

Story 2042 (Transcribed from
tape of Atatürk İlkokulu.)

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The Woodcutter's Gluttonous Wife

Once there was and once there was not a poor man. He went to a nearby mountain every day and cut firewood, which he later sold to the people in his village. He sold his load of wood each day for five kuruş.¹ Feeling a desire to eat goose meat, this man one day used his five kuruş to buy a goose at the marketplace. After killing goose, the woodcutter handed it to his wife and said, "Cook this for our dinner tomorrow evening."

On the following day, the woman roasted the goose for some time. Uncertain about whether or not the goose was thoroughly cooked, the woman cut off a piece to taste it. It seemed to be well done. Then she began to wonder if she had salted the goose enough. So, she cut

¹A monetary unit worth 1/100 of a Turkish lira. It was still in use as late as the 1960s. There then began a steady decline in the value of the lira until in the 1990s it took more than 200,000 liras to be equal to one U.S. dollar. This exchange rate left the kuruş meaningless, and so it is no longer in circulation.

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off another piece and ate it to determine its flavor. The goose meat tasted so good that she continued to find reasons to sample it. It was not long before she had devoured the whole goose in this way.

When her husband arrived home that evening, he said, "Bring out the goose! Let us eat it at once!"

But the woman said, "Oh, my husband, we have no goose. It was eaten by our neighbor's black dog while I was going to the public well for water."

"What a pity!" exclaimed the husband. "It upsets me to think of all the work I had to do to be able to buy that goose!" He returned to the mountain the next morning to cut more wood. That evening on the way home, he bought another goose and gave it to his wife, saying, "Cook this goose for our dinner tomorrow."

But while the woman was cooking this second goose, she again began to taste and sample the meat until she had consumed the second goose too. When her husband arrived home, he said, "Let us now eat that goose!"

"Alas, my man!" said his wife. "Our cat ate that goose while I was at the barn tending to our animals there."

The husband was a very gullible man, and he believed

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whatever his wife told him. He was very annoyed, however, at having lost two geese. He set out for the forest the next morning determined to buy one more goose. At the end of the day, he sold his wood and bought a third goose. When he gave it to his wife that evening, he said, "Cook this goose for our dinner tomorrow evening, and this time guard it very carefully!"

While she was roasting and roasting, tasting and tasting this third goose, there arrived for a visit the person who had been her husband's "best man" at their wedding. He had brought as gifts bulgur,² tarhana,³ and kuskus.⁴ The woodcutter's wife wondered how she could get rid of this uninvited guest. She took the pestle from her large mortar and began to wipe it with oil. When the "best man" saw her doing this, he asked, "Why are you

²Coarsely ground wheat which has been precooked and then dried.

³Dried curds mixed with flour; diluted with water, it makes a good soup.

⁴Couscous (kuskus in Turkish) is a North African dish made of steamed semolina (purified middlings of hard wheat) served with meat and vegetables.

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oiling that pestle?"

She answered, "My husband has a practice of striking the necks of guests three times with this pestle when he thinks that they are having difficulty swallowing their food."

When the guest heard this, he was alarmed. He asked the woman to unload from his bag the food he had brought so that he could depart. As soon as he had retrieved his bag, he left quickly.

That evening when the woodcutter returned home, he said, "Now, at last, we shall have a dinner of goose meat!"

But the woman answered, "Oh, my husband, your 'best man' was here today and brought us these other foods. But when he left, he grabbed the pot containing our goose and started back to his own village."

The poor woodcutter was made so frantic by this information that he said to his wife, "Quick! Bring me a loaf of bread! If I can overtake him, I can at least dip my bread into some of the juice." Running as fast as he could, the woodcutter caught up with his "best man." He shouted, "My 'best man,' stop for a minute. Let me

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dip my bread into the juice before I eat it."

But the "best man" answered, "Strike your own throat instead of mine!" Having said this, he fled with increased speed.

Exhausted by a day's hard work and now this long chase, the woodcutter decided to end his pursuit and return home. There he discovered that his wife had lost her footing while trying to lift a heavy bucket of water from the well. She had fallen into the well and drowned before anyone could rescue her. She had brought misfortune to others, but she was repaid for her deceit by becoming a victim of misfortune herself.