

Story 720 (1976 Tape 5)

Narrator: Fadime Kayacan, 62

Location: Yakacık village,  
Söğüt kaza,  
Bilecik Province

Date: August 1976

*Names with  
special meaning*

What Were We? What Did We Get? and What Shall We Become?

Once there was and once there was not a family made up of a father, a mother, a son, and a daughter. The parents and the son one day left home to make a pilgrimage to Mecca. When they did so, they left their daughter at home.<sup>1</sup> While they were at Mecca, the parents and son received a letter from one of their neighbors saying, "In your absence, your daughter has become an evil person."<sup>2</sup>

Upon receiving that information, the three returned from Mecca to Söğüt, their hometown. When they reached home, the father said to his son, "Go and find that girl, and do not return until you have cut off her head."

The boy found his sister and took her to a nearby mountain to kill her. When they reached the mountain, how-

<sup>1</sup>Here, as in her other tales, Fadime Kayacan has omitted an important element of the story. In this widely distributed tale there is always a guardian appointed to look after and protect the girl while her parents are away.

<sup>2</sup>The letter received by the parents bears false witness against the girl. It is usually sent by the guardian, who falsely accuses the girl of immorality after she has refused to have sex relations with him.

*Innocent  
standard maiden*

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ever, the boy did not have the heart to kill his sister. Instead, he cut his little finger until it bled freely. Then, taking off his sister's dress, he soaked it in his own blood so that he would have evidence of her supposed death to give to his father. Having done this, he departed, leaving his sister naked on top of the mountain.

The girl searched for some kind of shelter, and after a while she found a cave where she could live. One day a shepherd who worked for an aga was passing the mouth of that cave when his dogs began to bark, "Hav, hav, hav!"<sup>4</sup> Frightened by the dogs, the girl ran farther into the cave and tried to hide. But the shepherd knew from the way his dogs acted that there was someone in that cave, and so he searched until he found her. "Hah!" he said, "this is just what I need--a wife."

Giving the girl some clothing to cover herself decently, the shepherd took her to his aga, declaring that he wished to marry the girl.

<sup>4</sup>This is onomatopoeia for the sound of barking. American dogs may say, "Bow, wow, wow!" but Turkish dogs do not. Their most common remark is "Hav, hav, hav!"

<sup>2</sup> Blood-soaked garment as token of victim's death  
<sup>2</sup>

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At the wedding feast drums and zurnas were played.<sup>5</sup> Thus the shepherd married the girl he had found on the mountain.

When sufficient time had passed, the shepherd's wife gave birth to a son whom they named "What Were We?"<sup>6</sup> After this child was born, the shepherd said, "I have become tired of serving as a shepherd after so many years at that kind of work. We shall leave this village and settle somewhere else."

Before he left, the ağa offered him this advice: "Son, if you are wise, you will go to a place that your wife likes."

"All right, I shall," said the shepherd.

Several days later they left and settled, let us say, at Esiri.<sup>7</sup> While they were living at Esiri, the girl gave birth to a second child. This one they named "What Did We Get?"<sup>8</sup>

While they were living there at Esiri, the father of the

<sup>5</sup>The drums and zurna are traditional instruments for the music of village weddings. It would be unthinkable to have a wedding without them. The zurna is a double-reed wind instrument. Drum and zurna music can be heard 15 or 16 hours a day at weddings.

<sup>6</sup>The Turkish for this name is Ne Idik?

<sup>7</sup>Esiri is a village close to the narrator's village of Yakacık.

<sup>8</sup>The Turkish for this name is Ne Olduk?

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girl had become padişah at the nearby city of Akçasu.<sup>9</sup> He did not have even the slightest idea that his daughter was still alive and that she was now married to a shepherd

After two more years, the girl gave birth to a third child, a boy. This one they named "What Shall We Become?"<sup>10</sup>

One day one of the ağas of that area sent a message to the shepherd, asking him to come to his mansion to talk with him. When he arrived at the mansion, the ağa said, "I want to hire you to sort a great quantity of gold coins that I have here. I want you to make three heaps of all this gold. Put the largest coins in a pile here, the middle-sized coins in a heap there, and the small coins in a heap in the corner. If you do a good job, I shall pay you one golden coin for your work."

The ağa's wife then said, "Don't you dare put even a single coin into your pocket, thinking that my husband won't pay you what he promised. But whether he gives you a gold coin or not, do not touch any of this gold or you will be considered a thief."

The shepherd worked for some time separating gold coins and piling them in three different heaps, as the ağa

<sup>9</sup>There is no nearby city of that name. It could possibly be the name of another village.

<sup>10</sup>The Turkish for this name is Ne Olacağız?



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We Get? hand me that other thing! What Shall We Become?  
do this for me!"

Very curious about these names, the padişah asked the woman, "Young lady, who are those whom you call What Were We? What Did We Get? and What Shall We Become?"

replied, "Uncle, some day I shall visit your palace and explain everything about these three." (She called him uncle,<sup>12</sup> not father.)

padişah said, "Well, do come and visit us some day."

A day arrived when they did go--the former shepherd, his wife, and their children--to visit the padişah in his palace. At one point in their visit, the wife told the padişah her life story:

"I once had a mother, father, and brother. My brother took me one day into the mountains to kill me, but when the time came for him to kill me, he did not have the heartlessness to do such a thing. Instead, he cut his finger and with his own blood soaked my dress, and then took that to our father as evidence that he had killed me. He then left me there naked in the mountains

"After a while a shepherd found me in a cave where I was hiding and took me home with him. His ağa gave a wed-

<sup>12</sup>Uncle is a term used sometimes to show respect to an older man with whom one has no kin relationship.

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ding feast for us, and we were married. We had three children and named them What Were We? and What Did We Get? and What Shall We Become?

"One day an ağa hired my husband to sort a large quantity of gold coins, promising to pay him a gold coin for his work. But when the work was done, the ağa paid him not just one gold coin but a whole chest full of them. In this way we became wealthy, so wealthy, in fact, that when the ağa died we were able to buy his mansion

"The only other thing I have to tell you is that I am your daughter."

Thereupon, they all embraced each other and kissed. The padişah called the former shepherd "My son," and they lived very happily together.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup>In most variants of this tale the rejected daughter herself achieves both great success and wealth, with which she ultimately confronts her father. In this poorly told variant, wealth is acquired more by luck than by ability, and it is acquired by the shepherd husband rather than by the daughter herself.