

Story 2002 (1969 Tape 14)

Narrator: Şahadet Göl, 80

Location: Tokat, capital of Tokat Province; but tale was recorded in Erzurum by Dr. Saim Sakaoğlu.

Date: January 19, 1969; copy made for ATON by Dr. Sakaoğlu in 1971.

Woman Mourns for Bear Relatives

One day a bear entered a certain village where he abducted a young woman and carried her off to his cave in the mountains. The two were married, and after awhile they began to have children.

This young woman had a still younger brother. When that little brother grew up, he decided to go into the mountains and search for his lost sister. He took his rifle and began climbing one mountain after another. After awhile he came to a very low roof made of woven branches. It was the home of his sister, who lived in a cave below that roof, but he did not know that yet. He picked up a stone and threw it against the roof.

Inside the dwelling his sister called her oldest son and said, "Yumlu Yumak, go outside and see who it was who struck our roof." The young man waiting outside saw a small bear boy approaching him. Aiming his rifle carefully, he shot Yumlu Yumak. Then he threw another stone against the low roof.

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Inside the dwelling his sister called her middle son and said, “Yumlu Yumak went outside, but he has not returned. Tumlu Tumak,¹ you go outside and see what is going on out there.” Tumlu Tumak went outside to see who was there. When the young man out there saw a bear boy approaching, he aimed his rifle carefully and shot Tumlu Tumak. Then he threw a third stone against the roof.

Inside the dwelling his sister called her youngest son and said to him, “Yumlu Yumak and Tumlu Tumak both went outside to see who was striking our roof, but neither of them has returned. Kılılı Barah, you go out and see who is there.” When the young man saw another bear boy approaching, he aimed his rifle carefully and shot him. Then he threw a fourth stone against the roof.

Inside the dwelling his sister now spoke to her husband, the father bear. “Yumlu Yumak, Tumlu Tumak, and Kılılı Barah all went outside to see who was striking our roof. Go out there yourself, Husband, and see what is the matter.” When the young man saw this large bear coming, he aimed his rifle very, very carefully and shot twice, killing the father bear.

¹The names of the oldest and middle brothers obviously rime, have assonance, and have alliteration, but they do not seem to mean anything. Such nonsensical wordplay seems inappropriate in such a lugubrious tale.

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The woman waited inside for several minutes, but none of her family returned. When she went outside, she saw her bear husband and all three of her bear children lying dead upon the ground. She wept loudly and said, “My Yumlu Yumak is dead. My Tumlu Tumak is dead. My Killi Barah is dead. And here my bear husband is also dead. Oh, I must weep for each of them! How could I do otherwise?” And then she cried even more loudly.

The young man now said, “Why are you crying? I am your brother, and I came here to rescue you from the bear. I am here to take you back to our home.” And that is what he did.

Days and days passed, but the woman continued crying. She said, “Even if our home was only a cave with a brushwood roof, it was our home. Even if my husband was a bear, he was my husband. And even if my children were half bear, they were my children.” She continued to cry and lament that way for the rest of her life.