Emine Usta, Misguided but Ingenious Second Wife of the Merchant

Once there was and once there wasn't, when God's creatures were many, and it was a sin to talk too much, there was a merchant with a wife and a daughter. And his wife got sick, and they couldn't save her, and she died.

The daughter was little, and he couldn't take her out. He would lock her in the house and go out to work. She would play in the house all by herself, spending her time pleasantly enough. One day the father came home and found that the girl had gotten her mother's hamam [bathhouse] things out—the big towel and the peshtamal to wrap around her waist, and her water dipper, and her combs—and she got dressed up in these things which her mother used to wear. She put the wooden clogs on her feet, too. And her father said, "What are you doing?"

And she said, "I don't know. I found these and I put them on. What are these? I don't know."

The father explained what each piece was for. "There's a towel, put this on after you get washed. This is the dipper that you dip into the water when you pour water on yourself. And the clogs you wear on your so as not to step on the stone. And the bathhouse, the hamam, is such-and-such."
The girl said, "I have never been to one. Please take me to one.
And her father said, "I can't take you to a hamam, and you are a
little girl and I can't send you with anyone else."

"All right," said the girl. But a few days later, she repeated the
same request. And because her father loved her very much, he didn't want
her to be disappointed, so he said, "All right. I'll send you to a hamam.
we have a neighbor, Emine Usta, who works in a hamam. I know Emine Usta.
I'll take you there, and she'll take you to the bath and soap you and wash
you and scrub you and have you dressed, and then she'll bring you home."

Emine Usta said, "Look here. If you want to go to the hamam so badly,
I'll take you to the hamam, and I'll take you to any place you want, so long
as you make your father marry me. You cry and insist, and make a point of
it that your father should marry me. If you do that for me, I'll show you--what
cays I'll show you!"

He came back and took his daughter home, and they ate and slept. The
next morning, the first thing she woke up in the morning she started asking
her father to marry Emine Usta. "Please, Father, why don't you marry Emine
Usta?"

"Oh, you! Go on!" said the father. "What sort of talk is that? Don't
even mention that." And the child stopped talking about it.

But a few days later, she repeated, "Oh, Father, please, why don't
you marry Emine Usta? I'm alone in the house all day long, and I sit behind
the door. If you married Emine Usta, we'd be together and I should be happy.

"Who put this into your mind?" said her father. "I'm not intending to

The usta in the bathhouse is the person who washes people—soaps and scrubs
them. The client at the hamam just lies down, and somebody comes and washes
him. The term usta is used in general to indicate someone who knows his own
business or trade very well, a master craftsman, for example.
get married, anyway. Who put this into your mind? Stop it, and don't ever mention it!"

But the girl kept on repeating her request, day in and day out. And he began to think. Now he, being a merchant of a high rank, and she being an usta in the hamam... "That won't do," he said. "That's not a fit partnership." And again he decided that he could not do it, and he said again, "No, that won't do."

But he was very fond of the little girl, and he saw that the girl wanted this marriage very badly. She kept on repeating her request until he was sick of it. She said one day, "What if Emine Usta comes and lives with us and cleans our house and prepares our food and makes our beds and lays our table?"

"Oh, to Hell with it!" he said. "All right." And he asked for Emine Usta's hand in marriage, and they got married.

It seems their house had two floors, and every morning when he left he locked the upstairs and said, "You live downstairs." And he would leave his wife and his daughter.

The days passed, and the girl was not a little girl any more. She became fifteen, and sixteen, and seventeen. Her name was Ayshe, by the way. One day, Usta said, "Ayshe, we're cooped up here on the lower floor like chickens. Why don't we steal the key from your father's pocket and go upstairs and make it nice and clean, and live there?"

So she decided to steal the key. While her father was asleep, she took the key. And the next day, they went upstairs and cleaned the place and made it look nice, and they spent their days up there. And in the evening, when it was time for him to come home, they locked the upstairs in a hurry
came down, and the man never found out about it.

In front of their house was a pasture where horses came to graze. One day some horses came with some officers, and the officers pitched their tent there and spread their horses for grazing. Among these officers, there was a young one that pleased Ayshe very much, and she kept on looking at him. She would sit and just watch him, his going in and out of the tent, and his other activities. She went to Emine Usta and said, "Emine Usta do you see that young man who goes in and out of that tent? I like him very much. Why don't you get him for me?"

"Oh, what's easier than that?" said Emine Usta. "Let's wait until your father goes to sleep," she said.

When Ayshe's father had gone to sleep, Emine Usta opened her trunk and got out beautiful clothing for the girl. She put earrings on her ears, and bracelets and necklaces, and she made Ayshe even lovelier than usual. Then she tied a rope around her waist and swung her down from the window.

for the silken sound of the dress]. The very beautiful girl come in, what could a man do? Of course, he took her in and had her seated there. Emine Usta had given her just one hour to stay—not more—because, she said, "If your father wakes up, he'll kill both of us. So you see to it that you are back in one hour.

So at the end of an hour, she said she had to go back. She came home and called Emine Usta. Emine Usta extended the rope again, and Ayshe tied it around her waist and she was pulled up. She went to bed, and then Emine Usta went and died in her bed.

2 This is an expression which is, of course, figurative. It indicates that the woman slept as soundly as if she were dead.
It seems that officer didn't know anybody in that country except Ayshe's father, whom he often visited in his shop. When he went to visit his friend the next time, he said, "Something strange happened to me last night. In the middle of the night someone young and very beautiful came into my tent. We sat together, and she was allowed there only for one hour. At the end of one hour, she disappeared. I don't know whether it was true or it was a dream. I don't know anybody here. I don't know who she is. You belong here. Won't you please find out who she is?"

The next night, again, Emine Usta dressed Ayshe in different clothes. She put her bracelets and rings and earrings and necklaces on her, and made her beautiful again, and sent her to the young officer's tent. And she repeated her instruction that Ayshe should stay only for one hour.

On the other hand, her father had told the young officer that if the girl came again that night, he should steal something of hers to find her. So after she had come and sat, and they had had fun and everything, the man came and sat near her and very quietly stole one of her earrings. And she said, "I'll never come back again. Why did you take my earring?"

"Well, I wanted to keep it as a souvenir," the young man said. And he kept it.

She went home and said, "Emine Usta, Emine Usta, he took my earring."

"Oh, don't worry," Emine Usta said. "I have earrings just like yours. I'll give one of mine to you to match your other one. It doesn't matter."

In the morning, the young officer went to his friend the merchant, Ayshe's father, and said, "Here, cau told of her earring."

And all the time, the thought was eating the merchant that the girl might be Ayshe, and he would think, "Look what's happening!" The thought was
was eating him for fear it might be Ayshe, but each time, he dismissed the idea. "Oh, no, it can't be. Anyway, she's locked in the house," he would say.

And when he came home, he asked Emine Usta to bring Ayshe's earrings, and Emine Usta brought the earrings, including the one from her own collection.

The next time, he told the officer if she came another time to have something sharp—some razors—stuck in the ground so that they would make her feet bleed and so that they could trace the blood to find her.

So she came again, and they sat down and spent their time, and when it was time to leave, she stepped out, and, krtch! she had her foot cut. "Oh!" she said. "Is this what you were meaning to do to me? I'll never come to see you again." And she, living with Emine Usta, became an usta herself (a master of her trade). She tore off a piece of her dress and she wrapped her foot so nicely and so tightly that not a drop of blood dripped on the ground. And she went home and said, "Emine Usta, Emine Usta, help me in! I'm wounded."

And Emine Usta said, "Oh, my heart! Come in, and I'll help you." So she pulled Ayshe in through the window (she really liked Ayshe), and she had her step into snow to stop the flow of blood, and then she wrapped the foot very, very nicely. Then she washed everything, and threw away anything that had blood spots on it, and she put Ayshe to bed.

The next morning, the merchant went to his store, and his young officer friend came and said, "What have you done?"

"Why, what should I have done?" asked the merchant.

"Well, her foot was cut, but she's such an ingenious person she cut her dress and wrapped her foot in such a way that not a drop of blood dropped
on the ground, and she disappeared again. And what's more, she said she would never come again!"

The next morning, the merchant noticed that Ayshe was limping, and he said, "what's wrong with you?"

"Oh," Emine Usta answered, "while she was wiping the floors, a nail from the floor punctured her sole, but it's nothing important. We put a medicine on it and wrapped it."

Suspicion grew in his heart again. "Is it Ayshe? I wonder..."

No, no, it can't be Ayshe," because nobody thinks evil of his own child.

Well, after a period of time, they discovered that Ayshe was going to have a baby. When she had had her baby, "what shall we do about this child?" they began to think. But Emine Usta said, "Don't worry." She wrapped the baby nicely and took the baby to the tent of the young officer and left it there in front of the tent.

In the morning, when the merchant asked for Ayshe, Emine Usta said, "Oh, Ayshe was sick last night. She had pains all night long. I had to put hot stones at her feet, and I put hot water on her stomach, and I put iodine on her back, and now she's perspiring in her bed."

So he went to his shop, and a little later the officer came. "What is it?" asked the merchant.

"Oh, don't ask me. You know what happened. In the middle of the night I heard a child crying, viyah, viyah, viyah, and I found a baby boy in front of my tent. It cried all night long, and I didn't know what to do with it. What shall we do? Shall we find a wet nurse? Or shall we buy a cow for milk to feed the baby?"

And the merchant said, "Well, let me go home and talk about this,
and let's see what we can do about it." He didn't know what to do with
the baby.

But Emine Usta said, "Oh, do bring the baby here! Ayse has nothing
to do and she would enjoy having a baby to keep her busy. And also a cow
that I can milk to feed the baby."

So he went to the officer and said, "I have a daughter and I have
a wife, and they have nothing to do at home. They said they would be
very happy to take care of the baby. You go and buy a cow to give milk,
and we'll take care of your baby."

"Oh, how nice of you," said the officer.

So they brought the baby to the girl, and she nursed the baby and
then drank the milk of the cow herself, and they lived happily together.

Time went on, and the child became two years old. One day Emine
Usta said, "Oh, husband, you are a funny sort of person! This child has
grown here for two years, and you know where his father is. You have
no heart Why don't you ever bring him here and show him his child?
Let him come and see his child, and also have a bite of food together
with us."

"Yes, you're right," said the merchant. "I'll do so tomorrow. You
get some food ready for him, and I'll bring him."

After the merchant had left, Emine Usta went to the (Imam) [the priest]
and the muhtar [the governing officer of the village]. She said, "There
is going to be a marriage in our house tonight. Won't you come to dinner?"
(Oh, what a clever woman she is!) And they agreed to come.

These are the two who register a marriage ceremony.
In the evening when her husband came home, she said that she had also invited the muhtar and the imam.

The merchant said, "What for?"

"Oh," she said, "they take care of our village, and you know helpful people they are. Can't you afford to have them at your table? we need them when we live; we need them when we die."

In the evening the guests arrived, and they ate and drank. The child was two years old, and he walked around, tupush, turush because he a big boy of two now.

Then Emine Usta came. And Emine Usta said, "Iman, listen to me. This is my daughter. And this is her husband. And this is their baby. Won't you have them married?"

when the merchant heard this, he turned all blue in the face. But when he wanted to say something, she motioned to him to stop. Then she went on, "You perform the marriage ceremony, and let them live happily until they die."

The father couldn't take any more of it, and right there and he dropped dead. So Ayshe was married to the young officer, and Emine Usta stayed with them and took care of their house. And they had their child, too. Their wedding lasted for forty days and forty nights, and they had their wish fulfilled.

These two officials also attend to burials.