

Story 1225 (1990 Tape 11

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Girl Created by Three Travelers

There were once three friends who decided to travel together from their village to visit a certain city. One of these men was a carpenter; one was both a tailor and a jeweler; and the third was a hoca.

The trip to the city was too long to be completed in one day, and so they were compelled to spend the night somewhere along their route. As it began to grow dark, they camped along the roadside in a barren and rather desolate place.

After they had been sleeping for a while, the carpenter awoke.¹ Being restless, he strolled around the spot where they were camping. While doing this, he saw a tree, which stood out very clearly because of the scant vegetation there. It was a dead tree, but the trunk was still solid. As he looked at this tree, it seemed to him to resemble somewhat the shape of a

¹In most versions of this very widely distributed tale, the three men do not just happen to awaken during the night. Because of the fact that they are camped in a desolate (and possibly dangerous) place, they take turns standing on guard. Each awakens his successor to this guard duty.

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woman. He cut down the tree and then exerted all of his skill to carve the trunk more precisely into the form of a young woman. He then returned to his bed and went to sleep again.

Some time later the tailor-jeweler woke up, and, like the carpenter, he arose and walked about their camping place. When he saw the wooden statue, he was surprised by its beauty, and he thought, "This could be an elegant lady if she were clothed appropriately and decorated with the right jewelry." He then set to work to sew a very pretty dress for her. After the dress was finished, he put it on the statue and added two or three pieces of jewelry. Having finished his work, he then retired again.

Still later in the night the hoca arose and looked about the place where they were staying. When he saw the statue of the girl, he was impressed by its beauty. To himself he said, "Should such a beautiful figure remain lifeless? One should at least try to give it life." He prayed for some time, and after a while the statue started to move. It began to have life, and, in fact, it actually became a real human being. The next morning the carpenter and the tailor were amazed to see that the beautiful statue they had created was now a living person. She was very desirable, and it was not long before the three men started discussing which of them should

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have the right to marry her. Not being able to settle this matter themselves,² they decided to let the girl choose whichever of them she felt had the greatest right to be her husband.

The girl thought about this for a few minutes, and then she decided to marry the hoca. When the other two men asked her to explain her reason for choosing the hoca, she made this response: "One of you carved my body out of wood, and the other made pretty clothes for me and decorated them with jewelry, but after you had finished your work, I was still a lifeless object. It was through the efforts of the hoca that I was given life, and it is because of that that I have chosen to be his wife."

This was the way that she announced her decision. And so the hoca and the young lady were married.³

²Here the tale loses some of its usual dramatic quality. In most variants each man sets forth his claim to the girl in specific and hopefully persuasive terms.

³At the conclusion of this tale, the narrator made the following observations about both it and its immediate predecessor (ATON 1224). "When telling these tales to children, it is possible to turn them into riddles. You can ask about the preceding tale, 'Which of the three sons of the padişah should have the princess after she recovered from her illness?' And about this tale you might ask, 'Which of the three travelers was most entitled to marry the girl made from the tree trunk?' I have heard these told both as tales and as riddles. But when I heard them as riddles, I did not give the same answers as the storytellers did!"