

Story #663 (1976, Tape #14 & 15)

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The Louse Skin, the Beautiful Girl, and the Giant

Once there was and once there was not a gentleman who raised a louse.¹ When the louse became big and fat, the gentleman killed it, skinned it, and nailed its hide to the door. He had a beautiful daughter, and he declared that he would give his daughter's hand in marriage to whoever guessed the type of skin nailed to the door.

The young men of the land heard about the gentleman's declaration, and they all gathered to try their luck on the skin. One by one they passed by the door of the gentleman's house and guessed the skin to be that of a sheep, a goat, an ox, a horse, and just about all the known animals, but none of them guessed correctly.

The daughter watched the young men pass and fail at the door. There was a young man she was in love with. When she saw him coming, she wrote the correct hide identification on a piece of paper and threw it in front of him. The young man, however, did not see the piece of paper tossed in front of him; he stepped on it, and continued on his way towards the door. There was a giant coming right behind him. The giant saw the

¹The narrator says here flea (pire), not louse (bit). Throughout the rest of the tale, however, he says louse (bit). Inasmuch as identifying the hide of a huge louse is a motif common in Turkish folktales, we have changed flea to louse here in this first sentence.

piece of paper, picked it up, and read the message. When he came to the door and it was his turn to identify the hide, he told the gentleman that it was a louse skin.

The gentleman had to give his daughter to the giant, and he did. The giant ~~took the~~ beautiful girl to his house. It was a huge house, with ~~rooms -- forty~~ forty rooms. He showed her every room in the house, except one. He told her she must never go into that room. If she did, he would devour her. The girl assured him that she would not go into the room. After a period of time, however, the girl became very curious about the forbidden room. She wondered what could be there. Finally her curiosity got the better of her, and she entered the room. She saw that it was full of dead people. There were corpses ~~bones -- skulls~~ bones and skulls everywhere. The sight of all the dead people frightened the girl and she quickly went out and locked the door. Every night the giant would ask the girl if she had entered the forbidden room, and she would say she had not.

One day the giant disguise himself as her mother, went to the girl's house, and asked how she was getting along. The girl was pleased to see her mother and told her she had been very frightened since the day she had gone into the forbidden room of the house and found it full of bodies. When the giant heard this, he removed his disguise and told the girl to get ready to become his meal, because he had warned her against walking into the forbidden room. He also prepared for his meal by painstakingly sharpening his teeth.

teeth -- sharpening of

sharpening -- of teeth

book -- Juvvish

The girl begged the giant to let her go to the Turkish bath and cleanse herself before he ate her. The giant consented to her wish, and together they went to the bath house so that she could bath. The giant took a seat in front of the bath house door while the girl went in to wash.

There was an old woman who tended the bath house, and the girl told her her predicament. She begged the old woman to give her her garments so that she might escape being devoured by the giant. She said to the old woman, "The giant will not recognize me in your garments, and since he does not know you, you will not be in any danger yourself." The old woman took pity on her, for she thought that she was too young to be killed. She stripped and gave the girl her garments. The girl quickly got into the old woman's clothes and went out the door past the giant, who did not recognize her in the old woman's clothes. disguise -- old woman

She ran away as fast as she could and soon came across a caravan. She told the caravan leader that she had barely escaped the giant's wrath, but that he would surely catch her. The leader of the caravan took pity on her and told her he would hide her. "Go to the very end of the caravan and climb inside the large chest that the last camel is carrying."

Meanwhile, the giant, after waiting in front of the bath house, became impatient. He went inside and looked for the girl, but he could not find her. He asked the old woman if she had seen his wife.

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but the old woman told him she had not. The giant realized the girl must somehow have gotten away, and so he went out to search for her.

He started on the road out of town and soon came upon the caravan. He asked the caravan owner what the woman who had just come by had wanted. The caravan owner said, "I have not seen a woman."

The giant said he would search ^{-- of caravan} the caravan, and the caravan owner told him to go ahead and search. The giant went to each camel on the caravan and looked through the goods it was carrying. When he came to the last camel, the owner said that was his lame camel, and could hardly carry anything, much less a girl, in its back. The giant by now had grown tired and discouraged by his long and futile search. He agreed with the camel owner and left the last camel's load unsearched. Thus the giant was fooled by the caravan owner and left to search elsewhere.

The caravan owner helped the girl out of the chest where she had been hiding and took her to her father's house. When the girl's father heard the story of what had happened to his daughter, and realized the extreme danger she had just survived, he was most grateful to the caravan owner and rewarded him generously. He gave him enough gold to buy seven more caravans. Thus the girl was saved from the giant, and he was never seen again. They all lived happily ever after, and may we all do the same.

Ending -- of tale -- formulaic