

Story 1895 (1996 Tape 3)

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The Prince with Fair Wives but an Evil Father

Once there was and once there was not a sultan and his wife who had no children. This situation had worried them for several years, and they had consulted doctors and midwives about their problem. Then one day a dervish brought help to them. The dervish said to the sultan, "Here is an apple. You and your wife should each eat half of this apple. Nine months later your wife will bear a son whom you should call Shah İsmail.

Just as the dervish had said, the wife bore a baby boy nine months later. And just as the dervish had ordered, they named that boy Shah İsmail. Years passed, and İsmail grew through childhood to become a young man. After Shah İsmail had married and had found work in another town,<sup>1</sup> he one day saw a beautiful female jinn.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Sons of sultans had no need to work anywhere--certainly not outside the palace and in another town. This is the peasant orientation of the narrator.

<sup>2</sup>The word jinn suggests two different kinds of supernatural creatures. The first is the huge humanly shaped being who comes forth from a bottle or appears in response

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He was attracted to this beauty, but when he tried to approach her, his path became a churning sea which at first seemed so dangerous that it was impossible to cross. That jinn girl had seven jinn brothers, and it was they who caused illusion of a dangerous sea in order to protect their sister. But Shah İsmail urged his horse through the image of dangerous waves and reached the jinn girl. She said to him, "Alas, young man, you may have endangered yourself by coming here. If my brothers see you here, they will surely kill you." But Shah İsmail did not hear her say this, for the sight of her great beauty had caused him to faint. When he regained consciousness, she repeated her warning. "If my brothers should find you here, they would kill you. They are not here now because they are engaged in battle. I, Gülizar, have vowed to marry any man who can save them from destruction."

"Where is it that your brothers are fighting?" asked Shah İsmail. When the girl described the location of the battle, Shah İsmail jumped on his horse and rode off in that direction. When he arrived at the battlefield, he to some signal, such as the rubbing of a magic lamp or ring. This creature then proceeds to give the caller supernatural or magic aid to achieve what he wishes. The other kind of jinn is never seen. It is a spiritual force referred to in some Sufi beliefs and in other mystical systems.

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saw a huge, dark-skinned man fighting the jinn brothers. That huge man would not let anyone pass beyond that point in the road. He immediately killed anyone who tried to do so, and he had built a wall with the bones of his victims, whose blood flowed away like a small river. He challenged anyone who came along that road, even if that person looked to be stronger than he was. When he saw Shah İsmail approach, he jeered, "Foolish young man, how dare you come here? Have you not heard how I slaughter all who reach this point?"

"Yes, I have heard about you, but let us now fight in order to determine which of us is the stronger." Shah İsmail wanted to rescue the jinn brothers from this monstrous human being.

"Yes, I shall fight with you," said the huge man.

Unseen by either of the fighters or by anyone else, St. Hızır<sup>3</sup> was there observing all that was happening.

<sup>3</sup>Once a water deity and fertility god--and still both those figures to many farmers in southern Turkey--Hızır is more widely known now as a granter of wishes, a last-minute rescuer from disaster, and a special agent of God. In these functions he appears frequently in Turkish tales. Not mentioned in the Koran originally, Hızır was later used as a chapter title. He is assumed to be the person instructing Moses in Chapter XVIII of the Koran, where he is referred to by the Deity simply as "our servant."

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Hızır said, "This boy will neither be killed nor injured. He will have my protection."

After the two fighters had struggled for awhile, huge man was forced to the ground. His sword was knocked to one side. Shah İsmail jumped upon his enemy, intending to kill him, but when he looked inside the helmet of the fallen fighter, he discovered there not a man but a woman, the most beautiful girl in all the world. Her beauty was so great that it caused Shah İsmail to faint again. When the young man recovered, the beautiful warrior said to him, "I have been waiting and waiting to see if there was a man anywhere strong enough to defeat me in combat. I had declared that if I found such a man, I would marry him. You have shown that you are stronger than I, and so I wish to marry

Shah İsmail was amazed. He answered, "But I already have a wife. Furthermore, the sister of these jinn brothers has vowed to marry me if I rescued them from sword."

"But I have also vowed to marry you. I shall again wear my warrior clothes and help you to guard your

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other two wives."

He married the warrior girl and then, while she was still in male attire, he returned to the home of the jinns. There the jinn brothers welcomed him and made arrangements to celebrate his wedding to their sister. After the marriage was completed, he returned with his second and third wife to the town where he had left his first wife. A short while later, Shah Ismail decided to take his wives from there and return to the palace of his father, the sultan.

But as soon as Shah Ismail arrived at the palace, father immediately became envious and plotted to take those three wives for himself. The sultan said to son, "We must wrestle, and the winner is to kill opponent." Drums were beaten and music was played as the wrestling match was about to begin. But while this entertainment was being provided, the sultan secretly his son's movements restricted by chains. However Shah Ismail broke the chains and prevented his father from defeating him. This angered the sultan, and he said, "Why is it that I cannot kill him, especially when everyone is watching?"

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It was reported to the ruler that Shah İsmail's strength came from his hair. He was told, "If you will cut three locks from his hair, you will be able to kill him." Following this advice, the sultan had three locks of hair cut from Shah İsmail's head. He then defeated the young man in the wrestling contest

The ruler then announced, "I have beaten Shah İsmail in the wrestling match, and I shall now have him executed." He wanted his son's three wives, and especially the very beautiful jinn girl.

But the people who had attended the contest objected to this. Some people said, "He is your only son How can you kill him?"

Others said, "Instead of killing him, why don't you slash his eyes, and then, after he is blinded, throw him into a well?" Following this advice, the sultan had his son blinded and thrown into a well

From the well Shah İsmail managed to send a message to the the wife who had been disguised as a huge warrior the girl who had killed so many men and used their bones to build a wall. He said to her, "Find out from Gülizar, the jinn girl, what medicine will cure my eyes."

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The girl warrior sent a message back to him. "This evening a flock of birds will flutter their wings over the well and drop many of their feathers. Rub your eyes with some of those feathers and they will be healed. Shah Ismail followed these instructions and regained his eyesight.

When Shah Ismail climbed out of the well, he found his father there waiting for him. The sultan said, "I am sorry about what I have done. I shall do for you anything that you wish."

But Shah Ismail did not forgive him. He went aside and talked about this matter with the girl disguised as a huge warrior. He asked her, "What should we do to him?"

"We should take his head," she answered. "Only then will we be able to trust him." Having said this, she rushed to the sultan and beheaded him with a single stroke of her sword.