

Story 1185 (1990 Tape 5)

Narrator: Unidentified man

Location: Malatya, capital of Malatya Province

Date: 1990

The Pomegranate Seed

Childlessness

Once there was and once there was not a childless couple. One day when the wife was sweeping the floor, she found a pomegranate seed. She ate this seed, and it had a marvelous effect on her, for on the following morning she discovered that she was pregnant. In the usual length of time the woman bore a child, a very beautiful girl, whom they named Pomegranate Seed.

Beauty, because of her jealousy

As the girl grew to maturity, she became more and more beautiful with every passing day. She became so very beautiful, in fact, that her mother began to be jealous of her attractiveness. As a result of this jealousy, the woman began to buy fine clothes for herself but none for her daughter.

One day the woman took out her ^{1, 2, 6} magic mirror and questioned it. "O mirror, which is the most beautiful: you or I, daylight or moonlight?"

mirror answered, "Neither you nor I, neither daylight nor moonlight is the most beautiful. It is Pomegranate Seed who is most beautiful."

Later that day when her husband came home, the woman said to him, "You must kill your daughter!"

wife, you must be unaware of what you are saying! In

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our forty years of marriage we have had just one child: this girl. You cannot really mean that you want me to kill our only child!"

"Yes, I do mean that. Either you will kill her, or I shall kill both of you! Bring back her ^{bloody garment} bloody shirt as proof that you have killed her!"

Abandoned child

The father had no intention of killing Pomegranate Seed, but he pretended to do so. He took her into the mountains and left her there. Then he killed a crow and let its blood run upon the one of the girl's shirts that he had brought along with him. When he returned home, he gave this bloody shirt to his wife.

In those mountains where Pomegranate Seed had been left, there were five sisters living together in a cottage. When these sisters found Pomegranate Seed wandering about the area near their cottage, they took her home with them and made her the sixth sister.

About a week after that the mother again consulted her magic mirror. "O mirror, tell me now which is most beautiful: you or I, daylight or moonlight?"

"Neither you nor I, neither daylight nor moonlight is the most beautiful. It is Pomegranate Seed who is most beautiful."

"But that is impossible," said the woman, "for Pomegranate is dead. She was killed, and here is her bloody shirt as proof of her death."

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"Tu-u-uh! That is not true. Pomegranate Seed lives in the mountains in a cottage with five sisters. There she spends her time making lace upon an embroidery frame."

That night when her husband returned home, the woman said to him, "You did not really kill our daughter! She lives in the mountains in a cottage with five sisters. You must go there and kill her!"

"Very well," said the man. He went to market and bought the contents of a peddler's pack, all of which had been laid out on the ground.¹ He bought the goods in that particular pack because he saw among them some ^{3-5 3-4} poisonous white candies. Placing all of these materials back in the pack, Pomegranate Seed's father placed the load on his back and went into the mountains to find the cottage of the five sisters. When he located it, he began shouting, "Here are needles, mirrors, and all kinds of things for sale!"

When the five sisters heard him calling in this way,

¹In Turkish rural markets there are rarely stalls or racks for displaying merchandise. Vendors lay out their wares on a blanket or piece of canvas. In cities sidewalk vendors do the same thing. Although such sidewalk vending is illegal in major cities, it still flourishes. Because such goods are so readily portable, they are quickly whisked out of sight whenever a police inspector's vehicle is seen proceeding down the street searching for such itinerant merchants. Sidewalk vendors have no overhead costs, and so they can sell more cheaply than established shopkeepers, and so local Chambers of Commerce and Better Business Bureaus strive to eliminate such curbside vendors.

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to the peddler in hope of buying some balls of embroidery thread from him.² Pomegranate Seed ran out of the cottage with five sisters.

The man pretending to be a peddler said, "I have some balls of that kind of thread here in my pack but I cannot find them right now. Let this small girl of yours walk along with me as I sell my goods, and when I get down in the pack to the yarn you wish, I shall give them to her."

"All right," said the five sisters.

After walking for some distance while he pretended to be searching for the embroidery thread, the peddler gave Pomegranate Seed a piece of the poisoned white candy. As soon as she put the candy into her mouth, the girl fell to the ground unconscious.

Meanwhile, the five sisters at the cottage awaited her return. After waiting for quite some time, they suspected that something must have happened to her. They began searching for

When they found her lying on the ground, they thought that she was dead. They began to cry, and they continued to cry until morning.

On the following day the five sisters bought a horse and two wooden chests. Placing Pomegranate Seed in one of the chests and ⁴⁻⁵ pearls in the other, they mounted one chest on either side

²A ball of such thread is known as a kuka. That is the term used here by the narrator.

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of the horse's back. They then released the horse to go wherever it would. As the horse wandered along a mountain trail, it approached the padişah and his vizier, who had come into those mountains to hunt.

When they saw this unattended horse coming along the trail, padişah said, "Let us share the contents of those two chests borne by the horse. Whatever living thing may be in them will be mine, and whatever material thing they may contain will be yours. All right?"

"I agree to that," answered the vizier

They caught the horse and opened the chests it had been carrying. According to their bargain, the padişah took the girl and the vizier took the pearls.

The padişah took Pomegranate Seed to his palace and placed in a separate room. He then sent the girl engaged to his son to that room to see if she could discover what was the matter the girl he had taken from the chest. When his son's fiancée found no remedy for Pomegranate Seed, the padişah sent son to examine her. The prince opened her mouth and saw the poisonous white candy still lying upon her tongue. As soon as he removed this from her mouth, Pomegranate Seed recovered

When the prince gazed upon the great beauty of the revived Pomegranate Seed, he fell in love with her at once. He had his engagement annulled, and as soon as the required arrangements

could be made, he married Pomegranate Seed. After a while they a child, a son, whom they named Molla Muhammed.

Shortly after this, the mother of Pomegranate Seed dressed herself in her finest clothes and consulted the magic mirror again. "O mirror, which is the most beautiful: you or I, day-or moonlight?"

The mirror replied, "Neither you nor I, neither daylight moonlight is the most beautiful. It is Pomegranate Seed who is most beautiful.

"Tu-u-uh! That is impossible. She is dead, and I have here some of the poisoned candy that was used to kill her."

"No, no!" said the mirror. "She is not dead but alive. is now the wife of the son of the padişah, to whom she has borne a child."

When the woman's husband came home that afternoon, she said to him, "Get me a long iron stick." He left again to do as she ordered, and later that evening he returned with such a stick

On the following morning she took a cord and tied one end of the stick to her waist, wearing it like a gun.³ Then she

³Why should she wear the stick like a gun? When firearms were first used by Turks, a rifle was referred to as "the iron stick with a hole in it." Some Koroğlu tales describe a rifle in this way. The term iron stick here may possible have triggered this association in the narrator's mind. A sword would have been more practical both to hang from her belt and to use to stab the girl.

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proceeded to the palace of the padişah and knocked on the door Pomegranate Seed opened the door⁴ but did not recognize her mother.

"My girl, come out and walk with me for a while. You need the fresh air, and you remain inside too much

"No, I cannot do that, for my baby, Molla Muhammed, would cry if I left him here alone."

"But come along, anyway. We shall not be gone long, and Molla Muhammed will be all right," insisted her mother. They went to the private park on the palace ground, and there the mother removed her clothes and swam in the pool at the center of that park. After the mother came forth from the water Pomegranate Seed also removed her clothing and bathed in the pool. While Pomegranate Seed was doing this, her mother took the iron stick and plunged it into her daughter's chest. After that, the woman suddenly became ill. She had barely enough strength to drag herself home and go to bed

When the iron stick was plunged into the chest of Pomegranate Seed, the girl instantly became a bird and flew away. She flew to the orchard of her father's farm, where she settled on one tree after another. "May the trees upon which I settle dry up

⁴The peasant view of life sees no inconsistency in having a princess open the palace door, as if it were the door of a humble village residence.

*Trees turn dry
7, 9
Bird settles on trees
and kills them
themselves*

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bear no fruit," she said

Day after day one tree after another died until there remained only one living tree. The owner of this orchard (who Pomegranate Seed's father) found himself in deeper and deeper trouble. Not only was his wife growing sicker as time passed also his fruit trees were all dying. He had discovered the trees were being killed by the bird which settled upon them, and now it was perching every day on the only tree that was still alive. He consulted some hocas⁵ to find out how to rid of the bird that was causing so much damage. They said to him, "Place black mastic on the branches of the tree on which it perches. It will stick fast to that mastic and be unable to fly away. Then you can catch it and kill it.

Returning to his farm, the man followed the direction of the hocas. He spread black mastic on all the branches of the living tree in his orchard. Just as the hocas had predicted the bird (who was really a girl) was caught in the sticky mastic and was unable to fly away. The man climbed the tree and grasped the bird, saying, as he did so, "So, you were the one who caused me to lose all of these valuable fruit trees!"

His wife called to the man and said, "Cook that bird for me to eat! It may be what I need to cure my illness

⁵A hoca is a preacher and the religious leader of a community. In pre-Republican times the hoca was also the community teacher. Separation of church and state in the Republic

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transformation

Noticing a piece of iron sticking in the bird's breast, he took hold of it and pulled it out. As soon as he did this, the bird was changed back into Pomegranate Seed and at that very same moment her mother died.

The girl then explained to her father everything that had happened to her since he had first taken her into the mountains. He at once returned her to her husband, the son of the padişah. After they had been reunited in this way, Pomegranate Seed and her husband ate and drank and lived happily together forever after.

required that teachers be people of secular rather than of religious training.