

Story #563 (not taped; dictated)

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The ~~Dragon-Prince~~ and Banu

Once there was and once there wasn't an old woman who had three daughters. The two elder daughters always stayed at home with their mother, but the youngest one, whose name was Banu, used to go and work and bring food to her mother and sisters.

One day as Banu was passing through the marketplace, she saw a crowd gathered around a man. She approached the group to see what the man might be selling. The man was saying, "I have a house to sell. You will regret it if you buy it; you will regret it if you do not buy it." Banu did not understand how both of these things could be true, but she was curious.

"I will buy the house!" Banu called. To her surprise, the man accepted the low price Banu offered and sold the house to her. But in truth, the house was haunted. Whoever had bought that house would be found dead the next morning. The man who had sold the house to Banu had been the last owner, and his wife had been found dead that very morning. Of course, he did not tell Banu about that, but he took her directly to the house. It was a huge house, with forty rooms. There were all kinds of flowers and fruits in its garden.

Banu was very happy. She ran back to her old cottage and told her mother and her sisters all that had happened. Then she took her mother and her sisters to the new house. On the way, they bought a loaf of bread and a jar of yoğurt. When they arrived at the house, Banu said to her

mother, "I want to see the rest of the house, so just hide my share of bread and yogurt under the table. I'll eat them later."

Banu walked here and there through the house for two or three hours, and then she felt hungry, so she went to the kitchen. Both her share of the bread and her share of the yogurt were gone! But in the bottom of the yogurt jar was a big diamond! Banu could scarcely believe her eyes. She left the house with the diamond in her pocket, and returned to the cottage to her mother and sisters.

The next day, Banu went to the marketplace and sold the diamond for one thousand pieces of gold. With the gold, she bought for herself and her mother and her sisters new clothes and plenty of food. Still, she wondered how this wonderful thing had happened.

That evening, she went again to the new house with bread and a jar of yogurt. She put the bread and the yogurt under the table; then she hid herself behind a large water jar in the corner and waited. After midnight, she heard a noise. Suddenly the wall of the kitchen cracked, and a huge dragon walked in. He ate the bread and the yogurt; then he dropped a diamond from his mouth into the empty yogurt jar.

As the dragon turned back and passed through the cracked wall, Banu followed him. After walking for hours, they came to a beautiful garden with fountains and roses. The dragon stood under one of the fountains, and as the water passed over him he changed into a very handsome prince. Banu could scarcely believe her eyes. At that moment, she fell in love with him.

The prince walked toward a beautifully decorated bed, lay down there, and fell sound asleep. Then a very ugly woman came and stood beside the bed and said, "This is the punishment you get, young prince,

It was forbidden
Love at first sight

for not marrying my daughter. You will stay like that forever unless someone takes that magic diamond ring from your finger. And no one in the world will be able to do that, since no one will see you." She disappeared laughing.

Banu had, of course, hidden herself well, and she waited in her hiding place until she was sure no one would see her. Then she slowly approached the sleeping prince. She saw the beautiful diamond ring on his finger. Suddenly she lifted his hand and took the ring off his finger. The prince awoke and saw the beautiful Banu.

"Who are you?" he asked. "And how did you come here?"

Banu told him the whole story; she told him, too, what she had heard the ugly old woman say as he lay sleeping. The prince said, "We must escape at once, before that ugly witch sees us."

They began to run, hand in hand, without looking back even once. They ran over mountains and through valleys until they had reached the palace of the young prince. There the prince's father prepared a wedding ceremony that lasted forty days and forty nights. But before Banu and the prince were married, they threw the diamond ring into the depths of the sea.¹ Thus they were able to live safely and happily for the rest of their lives.

May we have a share of their good fortune!

¹Throwing into the sea an object which is believed to bring bad luck kills the power of that object.