Once there was and once there was not a padishah who had three daughters. Before the padishah departed, he warned his daughters, "While I am gone, do not go outside the house."

One day soon after that, while the padishah's daughters were sitting at home, an old yarn-spinner came along the street shouting, "I sell spindles! I sell spindles!"

The eldest daughter came out and asked, "What are you selling, grandfather?"

"I am selling spindles, my daughter," he said. They were for making woolen yarn.

"Will you give me one?" asked the girl.

"There are no good ones left in my basket now," he said, "but I have some better ones at home."

"Where is your home?"

"Not far," he said. "Just over there."

"Well, let us go, then," said the eldest daughter.

They went little, they went far. The old man kept saying, "It is

Although the old man is selling spindles, not spinning yarn, the narrator gave as the title of the tale "The Old Yarn-Spinner."
quite near here," but all the while he was taking the girl farther and farther away.

It was the habit of this old man to cut the throats of girls and hang them on the wall by their feet. When they arrived at his home, the oldest daughter was surprised to see this and asked, "Why did you hang those girls up there?"

"Don't talk too much," said the old man. "Just cut a piece of flesh from one of those corpses, and let us eat. I am hungry."

"I do not want to eat such flesh."

"If you do not," he said, "I shall kill you too."

The girl cooked some human flesh, and then they sat down. The old man ate some of the flesh from the corpse, but the girl refused to do so. The old man killed her, thinking that she would be of no use to him, and he hung her body on the wall with the others.

After he had finished eating, the old man went out to sell more spindles. He went to the same village. This time the middle daughter of the padishah came out to him. "Where is my sister?" she asked. "I want to buy some spindles, too."

"I have no good ones here, but I have better ones at home."

"Well, where is my sister?" the middle daughter asked.

"On the way to my house she met the son of a padishah, and she ran away with him. She would not listen to me."

"Well, I shall go with you to get the spindles, then, for my

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2 Actually, padishahs did not live in villages. Peasants naturally tell tales that fit within the setting and conditions they know best.
sister and I need them very much."

They went little, they went far, and the old man kept saying, "It is just here, just over there," until finally they reached his house.

As soon as they entered, the girl saw her sister's body hanging on the wall. She said to the old man, "Didn't you say that my sister had run away with the son of a padishah?"

"Oh, you talk too much!" he said. "We are hungry now. Go and cut a piece of flesh from that body so that we can eat it."

"I cannot eat my sister's flesh."

"If you do not, I shall kill you, too," said the old man.

With tears running down her cheeks, she cut a piece of flesh from the body of her sister, cooked it, and served it to the old man. They sat down together, but the girl would not eat. Instead, she continued crying.

The old man said, "You are of no use to me." He then killed her, too.

The old man finished his food, took his rest, and then went out again to sell spindles. Passing the house of the padishah, where now only the youngest daughter lived, he called, "I sell spindles! I sell spindles!"

The youngest daughter came out and spoke: "Grandfather, you took my two sisters. Where are they? What did you do with them?"

"My daughter, what could I do? When the last one saw an officer, she just took his arm and went with him. She would not listen to me."

"Well, then, give me some spindles. I need them."

"I have no good ones left here, but at home I have some better ones."

She also followed the old man, who kept saying, "Just here, just over
there," until they finally reached his house. What should she see there but her two sisters hanging on the wall?

The padishah had a little cat which was especially fond of this youngest daughter. It had followed the girl all the way to the old man's house.

When the girl saw the condition of her sisters, she wept loudly. "Stop that crying," said the old man. "Go and cut a piece of flesh from the body of your next-oldest sister and we shall eat. Her flesh should be quite tender."

The girl cooked the meat, weeping and sobbing all the while. They sat down at the dinner table, but the girl said, "I will not eat."

"If you do not, I shall kill you, too."

The girl then pretended to eat a piece of the flesh of her sister, but she gave it instead to the little cat, which was under the table. The old man then said, "Finger, where are you?"

It answered, "I am in a tiny little stomach." Of course, it was in the cat's stomach, but the old man thought that it was in the girl's stomach. From this he concluded that she would be a good person to have there.

Telling the girl to clean and sweep the house, the old man said that he was going out again to sell spindles. Before he left, he handed the girl a bunch of forty-one keys, saying, "Open these rooms and enjoy yourself—all but the forty-first one."

The girl opened so many rooms each day and she enjoyed herself in them. One day, however, she became very curious to see what was in the forty-first room. She decided to open the door of that room, but then,
realizing that it was close to the time for the old man to return, she thought it better to wait to do so until the next day.

As soon as the old man had left the next day, the girl went right away to open the door of the forty-first room. When she opened the door, lo, what should she see but a young man hanging by his hair from the ceiling. The room itself was filled with jewelry and all kinds of precious things.

The girl was surprised, and so was the young man, for he was alive.

"Are you man or jinn?" he asked.

"I am neither," she said. "I am a girl."

"Will you please rescue me from this place?" asked the young man.

"Yes, but the old man will be here any minute now. As soon as I see him off tomorrow, I'll come back and rescue you. Then we shall run away from here together."

She then went and started preparing food for the old man. They ate and drank. The next morning as soon as she had seen the old man off, she went again to the forty-first room. She cut whatever it was that held the young man up there, and the young man fell to the floor. They then gathered together all the precious things in the room and escaped, taking it all to the home of the padishah.

In the meantime, the padishah had returned home to find no one there. His daughters had been gone for a week. "Where have you been, daughter?" her father asked. "I warned you not to go out."

3 The expression, "In misin, cin misin?" means "Are you human being or jinn?" Apparently peasants use in for man, because usually a girl answers that question, "I am neither." This is, of course, illogical.
"Well, father," she said, "it happened in such-and-such a manner, and I acted in such-and-such a way."

After he had heard about it all, he said, "You did well, daughter. Now, that old man will come this way again. When he does, call me."

Later the old man did come again, and the padishah had him caught. They built a huge fire and they threw the old man into it.

The padishah had no sons, and now he had but one daughter left. He said to the young man, "My daughter seems to be your kismet. I have no son, and so you will be both my son and my son-in-law." Then he gave them a wedding which lasted for forty days and forty nights. Of course, the tale ends here.