

Story 1271 (1969 Tape 3)

Narrator: Halit Akbal

Location: Rüstü village, Bayburt
kaza, Gümüşhane Province

NOTE: Since taping of
this tale, Bayburt
city became capital
of newly created
Bayburt Province

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Tale taped by Dr. Saim Sakaoğlu

The Sparrow Sells the Bride He Has Gained

There was once a sparrow who got a thorn in one of its feet. Going to an old lady who was baking bread, he said, "Grandmother, take this thorn out of my foot." After the thorn had been removed from his foot, the sparrow said, "Guard this thorn until I return for it. If you should throw it away, I shall take the bread you are baking!"

The sparrow departed, but it was not very long before he was back again demanding his thorn. "Grandmother, where is my thorn?"

"I burned it."

Upon hearing this, the sparrow grabbed the loaf of bread that the woman had baked and ran out the door with it. After he had gone down the road a way farther, he came upon a shepherd tending a flock of sheep. He said to the shepherd,

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"Break up this bread in some milk and let it soak for a while, and then we shall eat it. But do not eat it before I return, or I shall take one of your rams in payment for it."

"Very well," said the shepherd as the sparrow departed. He waited a while for the sparrow to return, but he was hungry, the bread began to smell more and more delicious. After a while he could not restrain his hunger any longer, and so he ate the bread soaked in milk.

When the sparrow returned, it asked the shepherd, "Where is the bread?"

"I ate it."

When he heard this, the sparrow grabbed one of the shepherd's rams and ran off with it. He continued on his way until he came to a village where a feast was being held as part of a wedding celebration. Asking to leave the ram at the house where the feast was being held, he said, "Don't eat this ram, or I shall take your bride away from you."

But after he had left, the people there said, "Who is he, anyway? And what would he do with a bride?" Needing more meat for the wedding feast, they slaughtered the ram, roasted it, ate it.

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The sparrow returned later and--aman¹--the ram had been eaten. When the sparrow saw this, he grabbed the bride and ran off with her. Along the road he came upon a drummer and a zurna² player. He said to them, "I shall give you this beautiful bride for your drum and zurna." The two musicians agreed to this, and leaving their instruments with the sparrow, they took the bride and went their way.

When the sparrow reached the next village, he climbed to the top of a minaret. From there he announced, "I exchanged a thorn for some bread. Then I exchanged the bread for a ram. Next I exchanged the ram for a bride. Finally I exchanged the bride for this zurna and drum! Dombulu--tak, tak, tak! Dombulu-tak, tak, tak!³

¹An expression of concern or mild alarm, like "Oh, dear!" or "Heavens!"

²The zurna sounds like a snake charmer's pipe, but it is in fact a more complex instrument. It is a double-reed instrument, like an oboe. It is appropriate that the sparrow should encounter players of these two instruments, for at rural weddings zurna and drum music is played incessantly throughout the several days and evenings of the celebration.

³Onomatopoeia for any loud pounding sound, whether it be the knocking on a door or the beating of a drum. Here it is, of course, the latter sound that is being imitated.