

Story 707 (1966)

Narrator: Ali Çuga

Location: Village of Ulutepe,  
kaza of Turhal,  
Tokat Province

Date:

BUT TALE LEARNED FROM

Narrator: Muhsin Karakaya

Location: Amasya, Amasya  
Province

Date:

*Thought*  
The Arab Girl in Hate and in Love

*TEK*

Once there was and once there was not, when God had many people, and it was a virtue to talk much and a sin to say little. In that time there was a padişah who wanted to make the <sup>40,54</sup>pilgrimage to <sup>40,54</sup>Mecca. In order to protect their daughter while they were away, he and his wife designated forty palace women to be her companions, and they hired an older woman to serve them all. Then he and his queen departed for Mecca.

While they were travelling toward Mecca, their daughter and her forty companions danced in their quarters and enjoyed themselves. In those days everything was cooked with oil,<sup>1</sup> and oil was used for all lighting. As the girls

<sup>1</sup>Oil lamps were common since ancient times, and a padişah could afford to buy the necessary oil. Food was not, however, cooked with oil but with wood in a mangal.

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were <sup>41-45</sup> dancing about happily, one of them bumped into the lamp and knocked it over, putting out the light. Everything was cast into darkness. The girls cried out, "What shall we do? How shall we find our way?"

Among the companions there was an Arab girl. She said, "It was I who hit the lamp with my hand, and therefore it must be my neck that pays the penalty for it. Take a rope and lower me from the window in a basket, and I shall go and bring a light.

As she had directed, the Arab girl was lowered with a rope. Looking around after she reached the ground, she saw a light in a <sup>little table</sup> restaurant, and so she went there. She went directly to the kitchen of the restaurant where the chef was working. Attracted to this girl, the chef pulled out a chair and said, "Lady, please sit down

The Arab girl sat down as the chef talked and talked. As he talked, he kept moving closer and closer to her. She asked, "What foods do you have prepared?"

"Oh, I have this and that and something and something else."

The girl noticed that there were in the kitchen three earthenware vases so tall that the top of each had to be reached by a short ladder. Pointing at them, the girl

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asked, "What do you store in those three huge jars?"<sup>2</sup>

The chef answered, "In one there is strained honey,  
In the second one there<sup>e</sup> is melted butter.<sup>3</sup> And in the  
third one there is olive oil.

The Arab girl asked the chef, "What does strained honey  
mean?"

"Heavens Haven't you ever heard of strained honey  
before? It is amazing that you should not know what it  
is."<sup>4</sup>

"Is it something edible?"

"Why, of course!"

"Well, then, bring me a little and let me taste it

The chef climbed up the ladder, and taking his ladle  
he dipped it into the jar of honey. While the chef was  
doing this, the girl climbed up the ladder behind him

<sup>2</sup>In the Mediterranean basin and the Middle East there  
are very large clay vases. These may be six or even eight  
feet tall and four to five feet in diameter. Known in  
Turkish as a kup, this type of vessel is used to store  
water and oil. The vases in which the forty thieves hide  
in the Arabian Nights story of "Ali Baba and the Forty  
Thieves" is of this type.

<sup>3</sup>Butter is melted and cooked for a prescribed period of  
time. This process, analogous to pasteurization, kills cer-  
tain bacteria and thus retards spoilage. The top layer  
hardens enough to form a seal which keeps the air from the  
rest of the butter.

<sup>4</sup>Here and subsequently the Arab girl feigns ignorance  
about commonplace foods in order to lure the chef to his  
own death.

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grabbed his feet, and dumped him, head downward, into the vase of honey. Descending again, the girl, taking a lamp and much food, returned to her friends in the palace.

In the morning the proprietor of the restaurant came to the kitchen and discovered that the chef was missing. He shouted, "Chef! Chef! Chef! Where are you?" but he received no answer. Counting the plates, he found that several of them were missing, too. He concluded that the chef had run off, stealing the plates when he left. He said, "If I should ever find you, I shall cut off a piece of your flesh and stuff it into your ear!" Then he went out and hired another chef.

Let us now return to the palace and see what the girls are doing. They were all eating the food which the Arab girl had brought to them. The Arab girl herself was thinking about the chef. "I wonder what happened to him?" she said to herself. "I shall tip over the lamp again and thus have to return to the restaurant for light once more. As the girls were dancing and enjoying themselves, she tipped over the lamp again, and again the room was left in darkness. "Well, I did not do it on purpose," she said, "but I was the one who did it, and so it is my neck that must suffer for it."

Again lowered with a rope, she again came to the same

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restaurant, where she discovered that there was a new chef.

"What dishes of food do you have prepared?" she asked when he had answered that question, she asked, "What do you keep in those huge vases?"

"One has strained honey. One has olive oil. And the third has melted butter."

The Arab girl asked, "What does olive oil mean?"

"Is it possible that a lady like you would not know what olive oil is? It is oil taken from olives."

"Well, I have never seen it. Is it edible?"

"Of course it is!"

"Let me see what sort of thing it is--what color it is and what it tastes like."

When the chef climbed the ladder and leaned over the vase to dip out some with his ladle, the Arab girl slipped up behind him and pushed him in head first. Climbing down again, she took a lamp and enough of the best dishes to feed all of her friends at the palace. There they asked her, "Where did you get these dishes?"

"From my uncle's house," she answered. "They were having a wedding party, and they sent all of these things. I told them I was with friends, and so they sent enough all of you."

After they had finished eating, they all returned to

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their dancing and entertainment--all except the Arab girl. She was wondering whether the chef had drowned, or what had happened to him. Deciding, finally, to go and find out, she once more tipped over the lamp, and once more she was lowered to earth through the window by means of a rope.

When she reached the restaurant, she found still another new chef, but she did not see the forty guards<sup>45-50</sup> whom the owner had hired to watch closely the interior of the restaurant. They watched through holes in the walls. While watching the restaurant in this way, they observed the Arab girl enter the kitchen and the chef offer her a chair to sit upon.

The girl asked, "Chef, what do you keep in those three very large pots?"

"One of them contains strained honey. One of them contains olive oil. And the third contains melted butter

"What does butter mean?"

"Lady, don't you know what butter is--something which we eat every day? It is made from cow's milk

"Exactly what is it? What does it taste like? Let me have a small bit of it."

The chef went up the ladder with his ladle to get some, but before he could dip out any butter, the girl

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so they rushed into the kitchen, arrested the girl, rescued the chef before he drowned. Then it became quite evident that the two previous chefs had been pushed into the other two vases by the girl.

In the morning the guards revealed their findings to the proprietor of the restaurant. "This girl is the person who killed your two former chefs."

The proprietor looked at the girl and saw how beautiful she was. He could not possibly have such a beautiful person killed. And now the forty guards began to quarrel, they could neither share the girl nor decide which of them should have her.

"Why are you fighting over me?" she asked. "I have forty girl companions, and I make forty-one. Let me go and bring them all here, and then each of you can take his choice of them."

"Are you sure that you would not just run away?"

"No, I would not do that."

"Will you take an oath to that effect?"

(In those days the strongest oath that one could make was, "If this is not done, may my head scarf fall to the ground."<sup>5</sup>)

"I shall go and bring back my friends with me. If I

<sup>5</sup>This is apparently a euphemism for "May my head be cut off."

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fail to do this, may my head scarf fall to the ground!"

Released, the Arab girl returned to the palace, but this time without either light or food. When she reached the palace, she sat down and began to cry. The padişah's daughter went to her, embraced her, and asked, "Why are you weeping?"

"I discovered from my uncle that I am not really a friend but only a servant. Upon hearing this, I could eat a thing. They asked me to bring all of you to my house where you can eat. The wedding party is not over. It is still going on."

The padişah's daughter said, "If my father should discover that we went there, he would have all of us killed.

"No, no! No one will know anything at all about it. We shall go and stay only a short time and then return, at night without our being seen by anyone."

To descend, each girl was lowered by others, and the last girl was lowered by the old woman. When they reached the restaurant, each guard grabbed a girl.

But the Arab girl said, "No, no! That is not the customary way to do this. First you should set the table, and then we shall all eat and drink. Only then, after everyone is finished drinking, should partners be chosen

Thinking that this was a reasonable idea, the guards



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proceeded to set the tables, placing food and bottles of wine on them. So they ate and drank, and all the while, the Arab girl served as cup-bearer. By giving the guards large quantities of wine, she soon made them drunk. When they all lay drunk on the floor, she fastened each arm of the proprietor to a sharpened stake and drove the stake into the ground.

She now gathered her friends together and left. But when they had returned to the palace, she remembered something. Before serving drinks to the guards, she had taken off her bracelets and hidden them under a cushion. She spoke about this to her friends, and finally she said, "Lower me again from the window so that I can recover them."

Hearing this, the padişah's daughter said, "Give no further thought to them. When my father returns, I shall have diamond-mounted bracelets made for you."

the Arab girl said, "No, I must go and get my own bracelets. Lower me again!" Once on the street, she bought a pair of baggy trousers,<sup>6</sup> a suitcase, and a walking stick. Wearing the trousers, and crooking her back like an old lady, she hobbled along leaning on her walking stick. She called out, as she went, "The <sup>Fortune Teller</sup> fortune-telling grandmother is coming! The fortune-telling grandmother is coming!"

<sup>6</sup>These trousers are Turkish şalvar.

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This is what she was announcing as she passed before the restaurant.

By now the forty guards and the owner of the restaurant had recovered consciousness. The owner was furious<sup>Angry</sup> "If I ever catch that Arab girl, I shall drink three hand-fuls of her blood!" But he was distracted from such thoughts by the call from the street: "Fortune-telling grandmother!" Hearing this, the proprietor said to his men, "Bring that fortune-telling grandmother here, and we shall see what she can tell us

Entering the restaurant, the Arab girl asked for a bowl of water. When this was brought, she placed it before her on the table and began staring into it without saying a word.<sup>7</sup> After a few moments, however, she burst out laughing.

"Grandmother, why do you laugh?" they asked her.

"Well, I can see that there was a large crowd of girls here recently, and it seems that these girls played tricks on you. It looks as if one of them in particular played tricks on every one of you. That is why I laughed.

"What did she do to us?"

"Before I shall be able to describe that, I shall need

<sup>7</sup> Fortune tellers and seers gaze into mirrors, crystal balls, or dishes of water. A common conjuror in Turkey is the cinci hoca (jinn-calling priest), and this conjuror almost always employs a bowl of water in this way.

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to have from each of you one broad bean."<sup>8</sup>

"Well, that is no problem," said the proprietor. Speaking then to one of his men, he said, "Go out and a whole sack of them.

"No, no, no! It cannot be done that way. Each of you must bring his own bean, and no two of you should your beans from the same shop." As soon as the men had all left, she recovered her bracelets from beneath the cushion and departed

Some time later, when the proprietor and the guards had all returned, they found that the fortune-telling grandmother had disappeared. The proprietor said, angrily, "She was no fortune-telling grandmother at all. She was that same Arab girl. If I ever catch that girl, I shall suck her blood!" Determined to do this without further delay he made a plan to accomplish it. Dressed in an old and shabby suit and wearing<sup>an</sup> artificial beard, he too<sup>k</sup> a bunch of roses in one hand and a stick in the other, he began walking back and forth on the street before the palace. As he walked, he shouted, "Rose-selling father!"<sup>9</sup> Rose-selling father! Here comes the rose-selling father "

When the Arab girl saw this rose-seller, she recogniz-

<sup>8</sup>The broad bean referred to here is the lima bean

<sup>9</sup>The Turkish term is gülcü baba.

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ed him at once. She called her girl friends about her said, "That is the proprietor of the restaurant. There he is! Watch, now, and see what kind of a trick I shall on him!"

"Oh, no," they said, "don't take such a chance!"

"Rose-selling father," she called down, "what is price of your roses?"

He named his price. I have forgotten just how much it was.

"Well, then, give us several of them."

"You must come down here so that I can sell them to you."

"We cannot go down, for all of the doors are locked. If you like, we can pull you up here to the window with this rope."

"All right."

They lowered the rope to the proprietor of the restaurant. He tied the rope securely around his waist and then called to them, "Pull me up!"

When they had raised him about halfway up, the Arab girl took a knife and cut the rope. The man tumbled downward, head over heels, and when he struck the ground, arms and legs were broken and his skull was cracked. Badly injured, he called to a porter and had himself carried home.

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Observing this, the Arab girl said, "This man is not dead. Wait and see what I shall do to him next."

She had all of her forty companions defecate in plates which she had taken from the restaurant. She then sprinkled dyes of various colors over the excrement. Putting on a doctor's <sup>Duagune</sup> robe, she took the plates and descended to the street, where she hired a carriage.

Riding slowly through the streets, she called, "Here is the famous doctor who can find cures for all kinds of fractures and sprains Here is the famous doctor who heals all kinds of fractures and sprains!"

When the people in the home of the restaurant owner heard this, they said, "Let us call in this doctor for our patient."

"My fee for examinations is 300 liras," said the Arab girl.<sup>10</sup> After examining the patient, she said, "My diagnosis is that he has fallen from a great height. Pay me my 300-lira fee!" After she had received this amount, she said, "My fee for medication will be 500 liras, for it will require that I prescribe a great amount of medicine. Undress the patient."

After they had undressed him, she ordered, "Now all of you must leave the room until I call for you." After they had gone, she took the plates of excrement and smeared the excrement on the patient heavily from head to foot. Then, cal-

<sup>10</sup> Until the soaring inflation devalued the Turkish lira in the 1970s. 300 liras would have been a substantial fee.

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ling back his family and servants, she said, "Now build a fire in this room and cover the patient with two blankets. If he should say, 'It smells terrible!' place another blanket over him and have one person sit on each corner to be sure that he stays covered." Then, taking her 500-lira fee, she left.

As the patient grew warmer, he started shouting, "Oh, it smells terrible!"

Members of the family said to each other, "That doctor made the correct diagnosis. As you see, the patient is saying just what the doctor said he would: 'It smells bad!'" And then they covered him with another blanket and placed one person on each corner to hold it down.

"Don't! Don't!" he shouted. "I am dying! This is human excrement in here!"

One of those present said, "He may possibly be suffocating. Let us open the blankets a bit for a moment to give him some air." When they did this, they discovered beneath the blankets a great amount of excrement, and so they pulled him out and washed him off.

"That person was not a doctor at all," the restaurant owner said. "It was that Arab girl who, once again, has played a trick on me! If I survive these injuries, I swear that I shall catch her and drink three handfuls of her

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blood!"

In the meantime, the padişah had finally returned from his pilgrimage to Mecca. He said to his daughter's forty companions, "You have kept my daughter company and entertained her all of the time that we were away. Now I should like to learn your wishes. Wish for anything that you would like, and I shall give it to you

Each girl told the padişah her wish, some selecting gifts of various kinds, some choosing to be married to wealthy husbands. But the Arab girl said, "I want nothing, my padişah."

"But you must make a wish for something!"

After refusing his offer twice, she agreed to make her wish known. "All right, then, I should like to have a life-size rubber doll that looks exactly like me. Her height and her figure--everything about her--should be just like me. Also, this likeness of me should be able to make one remark: 'Yes, yes.'

The padişah had the replica of the Arab girl made. In its back was a mechanism which, when squeezed, would say, "Yes, yes." clothes.

this liquid. Then she went to the padişah and said, "Your

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majesty, I have no parents in this world. You are both father and mother to me. You may do whatever you wish with me." After that, the royal couple treated her as they would their own children.

One day, matchmakers were brought to the palace to arrange marriages for the daughters of the padişah. She refused all of the young men proposed to her by these agents. When the proprietor of the restaurant heard a report of this, he said to himself, "This girl would not accept any of the offers made to her. I wonder if she would accept me as husband? Apparently I am about the only man of position who has not asked for her hand." When he went to the palace and proposed to the girl, she accepted his proposal.

The restaurateur decided to give presents at the engagement ceremony which would soon take place. He decided to have a fine overcoat made for the padişah, a very fancy pair of bath clogs for his wife, and a belt for the girl. But the Arab girl, wishing to know what he was doing, followed him around secretly.

He went to a tailor shop and ordered an overcoat so well made that it would stand on the floor by itself. At the time that it was supposed to be ready, the Arab girl, dressed like the restaurateur, went to the tailor shop. When the tailor placed the coat on the floor, she looked at it and



said to him, "I did not ask you to make an overcoat (palto) but a pad to go below a donkey's saddle (palan).<sup>11</sup> Make a saddle pad out of this coat

After leaving the tailor shop, the restaurateur went to a clog maker and said, "I want you to make a pair of bath clogs inlaid with diamonds." The Arab girl overheard this, and later, when the clogs were ready, she went to the shop and said, "I did not ask you to make clogs (nalın) but horse shoes. Instead of these things, make me horse shoes!"

After he left the clog maker's shop, the restaurateur proceeded to a jeweler's shop and said, "Make me a belt for a lady out of silver. It should be made entirely of pure silver links." But before he could return to the shop to pick up this belt, the Arab girl again preceded him. Looking at belt, she said to the jeweler, "I did not ask you to make a fancy belt (kemer) but a girth strap (kolan) for a saddle. Take this back and make a girth strap."

When the restaurateur thought that the gifts would be ready, he went to the tailor and asked, "Do you have the coat ready?" When the tailor handed him the saddle pad, he said,

<sup>11</sup> The tri-partite contretemps that begins here derives some of its humor from its play on words. In each case the gift initially ordered and the one substituted for it have Turkish names that sound somewhat alike. Besides adding humor, this word-play makes the confusion somewhat more believable.

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"I did not order a saddle pad (palan) but an overcoat (palto)!"

"But don't you remember, sir? I showed you the overcoat a couple of days ago and you ordered a saddle pad in its place.

When he heard this, the restaurant owner said, "Oh, this must be the work of that Arab girl again! If I ever catch her, I shall drink three handfuls of her blood!"

When he went to the clog maker's shop, they handed two horse shoes. "What are these? I ordered fancy bath clogs!"

"Yes, sir, you did at first, but then you changed your order to horse shoes."

"Oh, that Arab girl. When I catch her, I shall drink three handfuls of her blood!"

At the jeweler's shop he was handed a girth strap for a saddle. He said, "This is not what I want! I ordered a belt made of pure silver links."

"Well, that is what we started to make, sir, but then you changed your mind and ordered a girth strap."

"O you Arab girl The time will come when I shall drink three handfuls of blood from your body!"

Not long after this, the wedding ceremonies began. Elaborate preparations had been made for this occasion, the entertainment lasted for several days and nights. At

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last the time came when the newly wedded couple were to enter the nuptial chamber. The Arab girl placed the rubber likeness of her in the center of the room, and she herself hid in the closet

The restaurateur entered the room with a dagger in his hand and said, "O Arab girl, there was once a time when you pushed two of my chefs into vats of liquid and drowned them --didn't you?" Saying this, he grabbed the doll and squeezed it.

"Yes, yes," it said.

"Then you made me and my forty guards drunk and pinned me to the ground with sharp<sup>e</sup>ned stakes--didn't you?" Again he grabbed her and squeezed her

"Yes, yes."

later, when I was a rose-seller, you raised me halfway to the palace window with a rope and then dropped me to the ground, breaking my arms and legs and cracking my skull--didn't you?"

"Yes, yes."

"And then, as if that were not bad enough, you came to me disguised as a doctor and smeared me with human excrement --didn't you?"

"Yes, yes," she responded when he pummeled her.

"What? Do you still dare to answer 'Yes' to me?" Saying

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this, he stabbed the rubber doll with his dagger. When the red sherbet flowed from the wound, he scooped into his mouth a handful of what he thought was blood. "How sweet her blood is, and if this is so sweet, how much sweeter must she herself have been What an evil thing I have done in killing her! I have already lived too long myself, and there is no need for me to live longer!" Saying this, he prepared to stab himself.

Right then, however, the Arab girl called out, "Hey, you stupid one Stop! Here I am!" Saying this, she came forth from her hiding place. The two of them ate and drank together and enjoyed themselves.

has made them both very happy, and may he do the same for others like them. --Three apples fell from the sky: one for the narrator of this tale and two for the listeners.

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