No Man Is Richer Than God

He is being mingled by my veins.
Story #275

Right then the padishah looked through the window and he saw a simit seller pass by. He said to a servant, "You go and call that man, and tell him to come here."

So the servant stopped the simit seller and said, "Come in right away. The padishah wants you."

Well, the simit seller began to cry. He said, "But I haven't done anything wrong. Please don't take me there."

The servant said, "Whether you have done wrong or right, you are asked by the padishah to go to his side, so you had better come in."

So he left his wooden simit tray by the side of the stairs and went upstairs to the padishah and he said, "Here I am, Your Majesty. What do you desire?"

And the padishah said, "This is what I want of you. I'm going to marry my daughter to you, right away, right here, and now, and you'll take her away."

And the simit seller said, "Oh, Your Majesty, how could that be? How can I take your daughter as my wife? I have no place to live, and I have nothing to eat. I have no family. I am just a poor soul."

the answer was, "I am ordering you so, and you have to obey, or else your head will be cut off! This is my last order. Go down," he said, "and find a [an imam] and bring him here and have him perform your marriage ceremony and then hold her hand and go away wherever you will."

1Similar to a pretzel, this bread ring is sold from trays or boxes carried along the streets of Turkish cities and towns.
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So the simit seller went down, and out into the street. Poor thing, he was just a young fellow, and nothing like that had ever happened to him before. And he looked here and there, and finally he saw a hoca passing by. He said, "Oh, please sir, come on. I have some business for you to perform."

So the priest came and married the young man to the padishah's daughter. And just as the padishah had told the man, he held her hand and they started on their way, with the wooden simit tray on his head and the girl on his arm. They started going, but he didn't know where they should go.

There was an innkeeper he knew, and he went to that inn. He said, "Oh, please, friend, I have a wife and I have no place to stay. Please give me a room here. I'll see to it that I'll pay you for it by and by."

They went into the room. It was bare as could be. There was only a straw mat on the floor. There wasn't even a glass to drink a drop of water. He put the girl in the room and locked the door on her and went out to sell his simits. He worked very, very hard trying to sell all his simits. And then he bought a loaf of bread, some olives, and a little cheese, and came home to eat.

It happened this way every day. If he had enough money to add something to the loaf of bread, he did. If he did not have money, they just sat down and ate bread, and they never complained. And it went on like this for a period of time.

Finally the husband saw that there was no good to come from selling simits. This wouldn't be enough to make life possible
for them. So one day he said to his wife, "Let me stop
selling simites and become a porter, a hamal. Maybe I shall be
able to earn more money." So he did. He left his simit tray
and he started carrying things for people. He went here and
there, and carried loads and luggage and bundles for people, and
he made a little bit more money, so he was able to buy a mattress
for them and to buy a rug for the floor and a little kettle to
boil water or to cook things in--plain and simple things--a pitcher,
two glasses to drink out of, and a little better food to eat.
And all the time he was giving some money to the innkeeper, too,
and each time he gave the money to the innkeeper, he begged
pardon, and said, "Please excuse me for not being able to pay
you regularly."

And the innkeeper was a good man, and he said, "It doesn't
matter. You're my brother and she's my sister."

Now, on the other hand, there were some bezirgans [traveling
merchants], and they were on their way to Baghdad to buy things
and bring them back. But they needed a very strong man to carry
their loads. They were looking for a man to carry for them,
and the innkeeper said, "Why don't you take Hamal Hasan? He's
a mighty man--he's a strong and mighty man--and he's a good man.
You take Hamal Hasan along with you."

So the innkeeper called Hasan and said, "Here is a good
job for you. You'll go to Baghdad with these bezirgans and
you'll earn money.

Hamal Hasan said, "All right. It's good, as you say, but
you know how it is with me. I have my wife and I earn my living
daily. If I leave her and go away, she won't have anything to eat. If they'd give me some money in advance I could leave it with her so she could have enough to eat while I am gone.

And the innkeeper said, "Don't worry about that. She's my sister, and I'll take good care of her."

The merchants did give Hasan some money to leave for his wife, and they took Hamal Hasan along with them and started on their way. They went and they went. They went a little; they went far. They went straight over rivers and over dales. They went six months and a summer, and they found themselves in a desert. It was hot—oh, it was hot! There was no water, and there was no rest.

When they were very desperate, they came across a well in the desert at the bottom of which there was water. So they said, "Well, let's tie a rope around the waist of one of the hamals and let him down into the well to bring some water out for us." So they did this. They said, "You bring some water for us to drink, and to fill the barrels, and to water the animals, because they'll perish without water.

The man said, "All right." But when he was part of the way down into the well he began screaming, "Oh, I'm burning! I'm burning! Oh, I'm burning!" So they pulled him out.

Another hamal said, "Let me." They tied a rope around his waist and they let him down into the well. And when he was part of the way down, he started screaming, "I'm freezing! I'm freezing! It's—take me out! I'm freezing!" So they took him out.
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So they said, "Hamal Pasha Hasan [Head Hamal Hasan], they haven't been able to do that. Only you can do it. Let's tie the rope around your waist and let you down into the well."

He said, "Oh, well, don't you see? One went down and said he was burning, and the other said he was freezing. What if I get burned or frozen, and die? What will my wife do with me? What if I die? If I die, will you pay some compensation to my wife?"

They said, "Yes, yes, we'll compensate your wife for your loss; she'll be paid for it. Instead of having all our cattle here, we'd rather do that."

So the head of the caravan gave Hasan a bag full of gold, and Hasan put the gold in a big belt and gave it back to him, and said, "In case I am killed, you'll send it to my wife.

So he tied the rope around his waist and they let him down into the well. Soon he began to shout, "I'm freezing! I'm freezing! But they let him go still further, lower and lower, and he screamed, "I'm freezing!" until he came down to the very bottom where there was the water. So he said, "Send down the buckets!"

And they sent the buckets down, and he filled them, and they pulled; he filled them, and they pulled, and the water came up. They drank—oh, they drank!—and then they had the animals drink all the water they wanted, and they poured water all around the tents, and finally they said, "We have enough. Come up!"

He said, "Let me have a drink for myself before I come up." But before he drank, he struck a light to see what was around and he saw a door on his right. He opened the door and went in.
keeper said, "Here's a package for you, and she opened it and
when he sent the gold and the pomegranates home, the man and he sent
these things home and went on his way.

a bag and he gave them to a very trustworthy man and he sent
and he had a whole beltful of gold. He put these things into
waist, and they pulled him up. Now he had these pomegranates
coming up. They let down the rope, and he tied it around his
he came out of the room and said, "Let down the rope. I'm
Remember, you have never seen me!"

home and are with your wife, cut these pomegranates. But,
ever to have seen me, just forget about me, and when you go
going to give you three pomegranates, and you will pretend not
by the girl and did they there. And once more she spoke. I'm
by everyone who had answered differently had his head cut off.
and see. He opened another door and he saw a head of heads
way, this is what was going to happen to you. Open the door
and the girl said, "If you hadn't answered my question this
The answer came, "Whoever one loves is the more beautiful.
of us is the prettier.
"

of us is the prettier. This frog or I?"

the girl said, "Well, I'll ask you something. Tell me, which
He told her where he came from and where he was going, and
and the girl said, "Where do you come from? And where are
And, "Greeting to you," said the girl.
"Greeting to you," said the girl.

there was a frog sitting on the hood.

There he found a very beautiful girl sitting and

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saw the gold and the pomegranates

"Oh," she said, "how nice for the gold. But why did he send me these pomegranates all the way? I feel thirsty. Let me cut one and eat it." She felt thirsty, not because she didn't have anything to eat or drink, because the innkeeper kept his promise and he always fed her, whatever little he had, with bread and olives and cheese, and she always stayed in the room, locked from inside, but the innkeeper always provided her with food.

And now she wanted to eat this pomegranate, and she cut one open and she found that it was packed with jewels all sorts of jewels. She opened the second pomegranate, and it was filled just filled, with gold. And out of the third pomegranate came a rooster. It said, Gahk!, and jumped on the shelf. And each time it crowed, there came gold from it; each time it crowed, there came gold from it.

In the morning she called the innkeeper and she said, "You are my brother, in this world and in the afterworld. This is what I want you to do with me. We'll go out into the market and we're going to sell all these jewels and turn them into money."

"All right," said the innkeeper. So both of them started out and they sold all the jewels that came out of the first pomegranate, and it gave them so much money that they had to carry it in huge flour bags. They brought these huge bags of money home, and she still had the rooster giving money. She said, "Now, this is what we are going to do. We are going to
have a house as beautiful as a king’s palace, with all its furniture and with all its decorations, and with all its servants and carriages and dogs, just like my father’s palace."

So the innkeeper helped her. He found a house for her as nice as a king’s palace. They moved into it and they furnished it and they had their servants and slaves and dogs of a palace. Well, they got settled there.

Now let’s go back to the caravan bringing goods from Baghdad. They were on their way back from Baghdad, and when they came to the same place in the desert, with the well, they got some more water. The head porter Hasan went down, and helped them get water, and he again went into that room and was given three more pomegranates from the beautiful girl,2 and he came out.

When they were nearing the city, the girl found out about their approach, and she called one of her servants. "Get a full set of beautiful clothing, complete with its headdress and fur." When he brought these things, she said, "Now, go to the entrance of the city, and you’ll find a caravan there. Ask for the head hamal Hasan. Anybody will show him to you. Take him to one side and make him take all his old clothing off and dress him in these clothes and bring him back."

So the man went to meet the caravan, and sure enough, the caravan was coming with its bells ringing. And

2Apparently the narrator forgot what became of the second set of pomegranates; at any rate, there is only a passing mention of this second gift in the tale as it was collected.
in front of the caravan was head hamal Hasan, with his long beard--his beard had grown down to his waist--and he had his boots up to his knees, and his sleeves were rolled up. He looked a picture of might.

So the servant said, "Greetings be!"
And they answered, "Greetings to you, too!"
And he said, "I'm looking for the head porter Hasan. Do you know him?"

And Hasan said, "I am the one."
So the servant said, "Brother, step aside, please, and take your clothing off and put these things on"
Hasan said, "What's happening?"
"I don't know," said the servant. "Our lady ordered me to do this.

So Hasan took off his clothing and put on the new robes, and the pomegranates that were in the sash around his waist fell down, and he didn't forget to pick them up again and put them in his pockets. He rode in the carriage and they started for home, and all the time he was thinking, "How can my wife have all this wealth? Oh, it must be our padishah father helping us!"

when they arrived home the door opened and all the servants met him. The lady had told them to meet their master with due respect, and so they did. They helped him, holding his arms and leading him up the stairs. And all the time he was bewildered. He didn't know what had become of him. Finally they went up to a large room and he was made to sit on down-filled
cushions and his wife sat by him. He kept looking at his wife, trying to find out what this was all about. But his wife stopped him from talking, saying, "Later I'll tell you, after the servants have gone from the room."

And she ordered the barbers to come and give him a shave, and then she ordered the bath to be made ready, and he went in and bathed. When the food came in, on huge trays, they ate all they wanted. Well, in short, it had all the details of a rich life.

When everything was finished, they went to bed, and everybody else disappeared. Then they had time to talk to each other all by themselves, and he said, "I must know! Tell me! Where did we get all these riches?"

And she said, "Well, don't you know? You sent me three pomegranates. I cut one, and it was packed full of jewels. And I cut the second one, and it was packed full of gold. And I cut the third one, and there came forth a rooster, and each time the rooster crows, he drops gold. It's in the cupboard. Come and see!"

Then he understood what it was all about, and he felt very happy, so happy that he said, "You know, wife, let's do this. Let's call a crier and have him go all through the town and for three days let's invite everyone to come to dinner with us. And we shall give a piece of gold to each guest for the rent of his teeth."3

This is an example of extreme hospitality, where the host gives a gift in addition to the meal. It may well be an extension of the plunder banquet observed among the Oghuz Turks. See Legend XII in The Book of Dede Korkut.
So they had the criers go around, and they ordered the cooks to prepare plenty of good food—meat and rice and macaroni and vegetables and fruits and everything just poured into the house. When the food was cooked, everyone was served. And the master of the house—head hamal Hasan of the caravan—sat by the door and gave a piece of gold to every guest who had honored their house by coming and eating. He sat by the door in his fur, with his long pipe [chubuk]

When the padishah heard about this house where food was served and people were given money, he called one of his servants and said, "who this person? Is it possible that he may be richer than we are?" You see, he's still at it! "Let's go and eat there, like anybody else. I'll go in disguise, and so they won't know me. We'll just go and eat there."

So the padishah changed his clothing and they started just like any ordinary people. As they were coming to Hamal Hasan's house, the daughter saw them, and of course she recognized her own father. She told Hasan, "Look, my father is coming with a servant. He's going to eat here. Be sure to give him two pieces of gold instead of one, and one for the servant—two for my father, and one for the servant."

So he was honored just like everyone else. He was offered food, and after he had finished his coffee and was leaving, Hamal Hasan, the host, gave two pieces of gold to the padishah and one to his servant. After they had left the house, the padishah said, "Why do you suppose they gave me two and gave you one piece of gold?"
now on, my crown and my kingdom will be yours. You'll rule in
my place. I am an old man now, and all I have is yours, Hasan. From
someone richer than I am. God is richer than I am. Listen to
me. I am rich enough to stay behind for a minute?"

"Well, said the padishah, "I was mistaken. There is
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my place. And from today on, I'll spend my time washing and praying.

To celebrate the occasion, they arranged a wedding for forty days and forty nights, all anew, fit for a king, and their wish was fulfilled.