

Story 899 (1974, dictated) Narrator: Dikmen Gürün Uçarer

Location: Iskenderun, kaza town of Hatay Province; tale collected at Istanbul, where she had lived many years

Date: Summer 1974

The Padişah's Three Sons and the Wicked Wives of Sultan Fedlifa

Once there was and once there was not a padişah who had three sons. One day the oldest son went to his father and said, "I want to see the world. Please give me forty bags<sup>112-114</sup> of gold, a horse, and your permission to leave." After his father had granted all three of these wishes, the oldest son said farewell and departed.

The prince rode his horse steadily day and night until he reached an inn<sup>112-115</sup>. The weather was very warm at that time, and the young man decided to sleep on the roof of the inn.<sup>1</sup> As he lay there on the roof, he gazed into the sky, and he was amazed to see there not just one moon but two moons! Unable to believe his eyes, he called the innkeeper<sup>112-115</sup> and said to him, "I seem to see two moons here tonight. What is the meaning of this?"

<sup>1</sup> Peasants in central and southern Anatolia regularly sleep on the flat sod roofs of their homes during the heat of the summer. Whether or not guests at an inn would do so is debatable. In folktales the narrators adapt the narrative to the living conditions they know best.

Beauty scene - centered with  
113, 114, 13

Innkeeper said, "One of those moons that you see is the real moon. The other one is the reflection of the beautiful face of the daughter of the padişah of this land.<sup>2</sup> But don't you dare try to see her, for she is very cruel. To win her hand, her suitors must answer correctly a question she asks them. If they do not answer the question correctly, she has their heads cut off."

Heedless of this warning, the young man went to the palace the next day and said, "I have come to ask for the hand of the padişah's daughter." Everyone at the palace who heard that pitied the boy, but they called the princess. She came wearing a veil, with only her beautiful shining eyes showing. She said to him, "You are a handsome young man, and I pity you. Why don't you abandon the idea of marrying me? For if you cannot answer my question, you will die."

But the boy was <sup>encharmed</sup> bewitched with her beauty, and so he said, "Ask me the question."

She asked him, "What does the black dog of Sultan Fedlifa eat?" Of course he could not answer such a question,

<sup>2</sup> In the Turkish tradition the moon is the most beautiful of all natural objects. It is a symbol of all beauty. The most fulsome compliment that can be made to a woman's beauty is to compare it with that of the moon. The ATON contains numerous comparisons of this kind. The crescent moon appears in the flags of Turkey and of several other Islamic countries.

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2 4

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and of course they chopped off his head.

When two years had passed and the oldest son had not returned, there was concern about him back at the palace of his padişah father. Worried about his older brother, the second son decided to search for him. He, too, requested his father for forty bags of gold, a horse, and permission to leave. When these wishes were granted, he bade farewell as his brother had and departed.

It was by chance that his first stop was at the same inn that his older brother had stayed in earlier. It was again the summer season, and like his brother, the middle son decided to sleep on the roof of the inn. He, too, saw two moons in the sky, and after listening to the explanation of the innkeeper he, too, decided to become a suitor for the hand of the beautiful but cruel princess. She asked him the same question: "What does the black dog of the Sultan Fedlifa eat?" And when he failed to answer that question, his fate was the same as that of his older brother.

After another year had passed, the youngest son, not having heard anything from either of his brothers, left the palace with forty bags of gold and a horse in search of them. He stopped at the same inn that they had, and he asked the innkeeper if he had seen anything of two young men that resembled him. The innkeeper remembered those two young men

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well, and he told the youngest son the sad story of what had happened to them

The next day the youngest son walked past the palace and began observing what went on there during the course of the day. He saw a very old woman walking in the garden with the beautiful princess, the two of them talking and entertaining each other. He thought that this old woman might possibly be able to help him. He returned to the palace several days in a row with the hope of finding an opportunity to talk with the old woman alone. Finally a day arrived when he did have that opportunity. He said to her, "Old lady, I want to marry the princess. I shall give you thirty-nine bags of gold if you will discover a secret from her. Discover and tell me what question she will ask me as a suitor test."

When she saw the thirty-nine bags of gold, the old woman accepted this task. On the following evening she came to the inn to see the boy. She said, "The question is this: 'What does the black dog of Sultan Fedlifa eat?'"

The boy had never even heard of a person named Fedlifa but he decided to locate his country and then find Sultan Fedlifa. He set out in the direction of a distant mountain range, riding day and night. After several days of such hard travel, his horse died, and he had to continue his

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journey on foot. As he was walking along one day, he noticed a tree in which there was a nest full of baby birds. A snake was getting ready to eat these nestlings.

The boy pulled out his sword and killed the snake. He then went to sleep in the shade beneath the tree

Later, when the mother bird returned to her nest, she saw the dead snake and the prince sleeping beneath the tree. When the prince awakened, she said to him, "Because you have saved the lives of my children, I shall do anything I can for you."<sup>3</sup>

The prince asked, "Can you tell me where the kingdom of Sultan Fedlifa is located?"

The bird answered, "It is past seven mountain ranges and beyond seven seas, but I shall carry you there."

*Bird, giant*

The boy climbed upon the bird's back, and they began to fly toward the land of Sultan Fedlifa. They flew and flew for seven days without stopping and finally reached that land. The bird landed him near the city where Sultan Fedlifa lived, and then she said to him, "Here are two pieces of

*116-117, 120*

*Magye of 116-117, 9*

<sup>3</sup> The episode of the hero with the giant bird and its nestlings appears in many folktales and in several in ATON. The bird may be a roc, a phoenix, a simurgh, or sometimes just a giant hawk. In the Turkish tradition it is most often an Anka bird, and it is often referred to as the Zümrüdu Anka--the Emerald-Green Anka Bird. In most cases the bird rewards the hero by carrying him up from the underworld to the surface of the earth.

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feather. If you are ever in severe difficulty, blow on these feathers, and I shall appear to rescue you." Having said that, she flew away.

The boy began wandering through the city, which seemed to be unoccupied and empty. For some time he did not see a single person. But as he approached a large palace, he saw a man, dressed as a sultan, sitting on the balcony with his dog.<sup>117-120</sup> This was Sultan Fedlifa. When the sultan saw the prince approaching, he called to him, "Come upstairs here and dine with me." The youngest son was glad to accept this friendly invitation

As the two men sat at the dining table, the prince noticed that the Sultan and his dog were just like friends in their manner toward each other. He said, "My Sultan will you please tell me what you feed your dog?"

The Sultan said, "If I should tell you that, I should have to kill you afterwards, because this involves a great secret."

The prince said, "Never mind the penalty. Kill me afterwards if you wish, but do tell me the secret

The Sultan then began his story. "I had three wives who were as beautiful as it is possible for any women to be. Their beauty was so great that it was reflected in the skies. At night here there were four moons in the sky. I thought

four moons  
in sky

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that we all loved each other and were living together happily, but such was not the case

"Now one of those wives is dead, one will die, and the whereabouts of my third wicked wife is unknown to me, but wherever she is, I am sure that her beauty reflects in the sky at night like a second moon. My disaster began one day while the three of them were in the garden plotting against me. What I overheard I could hardly believe, for these three wicked women were planning to kill me and then rule the kingdom themselves

"The next day they invited me to go walking with them along the riverbank and through the valley on the edge of city. I accepted their invitation but took my black dog with me. As we were walking along, a huge giant appeared before us. My wives ordered this giant to kill me at once. As I was trying to pull my sword from its scabbard in order to defend myself, my black dog leaped upon the giant and <sup>blinded</sup> blinded both its eyes. The giant then could do nothing but flee.

"Seeing this, one of my wives <sup>transformed</sup> transformed herself into a bird and flew away.

She then escaped to the palace, where she reported that I was

↓ *see me in*

dead.

*Sanjiv*

"I had to return to the city as a dog. None of my people recognized me, and I was such a filthy dog that everyone who saw me kicked me as I walked along the street. My wife was by then ruling the country, and my future seemed to me to be utterly hopeless. But my dear black dog, who is as clever as any human being, rescued me. He sneaked into the palace one day and stole the magic stick from my wife. Dragging it to me, he used it to restore me to my former self--though not completely, for I still have a dog's tail. After I had become my old self again, I entered the palace at night, touched my wife with the stick while she slept, and turned her into an ugly black bird. Do you see the black bird in that cage over there? Every evening I feed my dog a large bite of that bird, and that will eventually kill her. After executing those people who stoned and kicked me while I was in dog shape, I ordered all the rest of my subjects to leave the city. You are a stranger, and I have no reason to trust you. You might well take my secret to others and even make fun of my tail. Therefore, I now have to execute you, too."

*Sanjiv*

"Very well," said the prince, "but first allow me to take ablution in your fountain and pray to God." As he walked toward the fountain, he blew on the two pieces of

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feather. Suddenly the large bird appeared and carried him back to the inn where his difficulties had begun

On the following day he went to the front gate of the palace and sent word in to the padişah that he wished to marry his daughter. When the woman came to ask him that test question, he knew that she was the wicked wife of Sultan Fedlifa, the wife who had become a bird and escaped in that way. She asked him the question: "What does the black dog of Sultan Fedlifa eat?"

The prince answered, "Sultan Fedlifa feeds the black dog every evening with a large bite of the flesh of an ugly black bird."

The answer was correct, and the padişah's daughter agreed to marry the handsome young prince. After a wedding ceremony in which everyone feasted for forty days and forty nights, the prince said, "It is now time for us to go to my father's country." They left the palace and began to ride in the direction of his own land. Along the way the prince stopped the horses and said to his bride, "You are the wicked wife of poor Fedlifa!" Giving her no chance to escape, he immediately cut off her head and thus avenged the harm she had done to Fedlifa. *revenge*

*after this*

After reaching his own country, he related the entire story to his father. The padişah was so proud of his

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youngest son that he immediately made plans for the prince to succeed him on the throne.