

Story 718 (1976 Tape 4)

Narrator: Fadime Kayacan

Location: Yakacık village,
Söğüt kaza,
Bilecik Province

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The Substitute Bride

Once there were and once there were not two sisters-in-law, both of whom were married. One day one of them became pregnant. When her childbearing time approached she began to have labor pains, but she did not have a suitable place in which to bear her child. Finally she decided to go to the public bath and give birth to the child there. While she was bearing the child, two women came to her from a corner of the bathhouse and assisted her. After a daughter had been delivered, these two women gave many beautiful pieces of clothing both to the mother and to the baby girl. One of the women then asked, "May we prophesy the qualities of this child?"

"Yes, go ahead and prophesy her qualities."

"When this girl laughs, roses will bloom upon her face. When she cries, pearls instead of tears will fall from her eyes, and wherever she walks, grass will grow beneath her feet."

The second sister-in-law was also pregnant, and not

*Put bath as
place for
childbearing*

*Islamic?
8-9
Supernatural
vein*

throughout

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after the first child was born, a second one was born to this second sister-in-law. When her time of childbirth approached, the first sister-in-law said to her, "Go to the bathhouse to deliver your child."

"All right," said the second sister-in-law, "that is what I shall do."

When she began to give birth to her baby in the bathhouse, the same two women appeared from a corner in the building. They assisted her in the delivery. When a girl was born, its mother demanded of the two strange women "Predict my daughter's qualities!"

Offended by this command, the women said, "Your daughter will be blind and deaf!" And her prophecy came true. The child was blind and deaf. ⁹⁻¹³

The son of an aga¹ heard about the beautiful girl when she had reached maturity. He heard that wherever she walked the earth turned green and grass grew. He heard that whenever she cried, pearls and not tears fell from her eyes. He heard that whenever she laughed, roses bloomed upon her face. He sent a matchmaker² to the home of the girl. This woman

¹An ağa (English, agha) is a wealthy landowner. Until recently most rural areas were made up of large estates owned by aghas for whom the peasants worked.

²The Turkish matchmaker (dünür) proceeds according to a set pattern and discusses the marriage proposal with elaborate formulaic dialogue, all of which is skipped over here.

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came to the home of the beautiful girl and asked for her hand for the son of the aga. After all of the proper formalities had been completed, the family of the girl accepted proposal.

When it came time for the bride to go to the home of the groom for the marriage, her family decided to send her aunt with her to protect her on this journey. The blind daughter of the aunt also went along.

As they were traveling along, the beautiful girl became very thirsty and asked her aunt for water. Her aunt said, "If you will give us one of your eyes, we shall give you some water." The girl's thirst became unbearable, and finally she gave her aunt an eye for some water to drink. After a while, her thirst again became unbearable, and again she gave an eye for water to drink. Now she was completely blind herself, and at the first opportunity, her aunt pushed her from the carriage in which they rode and left her behind.

After some time an old man came along the road. The girl said to him, "Take me with you."

The old man said, "I would take you with me except that you are blind."

"Even though I am blind, I could take care of you," she said. The old man agreed to this and took her home with him

①
Eye
Eye for drinking
water

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Now let us return to the other girl. Her mother had given her the eyes which they had taken from the girl whose cheeks bloomed with roses. This daughter of the second sister-in-law went with her mother to the home of the son of the ağa as if she were the bride to whom he was engaged. And they were in fact married. The ağa's son was confused about her, however, for when she laughed, no roses bloomed upon her face; when she cried, no pearls fell from her eyes; and nowhere that she walked did any green grass spring up.

The beautiful girl living at the home of the old man would laugh and roses would bloom on her face; she would cry and pearls would drop from her eyes; she would walk about and green grass would spring up along her path. One day she said to the old man, "Father, take some of these roses around the town saying that you will exchange them for a pair of eyes."

The old man did as the girl requested. He walked from street to street shouting, "I give roses! I give roses! I give roses for a pair of eyes!" This was the way he was shouting as he went past the ağa's palace.

The second sister-in-law's daughter was now married to the son of the ağa. When the mother heard the old man's offer of roses, she said to her daughter, "Let us take your eyes and trade them for these roses. Then when you laugh in

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'the presence of your husband, we can say, "See! Roses bloom from her face when she laughs!" The daughter agreed to this and they exchanged her eyes for a bunch of roses. The old man then took the eyes home and gave them to the beautiful girl.

One day the son of the aḡa was giving away some horses to the villages round about in the area. The old man came home with one of these horses, but it was very feeble and sickly. He had said, "The girl will walk about, and everywhere she treads, grass will grow. The horse will be well fed." But no one who heard him understood what he said.³

After a while the son of the (aḡa) decided to travel about and examine the horses he had given to the villagers. He visited one village after another. When he reached the

³Fadime Kayacan is not a good storyteller. She is here simply summarizing a story which she but partially remembers. No one distributes free horses. The horses are farmed out to various people because of a drought in the land and because the aḡa cannot himself find enough food for his livestock. The girl's ability to make grass grow here becomes functional, for she feeds the horse assigned to the old man far better than anyone can feed any of the other farmed-out animals, and it is this that eventually identifies her for the son of the aḡa. She had pleaded with the old man to accept one of the horses so that she could thus reveal her identity; in Fadime's version here, the old man gets the horse--for no reason at all. The horse is always a sickly or weak horse so that the girl's nourishing will be more dramatically demonstrated when this puny beast becomes a tall and powerful horse. See other variants in ATON for a more logical development of these elements of the tale.

summarizing
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house of the old man and saw grass in the garden as tall as a man, he said, "The girl I have been seeking must live here."

The horse, overhearing this, responded, "The girl you have been seeking does live here."⁴

Hearing this, the son of the ağa said, "Let me look inside the house." Entering the house, he found the girl there. He took her at once to his father's palace and sent away the second sister-in-law and her ugly daughter⁵

Then there was a great wedding feast [celebrating the marriage of the son of the ağa and his true bride] which lasted for forty days and forty nights. Drums were beaten and zurnas⁶ were played throughout the celebration. At the present time the bride and groom are still living together happily.

⁴In most variants the horse either talks or understands the girl's instructions. Vaguely recalling a small bit of this section of the tale, the narrator here has the horse, for no apparent reason, speak to the son of the ağa.

⁵The whole identification scene, the reconciliation of the two betrothed lovers, the recognition by the prince or ağa's son of the villainy of the false bride and her conniving mother, and the punishment of this pair of offenders are here dismissed in a couple of brief sentences. In better renditions the same events may take several pages.

⁶The zurna is a popular wind instrument. It is a double-reed instrument. The zurna is a "must" for village weddings in Turkey. Drum and zurna music continues for fifteen or sixteen hours a day throughout the week of a village wedding.

Annual - speaks
language

Iron curtain

Wedding
celebration