

Story 1465 (1969 Tape 4)

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Bayburt kaza,
Gümüşhane Province--
at time of taping,
but c. 1990 Bayburt
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Taped by Dr. Saim Sakaoğlu

The Padishah's Daughter and the Forty Bandits

Once there was and once there was not¹ a padishah who ruled his country for several years without difficulty. Then a serious problem arose. Forty bandits led by a ferocious leader began to commit robberies all over the country. Almost every house in the land lost something at one time or another to these bandits. The padishah grew more and more concerned about this situation, and when the robberies began to occur closer and closer to his palace, he became very disturbed. His pride was hurt. He thought, "I am the padishah, but I am unable to protect my country from these bandits."

One day while he was thinking very deeply about his problem, his daughter went to him and asked, "Dear Father, what are you thinking about so seriously?" After the padishah had explained

¹The first line of a popular formulaic opening for Turkish folktales. Known as a tekerleme, any such formulaic opening is a series of nonsensical, often paradoxical statements in verse. Besides signaling the beginning of a tale, any tekerleme is likely to be entertaining in itself.

Story 1465

the reason for his deep thought, his daughter said, "Don't worry any more about this matter. Do two things for me, and I shall solve the problem. First give me a sword so sharp that one blow from it will kill a person. Then have a room dug into the ground beneath the entry to the royal treasury."

The night after the padishah had granted her two wishes, his daughter placed a light just within the underground room. Then, grasping her very sharp sword, she hid behind the door inside that room.

The bandits approached the royal treasury that night to it, but they halted some distance away from it when they saw the light near the entrance. The bandit chief said to one of his men, "Go and see why that light is shining over there."

when the bandit entered the underground room where the light was shining, the girl slipped out from behind the door and cut off his head. When a second bandit and then a third bandit came to investigate the light, she cut off their heads, too. The bandit chief was curious about why his men did not return, and so he kept sending bandits there until thirty-nine had gone but none had returned. Then he said to himself, "I wonder what is happening over there? No one who has gone there has returned. I'd better go myself and find out what is the matter."

Story 1465

When the bandit chief entered the underground room, he found the decapitated bodies of his thirty-nine men lying all about the room. In the middle of all the headless bodies lay an unconscious girl with a bloody sword in her hand. He said to himself, "That is the person who has killed all of my men, but apparently she has fainted at the sight of so much blood." When the padishah's daughter recovered her senses, the bandit chief said to her, "I shall not kill you now, but later I shall kill you in such an unusual way that it will be on the tongue of everyone in the entire land

The padishah's daughter believed that the bandit chief would try to do exactly what he had threatened to do. Every day she worried more and more about being killed in some terrible way by him. One day the padishah's attendants said to him, "Our padishah, your daughter is very sad about something, and she grows sadder every day."

The padishah went to his daughter's room. He asked, "My dear daughter, what are you thinking about with such sadness? Tell me."

The girl said, "Oh, dear Father, I am thinking about the words of the bandit chief after he discovered that I had killed all thirty-nine of his men. He said that sooner or later he would kill me in such an unusual way that it would be on the

Story 1465

tongue of everyone in the land."

"Don't worry, Daughter. I am the padishah, and you are my daughter. What could anyone do to you?"

Time passed, and nothing happened, but the bandit chief had not forgotten that he was going to take his revenge against the padishah's daughter. He changed his appearance to that of a dervish, and in this disguise he was admitted into the palace. He completely deceived the padishah and all of his guards. Once he was permitted to come and go from the palace as he chose, he found a way to abduct the princess. He took her to a mountain, where he nailed her on a wooden cross. He said, "You will hang there for forty days. Then I shall return and burn both you and the cross, and over the flame I shall roast a lamb, which I shall then eat."

The chief bandit left the girl there on the mountain in great suffering. After thirty-nine days, a caravan came along that same mountain pass and heard someone moaning. They traced the sound to the girl, and when they discovered her, they knew at once that she was a victim of the chief bandit, for he was known for committing this kind of cruelty. One of the merchants said, "Let us save this girl

But all of the others said to him, "Are you crazy? That fierce bandit chief will discover that we saved the girl, and

Story 1465

then he may have all of us killed!"

The first man responded, "Let him kill me if he kills anybody. I'll rescue this girl and hide her inside a bale of cotton."

The next day when the bandit chief came to burn the girl, he discovered that someone had rescued her. After thinking about it for a minute, he said to himself, "It must have been someone in the caravan that I saw passing this way. I shall find her, and if she is with the caravan, I shall kill every one of the merchants and drivers in that caravan!" Following the caravan, he overtook it in a day. He stopped the caravan

said to the drivers, "Take all your bales of cotton down from the mules' backs so that I can examine them." But the

who had saved the girl hid his mule, and so the bandit chief never saw it.

The merchant who had rescued the girl took her to the city with him. Not knowing what else to do with her, he put up for sale, and because she was beautiful, he had no difficulty selling her quickly. She was bought by a strong, tough young man, but she said to him, "No matter how strong you may be, you will not be able to defeat my enemy."

After he had not found the girl in the caravan he had stopped, the bandit chief devoted all of his time to searching

Story 1465

for her. He went to the same city that the girl had been taken to, and when he arrived there, he noticed a steady flow of people going in one direction. He asked a butcher, "Where is this crowd going?"

"They are going to gaze at the wife of a strong, tough young man who lives in this city. She is a world beauty." bandit followed the crowd, and when he had an opportunity to see the world beauty, he realized at once that she was his enemy. That evening the bandit returned to the butcher shop and asked the butcher another question. He asked, "Friend, why do so many people want to observe this girl?"

The butcher answered, "Because she is very beautiful and because she is known to have a fierce enemy who wishes to kill her. It is because of the threat against her life that we can see her only once a week. She is closely guarded and protected all of the time."

Before the door of the house in which the girl now lived there was a lion chained on one side and a tiger chained on the other. No one could pass through the door without being killed by these fierce animals. When the bandit chief observed this, he returned once more to the butcher and asked, "What do lions and tigers eat?"

"They eat meat--almost any kind of meat."

Story 1465

The bandit chief bought many kilos of meat and returned to the girl's house. After he had thrown all of this meat to the lion and tiger, they gave all of their attention to devouring it, and as a result, the bandit chief was able to slip into the house unharmed. He went to the bedroom and found the and her strong, tough husband asleep. After hitting the husband on the head and knocking him unconscious, the bandit chief wakened the girl and said, "Did I not tell you that I would kill you, burn you, and cook a lamb over the flames from your body?" He then went downstairs to get one of her husband's lambs from the stable.

While the bandit chief was gone, the girl kept trying to wake up her husband, but, unknown to her, he was totally unconscious. As the girl was helplessly looking around to find some way to defeat the bandit, she saw a bird land on the dowsill. As soon as that bird began to sing, the husband gained consciousness. He went at once to the window and called for help from all of his neighbors. So many people came to his assistance that they overpowered the bandit and captured him. When they heard what the bandit had intended to do to the girl, they threw him into the fire and cooked the lamb in the flame that rose from his body. Then they ate the lamb, they drank, and they lived happily. May you eat, drink, and be happy, too.