

Story 2133 (1984 Tape 9)

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Muradiye kaza,  
Manisa Province

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The Young Hunter as Unrewarded Hero

Once there was a hunter who lived in a certain village. His income came from the animals he killed. Some of the meat he fed to his family. Some of it he gave to the muhtar<sup>1</sup> and to the hoca<sup>2</sup> in exchange for wheat. Eating the meat and the wheat, he and his family managed to survive.

One day as he set out to hunt, he passed through a cemetery. In that cemetery there was a large tree upon which a bird was sitting. That bird, which could speak human language, said to the man, "Oh, hunter, you have always passed this way without meeting any difficulty, but today you may pay a penalty for doing so. If you can shoot me at once, you can continue on your way unharmed. But if you cannot kill me right away, then I shall kill you."

<sup>1</sup>A muhtar is the headman of a village. Before the advent of television in the 1960s, the muhtar was often the only elected official seen by villagers; all other officials were appointees of federal ministries.

<sup>2</sup>A hoca is a preacher and the religious leader of a Muslim community. In pre-Republican times the hoca was also the community teacher, for education was the responsibility of the clergy. Separation of "church" and state in the Republic required that teachers be people of secular rather than religious training.

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After the hunter had shot at the bird unsuccessfully several times, he said to himself, "This is the end of my time in this world. I have failed to kill this strange bird, and so I shall now die." Attacked by the bird, he was fatally injured. He dragged himself home and said to his wife before he died, "Try to prevent our son from succeeding me as a hunter, for I do not want him to have the experience that I did."

When the boy grew up into young manhood, he one day asked, "Mother, what kind of work should I take?"

"You should get a job on a farm. There are many farmers who need helpers." Following that advice, the young man began to work on the farm of one of their neighbors. It took him only a short while, however, to discover that he did not like such work.

"I am not happy doing farm work. What other job might I get?" he asked his mother

"You might like to work in a grocery store. Such a job would be very different from farming."

He found a job in a grocery store, but he did not enjoy it any more than he had liked farming. Going home again after a few days, he asked, "Mother, what did my

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father do to earn a living?"

She did not want to answer that question, but her son insisted that she should do so. She said, "Your father was a hunter. He suffered greatly in that work, and eventually it killed him. That is why I did not want to tell you about it.

"Then that is just the kind of job I am looking for," he said, and on the following morning he began his new occupation. Every day he went back and forth between his home and the hunting grounds. One day as he was passing through the cemetery, he encountered the bird which had killed his father.

The bird said to the young hunter, "Try at once to shoot me. If you cannot kill me, then I shall kill you." The bird kept moving about, but the young hunter observed it closely. Taking very careful aim, the young man killed the bird with his first shot. As he moved closer to the dead bird, the hunter observed that it had the most beautiful and most remarkable feathers he had ever seen. Besides being colorful, those feathers also gleamed brightly. He took three of those feathers and returned home before sunset. It slowly grew dark outside, but the inside of

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the house remained brightly lighted. It was impossible to say that evening had come to the interior of the house.

The young hunter and his mother asked each other, "What is happening here in our house? How can it be so brightly lighted when darkness covers everything outside?" Suddenly they realized that the brilliant feathers in the son's hunting bag were illuminating the entire house.

The son then said, "Let me give one of these feathers to the muhtar and another to the hoca." When he presented one of them to the muhtar, that official gave him a kilogram of wheat in exchange for it. When he gave the hoca a feather, that good man also gave him a kilogram of wheat. After he had returned home, he thought, "Perhaps I should give the third feather to the governor of Manisa [Province]. Let us see what he will give me." He went to the governor's mansion and gave the governor the gleaming feather.

Not knowing exactly how to respond to this unusual gift, the governor ordered one of his attendants to give the hunter a gold coin. But when this coin was offered to him, the hunter refused to accept it. He simply turned around and walked back home.

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After the mother and son had consumed the two kilograms of wheat, they had nothing to eat again except wild game. They had no money, and so they could not afford to buy any other food. The hunter went to the cemetery, and took another bright feather from the dead bird. This he also took to the governor's mansion, but he quickly departed without saying a single word to anyone there.

Soon everyone began talking about the brightly shining feathers and about the mysterious young man who had delivered them to the mansion. "Who is that young man, and where does he come from?" asked the governor. "Where does he get such wonderful feathers?" A search was made for the donor of marvelous feathers, and he was finally located in his village, a small settlement named Yöngürlü.

The governor's aides asked him, "Where did you get unusual feathers that you brought to the governor's mansion?"

"They came from a bird that I killed in such and such a place. The dead bird is still there, and there remain on it many more of the brilliant feathers." When all of the feathers had been brought to the mansion, the governor was informed by his wise men that they were worth a fortune.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup>Both in their great brilliance and great value, these feathers are similar to şamsırak stones (also spelled

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[There is a serious hiatus here in the narration. We are not told how the young hunter moved from his simple way of life to the point where the governor was setting him tasks both dangerous and almost unachievable.]

The governor then assigned a task to the young hunter. He said, "I want you to build me a palace made of ivory, and I want you to complete it in forty days."

"That is impossible! I cannot do it.

"Well, you have forty days in which to find a way of doing it

Returning home, the young man told his mother about the unreasonable task assigned to him by the governor. "How could anyone ever accomplish such a thing?"

"You must first ask the governor for the equipment you will need in order to acquire that much ivory. Ask him for forty wagons with the horses necessary to pull them. Ask him also for forty barrels of wine. There is a water hole in such and such a place where all the elephants come to drink. You should pour all the wine into that water hole.

çamçırak or şemşırak), which appear occasionally in Turkish tales. For more background on this fantastic motif, see entry for Tale 2133 in Archive Notes, Vol. 11.

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Elephants cannot tolerate alcohol, and all of them will die after drinking the wine. Then you must cut off their tusks and bring them all back in the forty wagons. Those tusks will provide enough ivory to build the governor's ivory palace

"Mother, do you think that that is all really possible?"

"Yes, of course it is."

They asked the governor for the equipment needed to get the ivory, knowing that at any time he might whimsically change his mind about the matter. But the ruler actually did provide the requested forty horse-drawn wagons and forty barrels of wine. Thus an ivory palace was indeed built for him <sup>4</sup>

That palace was so elegant that it made all else look shabby. No sooner had its door opened than one of the viziers said, "The woman Hatice is not really suitable to preside in such a palace. I know of a very pretty girl living in so and so land who would be a much more

<sup>4</sup>There is apparently some truncating here. Folktales usually spell out all of the details of any event. Folk-tale audiences are not in a hurry, and they prefer to have a story stretched out rather than be shortened.

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suitable person. But how can we get her here?"<sup>5</sup>

When the governor heard this, he called into his presence the young hunter and said to him, "You will go to so and so land and bring back from there such and such a pretty girl. If you do not do so, you will be executed."

Again the young hunter returned home and asked his mother for advice. She said, "Son, return to the governor and ask him to supply the things you will need to carry out this task. Ask him to provide you with a golden ship in which there are forty attractive girls all exactly same height." She thought that this requirement would be impossible to fulfill and that, as a result, the governor might be forced to withdraw the task he had imposed upon her son.

The young hunter went back to the mansion and requested the golden ship and the forty girls who all looked alike. The governor's aides gathered together thirty-nine identical girls but were unable to find a fortieth. The young hunter

<sup>5</sup>The inept narrator here omits information needed by the listener. Who was Hatice? Who is the pretty girl who will replace Hatice, and in what land does that girl live? It comes as a jolt to discover later that she is an English princess.



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suggested, "The daughter of the vizier has features which match in every detail those of the thirty-nine girls ready selected." The vizier was unable to make any objection to this choice, and so the group of forty girls was completed. Then, following his mother's directions, the young hunter made a further request to the governor. "Each of the forty girls on that ship must be given a saz<sup>6</sup> and a whistle. Although the forty girls all look alike, each should be prepared to sing her own unique song." When this condition had been met, the ship at last set sail for so and so land

They sailed a great distance in order to reach so and so land. They pulled up alongside the principal city of land at a point within view of the royal palace. There the forty girls sang songs and played their instruments steadily for a day, two days, three days. The king and his family could not help observing the strangers and hearing their music, and so they decided to approach the visitors and find out why they had come. The king, the queen their daughter went to the waterfront, but they were

<sup>6</sup>A three-stringed, lutelike instrument used by many Turkish minstrels and singers of folk songs.

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ignored by the strangers, who simply continued to produce their music. When the royal family attempted to board the golden ship, the crew untied that vessel and let it drift out a few meters from the dock. The royal family enjoyed the entertainment provided by the forty identical girls, but they learned nothing about the golden ship and its unusual passengers.

On the following day the princess said, "I am going again to the waterfront, where I can both see and hear the entertainment better." Although her parents did not wish to make a second trip down to the dock, they stood before one of the palace windows and watched their daughter go. When the princess walked right up the gangplank into the ship, the music stopped, and the ship began to move slowly offshore. The princess was not aware that it was sailing away until it was too late for her to leave it.

They sailed and sailed until they reached Turkey, and the young hunter then conducted the princess to the mansion of the governor. There the young man announced, "I have brought to you the daughter of the king of England." The girl was welcomed by the governor and by others in his household. She then replaced Hatice as the

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leading lady of the mansion.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup>The inept narrator again lets his own story get away from him. The protagonist is clearly the young hunter, and the resolution of the tale should be devoted to his destiny.