

Story #369 (Tape #2, 1972) Narrator: Bayan Sabire Tezcan  
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The Widowed Fox and Her Fierce New Husband

Once there was a widowed fox. The animals used to make fun of her<sup>1</sup> by calling her, "Widowed fox, widowed fox." One day she left her house in search of a husband. On the road she saw a cat.

The cat asked, "Where are you going, sister fox?"

"I'm looking for a husband," the fox answered, "And, what are you doing out here?"

"I am looking for a wife," the cat answered.

The fox and the cat decided to get married, and they returned to the fox's house. That night a rabbit came to the fox's garden and began making fun of her, "Widowed fox, widowed fox. When are you going to get married?"

The fox came out and said, "I am married. I have a strong husband with thick whiskers."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>There are several places in the translation at which the sex of the animal is confused, the fox sometimes appearing to be a widow, sometimes a widower. This may be the result of the application of O to both sexes. Where there would be confusion in the English, we have taken the liberty of making the genders consistent with the tale.

<sup>2</sup>That the cat should be cited for his thick whiskers (rather than for any of his other features) is a peculiarly Turkish element here. In earlier times masculinity and strength were measured by one's beard and moustache. In the legend of Genç Osman, the beardless youth Osman is refused permission to join the military expedition because he is as yet beardless. When he drives a comb into his upper lip to show that his moustache will support the weight of a comb--this is the test of manliness--the general accepts him. Turkish policemen almost always have moustaches, the police still maintaining the moustache as a symbol of authority and strength. There are also religious implications for facial hair.

This news frightened the rabbit. He informed the other animals of the fox's marriage to a creature with thick whiskers.

The pigs said, "Let's invite them to dinner and see what this creature looks like." The rabbit, the pigs, the wolf, and the other animals prepared dinner for the newlyweds.

There remained the problem of inviting them. The pigs were afraid to get close to the fox's house. The wolf excused himself from the task. The rabbit volunteered to do the job but refused to go inside the house. He shouted from the garden, "Widowed fox, widowed fox, you and your husband are invited to have dinner with us tonight."

When the fox and the cat came to the place of the party, nobody was to be seen. The rest of the animals were hiding in different places in the forest--in the bushes, trees, and grass. But the dinner was ready. The cat tasted the meat. It was too hot, and he jumped in pain. When he jumped at random, his claws accidentally blinded one of the animals hiding in a tree. Then he tasted the vegetables, which also burned his mouth. The dishes on the table were all so hot that every time the cat tasted a different food, he jumped in pain. And every time, he injured a different animal.

The cat and the fox ate all they could and returned home. After they left, the animals came out from their hiding places. They were all scratched or injured, and they were now convinced that the widowed fox had married a monster.