

Story 940 (1977 Tape 26)

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Göle kaza,
Kars Province

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The Miller and the Fox

there was and once there was not a miller. He did not earn very much money at his mill, but he also earned some money by raising chickens. He had a large flock of chickens

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After a while he discovered that he was losing chickens. Every day there would be one fewer chicken in his flock. Wondering what was happening to these chickens, he decided to sit up at night in the barn to learn the secret of their disappearance. While he was guarding his chickens, he saw a thieving fox enter the barn and take one of them. He quickly caught the fox by the tail and said, "Now I understand what has been happening to my chickens. But I have caught you, and I shall kill you."

Very frightened, the fox began to plead with the miller.

He said, "Oh, please don't kill me. If you spare me, I shall be very useful to you. In fact, I can make a real, fine man of you."

Offended by what he heard, the miller asked, "What do you mean by that? Am I not a real man already? If not, then what am I?"

Here
the
fox
is
a
man

He
is
not
a
real
man

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I did not mean it that way," said the fox. "Of course you are a real man! But I can improve your fortune greatly. I shall get the daughter of the padişah for you as your wife."

Shortly after that the fox went to the palace and talked with the padişah. He said, "Your Majesty, you should marry your daughter to Torlu Bey." (The miller's name now became Torlu Bey.)

"Perhaps," said the padişah, "but we must first see and talk with the man you suggest as bridegroom. After we have seen him, we can then decide if he is suitable. Bring him here."

fox returned to the miller and said, "Come along! We must go to the padişah's palace."

the miller objected saying, "Oh, my God! How can I ever go to the padişah's palace in these old clothes?"

fox comforted the miller. "Don't worry about that," he said. "I shall play a trick on the padişah to take care of that problem." He sent a message to the padişah in which he said, "My great Padişah, on our way to your palace we had an accident. As we were crossing a river, we fell into the water and soaked our clothes completely. Please send us some dry clothes."

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The padişah sent them two sets of clothes--very fine clothes from his own wardrobe. When they reached the palace and were shown into the padişah's presence, they looked like fine gentlemen. After the padişah had talked with them for a while, he decided to give his daughter to Torlu Bey.

Some time later the wedding ceremony was held. After a lengthy celebration, the time came when the bride was to be delivered to the home of the groom.¹ Before the procession started from the palace to Torlu Bey's house, the fox had made very careful preparations. He went to a shepherd along the route and said, "Can you see that large crowd of people gathered outside the palace? When they pass this way, they will probably ask you who is the owner of this large flock of sheep. Regardless of who the real owner may be, you are to say, 'They are the sheep of Torlu Bey.' If you do not say that, they will kill you." There were several other flocks grazing along that route, and the fox went to each of the shepherds and repeated what he had said to the first shepherd.

¹ It is traditional in village weddings to have the bride finally delivered, in a great procession of her kinsmen and friends, to the home of the groom. Her dowry and other goods are often transported to her new home at the same time.

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When the bride's kinsmen discovered that all those flocks belonged to Torlu Bey, they were very favorably impressed. They said among themselves, "The bridegroom is a very wealthy man--wealthier even than our padişah!"

The fox had also arranged for a suitable home for the bride and groom. He had seen two apartment houses² along the way, one made of gold and the other of silver. He went to the very old woman who owned these apartment houses and said, "Oh, grandmother, can you see in the distance the large crowd of men coming this way? They are the soldiers of the padişah, and they have orders to kill everyone who lives along this road. Quick, now--you must hide yourself until they have passed!"

Terrified, the very old woman asked the fox, "Where can I hide?"

The fox showed her a cave in which to hide. He said, "Quick--hide in here!" As soon as she had entered the cave, the fox poured some gasoline³ into the mouth of the cave and

² Modern urban apartment houses are the grandest, most luxurious living quarters that impoverished rural peasants can imagine. Hence, in their folktales, kings and sultans often live in such anachronistic residences.

³ This anachronism is used to replace the action that usually appears in variants of this tale. Usually the duped person is an ogre or giant (not a harmless old lady). After the victim has been persuaded to hide in a cave or well, the mouth of the cave or well is sealed shut with very large boulders.

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lighted it. In this way the old woman was burned up, and the fox took possession of her apartment houses. They provided a very elegant residence for Torlu Bey and the princess.

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They lived there for some time without being disturbed by any problems. Then one day the fox pretended that he was ill. The miller's (Torlu Bey's) wife said, "Oh, Husband, our fox seems to be quite sick!"

The heartless miller (Torlu Bey) answered, "Don't worry about that. Pay no attention to him! He will probably die soon, and when that happens, just throw him on the trash pile."

When the fox heard what the miller had said, he became angry. Rising from his bed, he said, "Hm-m-m! I think I shall turn you back into an impoverished old miller again!"

Only then did the miller realize what a mistake he had made. He begged the fox to forgive him for what he had said.

"I shall forgive you on one condition. When I die, you will place me inside a golden coffin, and you will keep that coffin in front of your house for the rest of your life."

The miller gave his promise to do this.

A day came when the fox finally died. The miller put the body of the fox inside a golden coffin and he placed

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that coffin in front of his home. Thus, everyone had his wishes fulfilled.⁴

Julie Terminal series

⁴ The very inept raconteur omits the important part of this very common terminal formula. The full statement here is this: "They had their wishes fulfilled, and may we all have the same good fortune."