The Substitute Bride

Once there was and once there was not, when the straw was in the straw, when jinns played ciril in the old Turkish bath, when lice were barbers, and the camel was a town crier, when I was rocking my father's and my mother's cradles, well, back in that time, there was a man who had a son. One day when the boy was asleep, he dreamed of a white-bearded man wearing a white turban and a green robe. The man was a saintly wise man. He told the boy to go to a certain fountain and wait until foam formed on the water. When it did form, he was to drink the foam and a beautiful girl would appear. The next morning the boy went to the fountain and waited. When foam formed on the water, he drank, and the most beautiful girl in the world suddenly appeared. The boy pulled the girl out of the fountain and set her on the edge. He then quickly went home to start wedding preparations.

In the meanwhile, a band of gipsy women were passing by the fountain. When they looked up and saw the boy departing, they

1Cirit is an ancient Turkish form of jousting, a javelin-throwing contest played on horseback.
cried for joy, "What a beautiful Shah! Your Shah is beautiful! I am beautiful. What is this beautiful Shah doing here?" And slammed their water jugs to the ground, shattering them in joy.

The beautiful girl could not stand it any longer, and she cried back, "Mother, that Shah is not for you. He is mine."

The gipsy women were disappointed to hear this, but a young gipsy stepped out from among the women and begged the beautiful girl to take her with her. After hearing her beg a long time, the beautiful girl consented to take the gipsy girl with her and the gipsy women left.

By now, the wedding preparations were about completed, and the wedding would soon take place. The village people together with the bridegroom started towards the fountain to get the bride.

The beautiful girl felt a bit tired from all the excitement, and she told the gipsy girl she would lay her head down in her lap to rest briefly before the wedding. She told the gipsy girl to examine her hair for lice while she was resting. As soon as the beautiful girl laid her head down, the gipsy girl grabbed her and rolled her down a bank and into a lake, where she drowned.

Where a drop of her blood had spilled onto the ground, a beautiful red rose sprang up.

When the villagers came to get the bride, they saw a dirty dark gipsy girl standing by the fountain on top of the hill.

The bridegroom could not believe his eyes and he kept repeating "This is the hyperbole of excitement. The boy is not literally a shah."
that he had found the world's most beautiful girl. The villagers
looked at the gipsy girl and wondered if this was supposed to be
a world beauty. They asked the girl, "Who are you?"

She said, "I was beautiful just a short time ago, but then I
looked down on the ground and darkened, and I looked at the sky
and grew ugly."

The villagers helped the gipsy girl to mount, and they all
started for the village. Just as they were about to leave that
area, the young man, seeing the red rose, picked it and wore it

The gipsy girl, who had seen him do this, said to the vil-
lagers, "I shall throw myself from the top of the hill if he does
not throw away that red rose."

The young man said, "No, I shall not throw away the red
rose, and she is free to do as she wishes about it."

The gipsy girl repeated her threat three times, and each
time the young man refused to throw away the red rose. They
finally arrived at the village and came to his house. The young
man quickly dismounted and planted the rose in front of the door.
Immediately the rose grew into a big rose bush.

The young man married the gipsy girl, and, in time, they had
several children. Among them, little Ali became the rose bush's
favorite. Whenever he played by the rose bush, it would bud out
into many beautiful red roses, but whenever the gipsy woman or
the other children went near it, the bush would beat its branches
against their heads and drop all its flowers onto the ground.

The gipsy woman grew more and more angry and kept asking her
husband to cut down the huge bush and make a porch for their
doors, spoons for their meals, and cribs for their babies.
Exasperated by his wife's nagging, he finally did cut down the
huge rose bush, which by then was the size of a tree, and with
its wood he made a porch for their front door, spoons for their
meals, and cribs for their children. The cribs would contract
and squeeze some of their children almost to death. The spoon
that the gipsy woman used would dig into her mouth until it made
a cut, and the porch would shake until the children and the
woman were knocked off their feet. But little Ali's crib and
spoon did not harm him, nor did he get knocked off his feet when
he played on the porch.

The gipsy woman became so annoyed that she demanded that
her husband tear off the porch, dismantle the cribs, and take
the spoons made of rose wood and burn them all. The man had
no choice but to comply with his wife's wishes. He tore down
the porch, disassembled the cribs, gathered the spoons and burned
the whole lot. He carefully placed the ashes in the fireplace
and as he did so, he heard a soft sound come from the hearth.

When the ashes of the fireplace were cleaned out and thrown
on the side of the road that week, the woman who herded water
buffaloes with her husband took the ashes to sprinkle on her
roof to make the mud dry. The next day when she returned from
herding, she found her house bright and sparkling clean. She
looked around for someone who might have cleaned the house but
did not find anyone. The next day the same thing happened.
On the third day she hid herself so that she could find out what was happening each day. A beautiful girl stepped down from the roof and started to clean the house. When the girl was through and ready to leave, the herder stepped out from her hiding place, and grabbed the girl by the arm, and asked, "Are you a human being or a fairy?"3

The girl answered, "I am one of God's creatures.

The herder then said, "From now on, you will be my own daughter."

The young man, now the inheritor of his father's estate, raised horses. The beautiful girl asked her new herder father to get a horse for her. He said, "Daughter, we have no way to care for or feed a horse."

The girl replied, "I shall care for and feed the horse."

The herder went and got a lame horse for her. They took the horse into the barn and washed him down thoroughly until the water running off the animal became a stream. Then she fed and fed the horse until he became big and strong.

Then one day the young man came to get his horse. She had whispered into the horse's ear that he should not get up until she had told him to do so three times. When the young man came, the horse would not get up to go. Finally, they called the girl

3When one encounters a creature of dubious origin, one utters the proverbial question, Imnisin cimmisin? ("Are you human being or jinn?")
to get him up. She said, "Kuheylan, I have had no reward for my patience. What can I expect from you?"

When she repeated this three times, the horse got up and went with the young man. But the young man was intrigued by this saying. He felt there was a special meaning in her words, but he could not determine what it was. Curious, he had the girl invited to his home for a session of rug weaving, and he asked that the women each tell her life story as they wove. He hid himself in a closet in order to hear what the girl would say. All the women told their life stories, and then asked the beautiful girl to tell hers.

The girl said to them, "My fate has been worse than that of a cooked chicken. My past has been so bad that you should not ask me about it, nor should I tell it to you."

They urged her to tell them anyway, and so she proceeded to do so. When she had related all the misfortune that had befallen her, the young man left the closet. He went home, gathered his wife and children, and put them in a huge pot. He closed the lid, tied the pot to the tail of a very bad-natured donkey, and sent the donkey to the mountain. The rocks on the mountain road bounced the wife and the children to pieces. He

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4 This unusual proper name is probably constructed to have some special meaning, an instance of symbolic language. The meaning, if any, is not known to us.

5 This is a proverbial expression.
then married the beautiful girl, and they lived happily ever after, and so may the listeners.\footnote{This variant of a widely distributed tale type is considerably truncated from that point in the story at which the heroine receives the lame horse. It becomes progressively more and more truncated as it comes to the end.}