

Story 1815 1970 Tape 16)

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The Man Who Spent Seven Years in the Fairy World

In very ancient times there was a man who was a very fearful man. He was afraid of many things, but he was especially afraid of going outside at night. If his wife happened to need something from outside the house at night her husband was afraid to go after it alone. There came a night when he had to leave the house at night for some reason, and his wife knew that he was terrified. As soon as he went out the door of their house, his wife taunted him by shouting, "Catch him! Catch him! They are coming!"

This time he had reason for being afraid, for there were fairies wandering in that area then. The fairies captured this man and took him down seven levels into the underworld.<sup>1</sup> The fairies said to him, "You will become a teacher of our children down here for seven years. Then we shall take you back up to your own world." His wife

<sup>1</sup>In Moslem cosmography there are seven levels of heaven and seven levels of the underworld.

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waited and waited for his return, but for a very long while there was no one coming or going.

While he was teaching in that fairy world, this man noticed that the fairies used fingernails and eggshells from the human world as money. Down there they were paid for their work with fingernails and eggshells, and all of their buying and selling was done with fingernails and eggshells. These things had great value down there.<sup>2</sup>

Seven years passed, and by then his hair had grown so long that it was matted and unkempt, and his fingernails were so long that they frequently became entangled in each other. There was no custom of nail-cutting down there

The fairies liked this man, and after he had taught their children for seven years, they kept their promise and returned him to his home in the upper world. He knocked on the door of his house. When his wife opened the door, she noticed at once his tangled fingernails and his very long hair and beard. She thought, "My husband was never like that before! What happened to him? Everyone who saw him was amazed.

<sup>2</sup>Human hair is also legal tender in the fairy world. See, for example, Type 119, The Fairy Market, in Eberhard and Boratav, Typen Türkischer Volksmärchen.