Once there was and once there was not a padişah who married once but had no children from his wife, who married a second time but had no children from his second wife, who finally married a third time but had no children from that wife either. One day while the padişah sat thinking very deeply about this matter, his vizier asked him, "Your majesty, what is it that you are so worried and thoughtful about? You have everything for which anyone could wish."

"I have a serious problem," said the padişah. "I have been padişah for all these years, but I have no children to whom to leave my kingdom."

The vizier suggested that the padişah go on a journey to find an answer to his problem. The padişah mounted his horse and set out. Along the way he met a bearded man who was Hizir.¹ This man said "Selâmûnâleyküm," "Aleykümselâm."²

"Where are you going, padişah?"

"How do you know that I am a padişah?"

¹ Although the most popular saint in Turkey, Hizir is neither mentioned by name in the Koran nor fully accepted by the Moslem establishment. An ancient water deity and fertility god, Hizir is worshipped by a large rural cult in Turkey. Here he is playing his role as an aid to the oppressed. He is often a last-minute rescuer from disaster.

² "Peace be unto you," and "Peace be unto you, too," are traditional Moslem greetings.
"I know it."

"Since you know that I am a padișah, then you may also know the answer to my problem," said the padișah.

"What is your problem?"

"I have been married three times, but I have had no children from these wives. I am making a journey to try to find Hizar to see if he can help me."

The old man gave the padișah an apple. "Take this home and cut it into four pieces. You will eat one quarter and give each of your wives a quarter. That very night they should become pregnant." Then the old man disappeared, and the padișah realized that it had been Hizar.

The padișah returned to his palace. When his wives wished to see what beautiful presents he had brought for them, he threw the apple on the middle of the floor of the room, saying, "You will cut this apple into four pieces. I shall eat one quarter, and you three will eat the other three quarters." That very night all three wives became pregnant, and in nine months and ten days they gave birth to three sons.

In time these sons grew into children. One day they went to play in the padișah's rose garden. After they had arrived at the rose garden, they saw an old woman filling her pitcher at the fountain. They said, "Let us throw stones and see who can break her pitcher."

She is actually called cadi—a witch woman.
Neither the oldest nor the second son could hit it, but the youngest son hit it so hard that only the handle of the pitcher remained in the old woman's hand. When the old woman saw them there in the garden, she uttered a curse: "Oh, they are the padişah's children. May your garden wither and dry up until the arrival of the June nightingales." That very moment, the garden began to dry up.

The boys began to quarrel. "You caused this to happen!"

"No, you did!"

When the padişah came home from his office, he asked his wives, "Where are the children?"

"They went to the rose garden, and they have not yet returned."

The padişah went to the rose garden, and there he found the children all crying. When they explained what had happened, the padişah said, "Do not worry about it. We shall have another garden planted."

Three or five years later, when the children were fully grown, they decided to go in search of the June nightingales in order to bring about the revival of the garden. The two older brothers saddled their horses and set out. "I want to go, too," said the youngest.

"You are too young."

"No, I want to go, too."

After they had left, with their saddlebags full of gold, the youngest said, "I will go, too."

4 So strong is the folktale convention of three brothers of different ages (oldest, middle and youngest) that it overrides the carefully established facts that these three boys were simultaneously conceived and born on the same day. If their ages differed by minutes, or even by hours, the difference was not enough to allow two to say to the third that he is not old enough to accompany them.

5 This obvious anachronism attests to the viability of supernatural tales in Turkey.
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The grooms said among themselves, "Give him the lean horse will follow the others only for a short way, and then he will return."

After he had started to ride, the young man said to his horse, "Take me to the place where my brothers are." The horse began to run as swiftly as a flying bird and soon caught up with the older brothers.

Then the three traveled together until they came to a triple forking of the road, and there they saw an old man with a long beard sitting on the ground. "How long have you been sitting here?" they asked. "And where do these roads go?"

"I have been sitting here for ninety years," said the old man. "Caravans often pass along the road to the right. Only an occasional caravan passes along the road in the center. But traveling along the road to the left I see no one."

The oldest son chose to take the road to the right. The middle son chose the center road. And the youngest son took the road to left. Before they left, they agreed among themselves to leave a ring beneath a rock at this crossroad. Whoever returned there first would take the ring but would wait there for the return of the other two.

They went little, they went far. They went over hills and dales. But when they looked back, they saw that they had gone only as far as the length of a grain of barley. Each of the elder brothers inquired about the June nightingales in the many lands they visited. But as their money was gradually used up, they first sold their horses, and finally they had to become shepherds.
The youngest son rode along the lonely road for many days until at last he came to where an old woman was sitting. "Grandmother, why are you sitting here this way all alone? Have you no one in this world?"

"I had three daughters, but one was carried away by the Yellow Giant, one was carried away by the Black Giant, and the third was taken by the Seventeen-Headed Giant."

"I shall find them," the young man said. He rode along farther and came to the home of the Yellow Giant. While he was eating his meal there, a woman spoke to him from one of the windows of the house. "O young man! What is your business here? The Yellow Giant will be here in another minute, and he will probably eat you. But if you should be able to kill him, I would be willing to marry you."

"Let him come. He will see what happens." When the Yellow Giant appeared, the young man said, shot an arrow, and knocked the giant down.

"If you are brave, shoot once more," said the giant.

"A brave man is born only once from his mother, not twice."?

Two or three days later the young man came to the home of the Black Giant. The woman there asked, "What is your business here? If the Black Giant finds you here, he will probably eat you. If you could
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kill him, however, I would be willing to marry you."

The young man killed the Black Giant. He then continued on his way to the home of the Seventeen-Headed Giant. There the youngest daughter [of the old woman] gave him a black head scarf. "Cover your head with this if you should see a black cloud hanging over a valley."

As the young man proceeded, he saw a black cloud descending. It was actually the girl's grandmother [mother?]. Putting on the head scarf, he said to himself, "Perhaps that cloud will know the way to the land where the June nightingales can be found."

"Where are you going?" the cloud asked him.

"I am searching for the June nightingales."

"The June nightingales are in a cage hanging at the window of the daughter of the Padisah of Fairies. This girl sleeps for forty days at a time. But you must know certain secrets and do certain things to get them [the nightingales]."

"When you come to a fountain along your way, you must stop and scrub away the moss that has grown over it, thus letting the water flow freely once more. Later, an impenetrable thorny field will block your way. You will say, 'O thorny field, if you had been a lawn in my country, we would have played on you.' Then the thorns will all turn into grass, allowing you to pass. Near the palace [of the Padisah of Fairies] you will find a sheep before which is in front of the shorn, when you reach the palace."

9 There is some text that the youth kills.

10 An ancient Turk. It is played on horse!
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Turn -- here -- to open long-closed door and shut long-opened door
Door -- closed -- to be opened (Gem)
Door -- open -- to be closed (Gale)

the closed door. After you have done all of these things, the magical
power of the palace will be gone, and the padişah's daughter will be
in her period of forty days' sleep. She has forty knots in her cloth
belt. You will untie thirty-nine of those knots, and one will be
left. Do not untie that last one. Then you will take the June nightingales and leave the room without looking back.

"When the padişah's daughter hears noises, she will awaken and
call to the door, 'Door, swing shut and stop him!' But the door will
say, 'I stood closed for many years until this young man opened me.
I shall not stop him!' Then she will call to the wolf and say, 'Wolf,
catch him!' But the wolf will say, 'For years I had nothing but hay to
eat, but this young man gave me meat. I will not catch him!' Finally,
she will call to the thorny field and say, 'Thorny field, catch him!'
The thorny field will say, 'No one ever said a kind thing to me until
he came. He said that if I were in his country, I would be a field
on which people played cirit. I will not catch him!"

The youngest son came to the fountain and cleaned off the moss so
that the water flowed freely again. When he came to the thorn field, he
said, "O thorn field, if you had been a lawn in my country, we would
have played cirit on you." The thorns became grass, and he was able
to pass. Near the palace he came to the wolf and the sheep. Taking
the hay from before the wolf, he put it before the sheep; taking the
meat from before the sheep, he placed it before the wolf. When he

11 This kind of belt is often worn by Turkish women on their
baggy trousers (galvar).

12 This prohibition is similar to a very popular taboo in Turkish
folktales which forbids the opening of the fortieth door in the palace
of an ogre or other supernatural creature.
arrived at the palace, he closed the open door and opened the one which was shut. When he came to the room of the daughter of the Padişah of Fairies, he saw that she was asleep. Taking the cage containing June nightingales, he ran from the room without looking back.

The girl woke up and called to the door, "Door, swing shut stop him!"

The door answered, "For years I was closed, but when he came, he opened me. I shall not stop him."

Then she called to the wolf, "Wolf, catch him!"

But the wolf replied, "For years I had nothing to eat but hay. This young man gave me meat. I will not catch him!"

Then she called to the thorny field, "Thorny field, catch him!"

The thorny field said, "No one before ever said anything kind to me. This young man said that if I were in his country, I would be a lawn on which people would play cirit. I will not catch him."

Taking the nightingales and the three girls, he returned to the place where the ring was hidden.  Hzır met him there and told him that his brothers had not yet returned. Leaving the nightingales and the girls under the protection of  Hzır, the young man went in search of his brothers. He found them and rescued them from their lives as shepherds.

Returning to the crossroad, the three brothers took the nightingales and the three girls and started for home. But along the way, the two older brothers grew jealous and behaved treacherously. They threw
him into a well and left him there while they continued their journey home.

When a caravan stopped at that well, the camel drivers fed bread to birds there. But the birds threw the bread down the well instead of eating it, and from this the men knew that there was someone in that well. The pulled the young man out and made him a son of the caravan owner. One day as the caravan passed his father's palace, the young man gave a loud sigh. "Why do you sigh so?" they asked him.

"I sighed because I am the son of that padişah."

The caravan owner said to him, "Do not tell your father that I brought you back. Take this camel load of goods and be quiet." The young man now disguised himself as a keloğlan by covering his head with a sheep's stomach. He exchanged clothes with a shepherd. He went to the palace, and the June nightingales, which until now had been completely silent, began to sing. The rose garden suddenly began to flourish again. When the girls heard the June nightingales commence to sing, they knew that the youngest son was back.

By this time, the daughter of the Padişah of Fairies had come to the palace where she was staying as a guest. She said to the palace people, "I want to see the man who brought the June nightingales here."

Keloğlan means bald boy. Ringworm infections make many peasant children partially or wholly bald. Quite often it happens to the younger child or children, who cannot attend to their own cleanliness. Keloğlans are both pathetic and sympathetic figures. In folktales they are at times hapless but at other times, quite shrewd. Those who wish to pose as keloğlans or just ordinarily bald people do so (at least in folktales) by stretching over their heads the stomach sacks of sheep.
"I did this," said the oldest brother.

"Where did you find them?" asked the fairy girl.

"In the mountains," he said.

"No, you did not," she said, and she slapped him so hard that she broke two of his teeth.

Then the second son came and said, "It was I who brought the nightingales." But the fairy girl slapped him even harder and knocked out three or five of his teeth.

When the keloğlan saw his two brothers lying on the ground, he asked them what was the matter. When they told him, he said, "I shall go and answer her questions."

"If you do," they said, "she will probably knock out all thirty-two of your teeth!"

The keloğlan went to the river and washed. Then, taking his saddlebag, he went to the daughter of the Padişah of Fairies and said, "Selâmûnaleyküm."

"Aleykümselâm. Are you the one who brought the June nightingales?"

"Yes."

"Where did you get them?"

Instead of answering, the young man just emptied his saddlebag, pouring out on the floor the thirty-four ears ot the Seventeen-Headed Giant. Then he and the girl shook hands.

She then said to the padişah of that land, "I shall now have a contest with your son. The conditions of the contest are either killing or marrying." Mats for wrestling were spread all around, but the
daughter of the Padişah of Fairies hid beneath one of these mats.

[At this juncture, the coffeehouse audience protested, "No, no! You have made a mistake!" The narrator then abandoned the contest and moved at once to the inevitable dénouement, the marriage of the youngest son to both the daughter of the Padişah of Fairies and the youngest of the old woman's three daughters, the one who had been held captive by the Seventeen-Headed Giant.]

The youngest son gave to his oldest brother the girl who had been imprisoned by the Yellow Giant. He gave to his middle brother the girl who had been stolen by the Black Giant. He himself married both the girl who had been imprisoned by the Seventeen-Headed Giant and the daughter of the Padişah of Fairies. After the wedding at the home of the three brothers, they all went to the palace of daughter of the Padişah of Fairies and there had another wedding that lasted for forty days and forty nights. I was there too. They said, "Come on! We shall give you some pilav." They gave me pilav and other things to eat when I left the palace.

When I came to the bank of a river, the frogs there cried, "Vrak, vrak, vrak!" I thought that they were saying, "Birak, birak, birak!" [Leave, leave, leave!], and so I left my food for them.

15 A rice dish containing pine nuts and sometimes currants and small flecks of meat.
16 Onomatopoeia for the croaking of frogs.
17 The verb birakmak means to leave, to abandon. Birak is the imperative form.