Once upon a time there was a sultan who had forty sons. One day these sons all held a meeting in a meadow near the palace.

Them all together in this meeting. He said to his brothers, "You all know that our youngest brother has now reached the age of fifteen. Let us go now to our father and ask him to find wives for all of us."

They debated this question and tried to decide who should go to ask their father, the sultan, about this. While they were discussing this, the youngest jumped up and said, "I shall go—but what exactly should I say to our father?"

"You don't have to say anything," said the eldest brother. "Only watch that you don't sit on just any chair that he offers you as a seat. Refuse each chair until he pulls out the green chair for you. When he does that, sit on it, and he will know that you have come to ask him to let us marry."

The youngest brother then proceeded to the palace. He refused to sit on the first two chairs that his father offered to him, but then when his father offered the green chair, he accepted it and sat down. Immediately after he had sat down, his father said, "I shall give the forty of you forty horses and forty saddle bags filled with gold, and it will be up to you then to find forty suitable girls to marry. I shall have all forty of you married on the same night, and I shall pay all the expenses of the wedding myself." The youngest son bowed and left without having said a word.

He returned to the meadow where all his brothers were waiting. "What did our father say?" asked the eldest brother.
"Our father said that he would give us forty horses and forty saddle bags of gold but that we must find our own wives," said the youngest brother. "He will marry us all in one night, and he will pay all the expenses of the wedding himself."

Very pleased with this news, they all went to the palace and took their horses loaded with saddlebags of gold. They mounted their horses and set out in search of their future wives. They went for a spring, and they went for an autumn, but they found that they had gone only the length of a grain of barley. One evening they reached a ruin into which they pulled their horses, dismounted, and prepared to sleep. They all fell asleep except the youngest, and he drew his sword and stood behind the door. Youngest son stood guard while older brothers slept.

In the middle of the night, a seven-headed female giant entered the ruin. She was so large that the forty of them would not have made forty mouthfuls for her, but the youngest brother managed to drive her off. She went away but soon she returned with her children, forty sons and forty daughters, all of them giants. The youngest son stood at the doorway, and as each giant stepped through it, he killed him. Finally he had killed them all except their mother, the seven-headed giant, and there was a huge mound of bodies heaped inside the entrance of the ruin. She ran away, and the youngest son chased her. She jumped into a well, where she lived, and the boy went after her. At the bottom of the well, she said to him, "I have lost forty sons and forty daughters, Don't kill me. Here are forty keys to forty rooms in which you will find forty girls to marry. Take these and spare my life."

The boy agreed to this, and taking the keys, he began to unlock the doors of the forty rooms. After he had opened them all and taken the forty girls from the forty rooms, he divided them among his brothers. He told each girl which brother she was to marry.
Having done this, the boy went back to the ruin with the girls. He discovered that his brothers were all up. They were surprised to see the bodies of so many dead giants heaped up inside the entrance of the ruin. They all asked, "Who has done this?" Every brother except the youngest swore that he was not responsible for the massacre, and they then knew that it was he who had done it. He then related to them what had happened.

"While you were all asleep, a seven-headed female giant tried to enter the ruin. When I drove her off, she returned with forty sons and forty daughters. All of these sons and daughters I killed, one by one, as they tried to enter the ruin. Their mother then ran away and went down the well where she lives. I chased her down to the bottom, and there she said, 'I have lost forty sons and forty daughters. Don't kill me. Here are forty keys to forty rooms in which you will find forty girls to marry. Take these and spare my life.' I agreed to this, and then I took the forty keys and opened the forty doors and found in them the forty girls. 'They shall be our wives.'

The brothers were all pleased at this, and they went to the mouth of the well. The youngest brother went down into the well and released thirty-nine of the girls. He took them up to the surface of the earth, and he took the first girl and said to his eldest brother, 'This one is for you.' And he took the second girl and presented her to his next oldest brother and said, 'This one is for you.' And after he had in this fashion distributed all the thirty-nine girls among his thirty-nine brothers, he went back down the well for the one whom he had saved for himself.

Before he took her from this underground prison, he was addressed by the female giant: 'Please take me with you,' she said. 'There is
nothing here for me now. I shall be your [slave], your sweeper." He agreed to this proposal.

They all mounted their horses, and each took his girl up behind him on his horse. They started toward home, and the giantess followed them. When they came to a marble column lying beside the road, the giantess addressed it saying, "Oh, Father-in-law, why are you lying there like that? I lost forty sons and forty daughters." Upon this the horsemen were all surrounded by a high stone wall, and the King of the Giants, who was also seven-headed, came up out of the earth and said to them, "Come here! Which of you has slaughtered the children of this giantess?"

Each of them except the youngest brother swore that he had not done it, but he was unable to swear. He admitted the deed and said farewell to his brothers. He said to them, "If I reach home safely, I shall marry my sweetheart. If I do not reach home, one of you can marry her." Then his thirty-nine brothers and the forty girls were allowed to proceed on their journey.

After the brothers were gone, the King of the Giants said to the boy, "I have a proposal to make to you. If you can do what I tell you to do, I shall let you go free. If you cannot, I'll eat you." The boy accepted the proposal, and the giant said to him, "You will burn me in a large oven; then you will sweep together my ashes, put them in a bag, and sprinkle them on that distant mountain."

The youngest brother pushed the giant into his oven, and when he was completely burned up, he gathered the ashes together, put them in a bag, and took them to the distant mountain, where he sprinkled them. Having finished this task, he prepared to mount his horse to follow his brothers, but at that moment he heard a cry: "Oh, gallant young
man, are you leaving? Where are you going?" It was the voice of the
King of the Giants, who had come back to life again. "Now do you see
what I am capable of doing?" he asked.

"Yes, I do," answered the young man.

"I have another proposition," said the giant. "If you can accom-
plish this task, I shall let you go free; if you can't, I shall eat
you. I have been at war with a neighboring king for forty years. The
object of our quarrel is his daughter, whom I want to marry. If you
can get this girl for me, I shall let you go."

The young man accepted this proposition and, mounting his horse,
rode to the apartment [peasant concept of a place where a king might live]
of that king. He knocked at the door of the apartment and told the king
that the purpose of his visit was to ask for the hand of his daughter
in marriage. Before reaching a decision, the king said to the young man
"You go out and walk around the palace once and then return." The young
man did not know that this king killed all those who came to ask for
his daughter but failed to fulfill the difficult tasks that the king
set for them. He had actually made a huge mound of the skulls of the
men who had come and failed.

When the young man returned, the king told him that he was going
to be given a difficult task that he had to accomplish in one night.

"I shall give you my daughter if you can plow a field of a hundred acres,
sow it, and gather the harvest all in one night. But if you fail to
finish this work in one night, I shall kill you."

The youngest brother accepted the challenge and started to work,
but before he had finished the plowing, he fell asleep. Toward morning
he was told in a dream that an ant was coming to help him, and that he
should burn the grain of wheat that the ant brought to him. He awoke,
saw the ant with the grain of wheat, and when he had burned this grain of wheat, all the ants in the world came to his aid. They finish plowing the field; then they sowed it; and as morning approached, they gathered the harvest. It was all done in a very little time.

When the king came to the field to see whether the work had all been done, he was amazed at what he saw, but he quickly set another task for the boy. "I shall have forty cauldrons of food brought for you," he said, "and if you can eat them all before tomorrow at this time you shall have my daughter. If you can't eat them, I shall have you killed." The boy accepted the challenge, and the forty cauldrons of food were brought and set before him. He took a mouthful from each cauldron, but soon he fell asleep. Toward the next morning, he heard a voice in a dream which said to him, "Why don't you burn that hair that was given to you as a child by the black Arab, and half of the black men in the world appeared outside the room, breaking the windows and the doors to get in. In no time, they had gobbled up all of the food in the forty cauldrons. A lame Arab, who came late, said, "Isn't there any food left for me?" They said, "No." At that, the lame man scraped the bottoms of the cauldrons, and he scraped so hard that he made holes in them. Having eaten all the food, the Arabs disappeared.

When the king came in the morning, he was again amazed. "Let alone the food in the cauldrons, this young man has almost eaten up the cauldrons themselves." But the youngest son could not yet have the daughter, for the king set still one more task. "I want one more task to be performed. If you can do this, you may have my daughter. You must wrestle with her tomorrow morning. If you defeat her, she will be yours; if you do not, I shall send you to the executioner."
An announcement was made throughout the land that day that on the next day the king's daughter would wrestle with a young man. And at the scheduled time on the following day, there were thousands of people waiting to see the contest. It was a very exciting wrestling match, for the two were good wrestlers. They wrestled for a long while, but toward midday the young man seemed to be weakening. He was having great difficulty with the king's daughter, who was very powerful. Panting hard, he called for a rest period; he said that he wanted to smoke tobacco. His real purpose, however, was to burn another of the Arab's hairs, for he knew now that he could not defeat the girl without help. He burned the hair with the tobacco, and out of nowhere the Arab appeared.

"Disappear from sight again," he said, "but stay here and help me defeat this powerful girl in this wrestling contest." The Arab did as he was commanded, and when the two wrestlers fell to the ground, he pulled the girl so that she was beneath the sultan's son.

When the king saw that his daughter was defeated, he ordered that the wedding be held at once. Since there had been no preparation for their marriage, the two were not actually united after this ceremony but lived apart first for three months. After this time had elapsed, the young man went to the king and said, "Your majesty, I am the son of a ruler, too, a sultan. If you will let me, I should like to return now to the land of my father."

"You may go, my son," said the king, "but first tell me what you wish from me."

"I have nothing to wish for except that God may give you good health," said the young man.

"There must be something that I can give you as a farewell gift," said the king.
"You can give me a bed and a cart with horses, then, that I can use in traveling home." [When peasants in Turkey travel—migrant workers and those seeking employment particularly—they always carry their beds with them, usually in form of mattress roll and blanket. This is true even of peasants who come to Ankara seeking work. A sultan's son and a king's son-in-law could probably afford to pay for suitable lodgings along the road, but the peasant mind here ignores this fact.]

The bed and horses and cart were provided, as he had requested, and the young man took his wife and started for home. The girl did not know that in fact the young man was taking her to the giant in accordance with the bargain he had made. When he finally told her this, near the giant's house, she threw herself down out of the cart, and she tried to escape. But the giant had heard them coming and he had come out to welcome them, and he quickly caught the girl and held her fast.

"Well, my son," said the giant, "you have done well. You may go now, and good luck to you."

But the young man was very sorry for what he had done. He could not keep his eyes off the girl. He did not go far from the giant's house, for he had now decided to try to rescue the girl. He noticed that each day the giant went hunting and did not return until evening, and so one morning after the giant had left, he went into the house and said to the girl, "I am sorry for what I have done, but if you will help me, we can kill the giant and escape. When he comes back this evening, don't give him any food and don't speak to him. Pretend you are angry with him. When he asks, 'What is the matter?' say, 'You leave me alone in this house all day while you go and enjoy yourself.'"

The girl did as she was instructed, and when the giant heard this complaint, he went to the forest and pulled up a large tree and brought it to his house. He stood it against the door of her room and said to
her, "Look, there are bird nests in this tree, and there are young birds in the nests. They will sing to you and keep you company."

Next morning, as usual, he went hunting, and while he was gone, the young man came to the house again. When he saw the tree full of birds that the giant had brought to entertain his wife, he said to her, "When the giant comes home this evening, tell him that the twittering of the birds made you sick and nervous. Say to him, 'If you want me to enjoy myself, tell me where you keep your source of life so that I may have its company.'"

When the giant came home that night, the girl again looked moody and sullen. When the giant asked her what was the matter, she said, "I am angry with you because you brought that tree with the noisy birds. They drive me mad all day long. I am quite sick of them."

"Well, what shall I do to please you, then?" asked the giant. "Show me where you keep your life source so that I may have its company," said the girl.

"When it rains," said the giant, "three deer will come to drink water from a ditch in the forest. In the belly of the yellow deer that will stand toward the south I have three naked lives hidden in three boxes. Take them and enjoy yourself with them."

The next morning the giant went to hunt again, and after he had gone, the sultan's son came and asked his wife: "Did the giant tell you where he keeps his life source?"

"Yes," she said, "but there are three of them. When it rains, three deer will come to drink water from a ditch in the forest. In the belly of the yellow deer that will stand toward the south he has three naked lives hidden in three boxes. He said I should take these and enjoy myself with them."
Upon hearing all this from his wife, the young man went and kept watch for the deer. When they finally came to drink water, he aimed an arrow at the yellow deer standing toward the south and killed it. He cut open its belly and took out the three boxes containing the three naked lives of the giant and put his feet on them. As he was about to crush the three boxes, the giant appeared in a great rush, sweeping along a whole cloud of dust and stones in his haste. He stopped before he reached the young man and begged him: "Spare my naked lives, oh gallant young man."

"May they be carried to hell!" said the sultan's son, and he crushed the three boxes. Thus the giant was killed and could not be restored to life again.

The sultan's son returned to the giant's house and released his wife. They then started for the young man's home country, but first they took as many valuable objects as they could carry from the giant's house. They proceeded to the young man's country, and when they arrived there, they went immediately to the meadow which the forty sons had always used as a meeting place. When he reached this place, he found his thirty-nine brothers arguing over the fortieth girl, the one whom he had taken from the well of the seven-headed giantess for himself.

When news reached the sultan that his fortieth son had arrived home, he announced the weddings of all his sons. The youngest son married both his sweethearts, and the wedding festivities lasted for forty days and forty nights. And when they were concluded, the forty sons of the sultan lived happily all the rest of their lives.