

Story 1891 (1996 Tape 3)

Narrator: Fazilet Tak-  
kalı, 71

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ince of Isparta

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The Inevitable Bride

There was once a sultan who had a son of an age to be married. The mother and father of this young man were searching and searching for a suitable bride for the prince.

The young man spent much of his own time riding into the countryside to hunt. One day as he was riding along the seashore, he saw an old man sitting at the edge of the water, breaking twigs and throwing those bits of wood into the waves. The prince asked the old man, "What are you doing, grandfather?"

"I am matching twigs which stand for boys and girls. The boy and girl represented by a pair of twigs will become married. Once the twigs have been matched, I break them and throw them into the sea.

Pleased to hear this, the prince said, "I wish to be married. Can you tell me with whom I shall be matched?"

Story 1891

The old man replied, "I recently found your match, broke your twigs, and threw them into the sea. Your match is still in her cradle, a newborn baby. There is a broommaker somewhere in some village whose wife recently bore this little girl. Do not bother looking for any other bride, for this is the girl who will become your wife."

Greatly annoyed by what he had just heard, the prince replied, "How dare you offend me by saying that I must wait for a baby girl to grow up so that I can marry her? I am ready to marry now!"

"Boy, I told you that your matching with a girl had already been completed, and I have no power to change that. I matched the way Fate had intended it to be. Your twigs were broken a few days ago and cast into the sea. They cannot be recovered."

The young man rode no farther that day but returned at once to the palace of the padishah. There he said, "Father, please fill my saddlebags with gold, for I want to make a trip." Because he was the son of a sultan, this boy usually received whatever he requested. As soon as his saddlebags were packed, he mounted his horse and

Story 1891

departed.

He went in search of the broommaker who was the father of the baby with whom he had been matched. There were many broommakers throughout the land, and he had to search for a long time to find the right one. The particular broommaker whom he sought was a very poor man. He would make brooms, take them to the marketplace, and there try to sell them. This was the only way he had of supporting his family.

The young man finally found the village in which this broommaker lived, and by asking people in the street, he learned where that man's house was located. It was a very small house which had only a porch and one room. When the prince arrived there, he knocked on the door. He said to the woman who opened that door, "Where is the broommaker?"

"My husband is not here right now. He went out to gather more broom straw, but if you will wait for a few minutes, he will return

Just as his wife had said, the broommaker soon came back. The young man asked him, "Will you accept me as your guest tonight? I can tie my horse to that tree over

Story 1891

there."

The broommaker replied, "Our house is so small that it has but one room, and some of its space is taken by the baby's cradle. We are sorry, but there is really no room for you."

Taking a handful of gold coins from his saddlebag, the prince said, "If you will permit me to stay with you for just one night, this gold will be yours."

When the broommaker saw that gold, he was astonished. He said to his wife, "Woman, make a bed for our guest alongside the cradle. We can sleep in the opposite corner. There is no comparison between all the money I have ever earned as a broommaker with the amount of gold that has been offered to us." After that, they tied their guest's horse to the tiny porch of their house, made up beds on the floor, and retired for the night

After the broommaker and his wife had gone to sleep, the prince arose and, taking out his knife, he slit the baby's throat. He placed one of the saddlebags of gold in the cradle. Then, leaving the house quietly, he mounted his horse and left that village. As he rode away, he thought happily, "We shall see now how little the

Story 1891

matchmaker knew about my marriage! I am free to find some more suitable young lady and marry her soon."

When the broommaker and his wife awoke in the morning, they heard no sound from the cradle. It was unusual

the baby did not cry. The broommaker asked, "What is wrong with our baby that it does not cry this morning?" They both went to the cradle, where they found infant lying in its own blood.

"That evil rich man has killed our child!" said mother. "What are we supposed to do now?"

But when they examined the child, they found that she was still alive. At the same time they also discovered that they now had enough gold to hire a doctor to heal the baby's wound. Grabbing the baby, they rushed with it to a doctor, who bandaged the child's throat.

after day the doctor treated the wound until it was at last healed and the baby had regained her strength. Time come, time go, and the girl passed through childhood and became a beautiful young woman.

The son of the sultan was a wealthy man, but he was still single. He found very few girls he considered suitable for him, and none of those few was willing to

Story 1891

marry him. In the meantime, the former broommaker used the gold left in his tiny house to become a very successful merchant. The people of his village now honored him, and all of them admired his beautiful daughter. Her beauty also became known beyond that village, and one day some friends of the prince said to him, "Why don't you marry that beauty who lives in such and such a village? If her father will not give her to you, to whom would he give her?"

So the prince sent a letter to the girl's father asking for her hand in marriage. A few days later prince and his mother went to the home of the girl to visit her and her family.<sup>1</sup> The prince fell in love with the girl at first sight. Arrangements were soon made for their marriage, and then a lengthy and expensive wedding celebration was begun.

After the wedding ceremony had been completed, the bride and groom were delivered to the nuptial chamber. There the prince noticed that beneath her long hair the bride had a scar across her throat. "How did you happen

<sup>1</sup>This is not the traditional way in which Turkish weddings were arranged. The narrator has coalesced the procedure and eliminated its ritual features.

Story 1891

to get such a scar?"

"When I was just a tiny infant, my parents accepted as a guest a young man who knocked on our door. During the night that the young man stayed in our very small house, he cut my throat. Then he left much gold in my cradle and disappeared. My parents used some of that gold to have my wound treated by a doctor and the rest of it to establish my father in business. This scar came from that wound."

At that moment the prince suddenly realized that this was the woman who had grown from the baby he thought he had killed. He appealed to Allah for forgiveness "How could I have been guilty of such a great sin? How could I have taken such action against the will of Allah? I have married the very girl that the matchmaker, speaking the will of Allah, said I would!"