

Story #398 (Tape #3, 1972)

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The Man Who Unknowingly Married a Witch

Once upon a time a young man married a young woman. Every night the woman was in the habit of leaving the house while her husband was sleeping. She would return home by dawn and awaken her husband; "It is time to get up and go to work." She would feed her husband meat for breakfast and see him off to work. Every night she would get on the large urn¹ that she kept in the kitchen and fly to the meeting place of the witches. The urn could fly like an airplane. The witches would meet with the devil, dance, feast, and have a good time. This was their wedding ceremony with the devil. Before the first cock sounded in the morning, she would get in her urn again and fly back home. On her way back she would stop at a graveyard, open a grave, cut up a carcass, and get its liver.

This witch had a small son, who had been spying out his mother

¹While European and American witches may ride on broomsticks, those in Turkey ride on küps. The küp is a large earthenware urn or vase used for storage purposes. Witches ride on them and whip them along as if they were horses. The son and husband, later in this tale, stow away inside the urn. Some urns of this kind are 6--8 feet tall and 3-4 feet in diameter, and thus they have a great amount of storage space. It is this very large urn or vase--forty of them--in which the thieves hide in "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves."

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for some time. One night he hid himself in the urn before his mother left. Not knowing her son was hiding in it, the woman got on the urn as usual and flew to the meeting place of the witches. The little boy watched the witches dance and feast. Before the first cock sounded, his mother got on the urn and flew back home. The boy also witnessed his mother stop at the graveyard and get the liver of a carcass. She stole into the house and put the liver in the cupboard. Later she woke up her husband, fed him the liver, and sent him off to work.

After his father left, the boy went to the neighbor's house next door and told what he had seen the night before. When the man came back from work, the neighbors came to see him. They asked, "Do you know where your wife was last night?"

"She was home. Why?" the man said.

"Your wife is a witch, and she flies in an urn to the meeting place of the witches every night," the neighbors said.

The man found it difficult to believe what the neighbors had said, but he hid himself in the urn that night. He also witnessed the proceedings of the night: the dancing and the feasting, the halt at the graveyard to get the liver of a carcass. While his wife was putting away the liver, the man got out of the urn, went to bed, and pretended to be asleep. Later his wife came to wake him up. She gave him the liver for breakfast.

The man refused to eat it and said, "Where did you get this liver? Where were you last night?"

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"It is none of your business," his wife answered. "Eat your breakfast and go to work." But the man was resolved to make his wife tell him where she was the night before. The woman became angry and threatened him: "What I do at night is none of your business. If you go on with this nonsense, I shall eat you. Get out of here or I will eat you."

The man left his home in tears. He went to a distant village and became a farmhand to a rich landowner. The landowner liked the man and let him stay at his house. He noticed that the young man was in the habit of crying and then laughing in his sleep. One day he asked, "Young man, you cry ^{and} then laugh in your sleep. What's the meaning of this?"

The young man explained, "I was driven from my home by my witch wife. Whenever I think of her good points, I miss her and cry. When I think of what she has done to me, I cannot help laughing."

The young man had scarcely finished these words when his wife appeared. She said sweet words to her husband and convinced him to return home with her.²

²This is a totally inadequate ending. The translator, Sema Kormalı, was unable to understand the dialect here. There are, among other omitted materials, references to Hızır. The last part of the tale should be translated again and the results should be appended to the tale.