

Story 809 (1970 Tape 18)

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*names - cryptic new*

The Three Children with Meaningful Names

There was once a padişah whose only child was a daughter. As this girl began to grow, she suffered from sores that developed on her body. First her hands were covered with these sores. Then her face was afflicted with them. Next, they spread to her feet. And after a while these sores covered her whole body. The padişah had doctors try everything they knew to cure her, but none of them was able to help her. Then the padişah began traveling with her to foreign countries in search of a doctor who could treat her ailment successfully. He took her to several different countries, including America, England, France, and Germany, but nowhere could he find a remedy for her sores.

Returning to Turkey, the padişah was exhausted from all his travel. He lost all hope for his daughter. At last he took her to a mountain and abandoned her there.

Three days after she had been left there on the mountain, she was found by a passing shepherd. He was greatly

*thought*

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if children*

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*From her* surprised to see anyone there in that lonely place, and he immediately said to her, "Are you a jinn or other supernatural creature?"<sup>1</sup>

"I am neither jinn nor any other supernatural creature but a human being."

When the shepherd heard her say this, he said, "I shall take you to my home tonight as my guest." At the end of the day the shepherd took the daughter of the padişah to his hut.

That night the shepherd had a dream. In his dream a voice said to him, "O shepherd, in order to cure the illness *sure* of the child in your house, kill a sheep and wrap its skin completely around her body."<sup>2</sup>

In the morning the shepherd did as he had been instructed in the dream. Unfortunately, the sheepskin was

<sup>1</sup> This is the first response to the appearance of an unknown person in an unlikely place. For those who believe in many visible and dangerous supernatural forces in the world, this was a justifiable question based on an understandable suspicion. The Turkish expression of this query rhymes, partly because of the inflectional ending of the verb: In misin, cin misin?

<sup>2</sup> The shepherd might well have used this treatment on the girl even if he had not been prompted to do so by a dream. It was once a common practice--and it still occurs occasionally in villages--to wrap a badly injured person inside the still-warm hide of a freshly killed animal, usually a cow. It is a standard part of Turkish folk medicine.

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large enough to cover every part of the girl's body, those places which it did cover began at once to heal, in a few days they were entirely healed. The shepherd then killed another sheep and used pieces of its skin to cover those places on her body where sores still remained. Soon these last sores also disappeared.

After she had recovered completely, the shepherd said to the girl, "People who see us suppose that we are husband and wife. Let us go to the village and be married, and then let us live as a family. What do you say to this idea?"

The girl accepted this proposal. They went at once to the village and were married by the hoca there. After this religious ceremony was performed, they went to the muhtar and were also married in an official ceremony.<sup>3</sup>

In the course of time they had three children. Their mother named the first child "What Was I?" She named the second child "What Am I Now?" And the third was named "What Shall I Become?"

After many years the padişah repented of his abandonment of his daughter. On the chance that she might still be

<sup>3</sup> In pre-Republican times the hoca (priest) was often the person who also recorded the wedding for official or legal purposes. Today this part of a wedding is handled by a secular representative of the local government. The muhtar is the elected village leader.

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alive somewhere, he began searching the countryside around the mountain where he had left her. When he and his courtiers reached the village where the princess now lived, one of the viziers said, "My padişah, let us stop here for the night."

who will accept us as guests and provide for our comfort?" asked the padişah.

"There is a Shepherd Ağa<sup>4</sup> and another ağa who have agreed to do this."

The padişah went to the home of the shepherd, who praised the ruler and showed him all proper respect. The children of the shepherd were now sixteen, fourteen, and twelve years of age. These children had been instructed beforehand how to behave in the presence of the padişah. When the shepherd called "What Was I?" that child poured water on the hands of the padişah and then of the other guests.<sup>5</sup> When he called "What Am I Now?" that child handed

<sup>4</sup> The shepherd has apparently grown affluent by now. He no longer lives in a hut but in quarters adequate to entertain a padişah. The word ağa refers literally to a wealthy rural landowner. In a figurative sense ağa may be applied to any man as a complimentary or flattering honorific.

<sup>5</sup> It is a standard courtesy to bring a pitcher of water and pour water slowly over a guest's hands while he washes them. A basin is placed on the floor to catch the water. The pitcher used for this purpose has a long, thin, curved neck. It is called an ibrik.

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towels to the guests. When he called "What Shall I Become?" the youngest child set the table in an attractive way.

The padişah became very curious when he heard the shepherd call his children by such names. He did not eat any of the food served at that time, nor did he eat anything at all during the twenty-four hours spent at the home of the shepherd. He kept repeating over and over in his mind the names of the children: "What Was I?" "What Am I Now?" and "What Shall I Become?"

In the morning the padişah asked the shepherd, "My son, where did the names of these children come from? Who gave such names to them?"

Before the shepherd could answer, his wife stepped forward and said, "This shepherd found me on the mountain. He cured my sores, and then later he married me. You are my father." Saying this, she went to the padişah, kissed his hands, and hugged him.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup>This is an anticlimactic ending for this variant. Usually there is much more suspense and a much more developed identification scene. This failure to make the ending effective is just one of the indications that the narrator is an unskilled raconteur.