One day after his mother had left the house, the young man decided that he too would pretended to leave, but actually he remained at home and hid himself behind some furniture. When the bride took off her feathers to begin cooking and cleaning, the bridegroom rushed out of his hiding place and grabbed the girl. He then seized her chicken feathers and threw them into the fire, saying, "This is enough!"

She was a very beautiful girl, and the son of the bey wanted everyone to know this. He therefore arranged second wedding celebration that was even larger than the first one had been. They lived happily together after that and had all their wishes fulfilled. May we all be as fortunate as they were.