

# *The Simpleton*

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Turkish

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*Intermediate*

*13 min read*

At the time when Allah had many servants and mankind much sorrow, there was a poor woman who had three sons and a daughter. The youngest son was somewhat simple and lay all day by the fireside.

One day the two elder sons went into the fields to work, and before leaving requested their mother to cook them something to eat and send it to them by their sister. In the neighbourhood a Dew with three heads had erected his dwelling, and the brothers instructed their sister which way to take in order to avoid him.

When the dinner was ready the maiden set out to take it to her brothers, but she mistook her way and strayed into the path leading to the Dew's house. She had walked but a few steps when the wife of the three-headed Dew stood before her and asked her how she came there. She chatted with the trembling girl until she had enticed her into the house, promising to hide her from her husband.

But the Dew with the three heads was there waiting for the maiden. As she entered the woman said that she would soon have a meal ready. "I will knead the dough," she said, "but you, my daughter, must make the fire." Scarcely had the girl begun to build up the fire than the Dew stole in, opened his mouth, and swallowed her just as she was.

In the meantime the men were expecting their dinner; they waited and waited, but neither girl nor dinner were forthcoming. Evening fell, and when the two brothers, arriving home, learnt that their sister had set out in the fore noon, they suspected what had befallen her. She must have strayed into the Dew's locality. The eldest

brother, after a little reflection, resolved to go to the Dew and demand the girl.

Walking along, smoking his chibouque and smelling the flowers, he came to a baking-oven by the roadside. By the oven stood a grey-bearded man, who asked him where he was going. The brother told him of the misfortune which he feared had overtaken his sister, and added that he was seeking the Dew with the three heads, in order to kill him.

“You cannot kill the Dew,” rejoined the old man, “until you have eaten of the bread baking in this oven.” The youth thought that would be no great feat. Taking a loaf out of the oven, he bit it, then commenced to run until he had left man, oven, and bread far behind.

Stopping to take breath, he saw a man carrying a vessel filled with wine. To this man the brother spoke of his business with the Dew, “You can do nothing to the Dew,” said the man, “until you have drunk some of this wine.” The youth accordingly attempted to drink, but crying, “Oh, my stomach! Oh, my stomach!” he ran from the spot and never paused until he reached two bridges. One bridge was of wood, the other of iron; on the opposite side thereof stood two apple-trees, one bearing sour, the other sweet apples.

HE Dew with the three faces was waiting on the road to see which bridge the youth would choose, the wooden or the iron one; which apples he would eat, the sweet or the sour. Fearing the wooden bridge might break down, the youth crossed by the iron one; as the sour apples were not ripe, he plucked the sweet ones. The Dew had now learnt enough. He sent his wife to meet the youth, and she enticed him into the house. Very shortly he found himself in the Dew’s stomach beside his sister.

Now the second son set out in quest of his brother and sister. He also could not eat the bread, and the wine gave him stomachache. He also crossed over the iron bridge, ate the sweet apples, and arrived eventually in the Dew’s stomach.

We will now turn our attention to the youngest son. The mother observing the simpleton get up from the fireside, begged him not to forsake her in her old age. The others had done so, but he at least should remain with her. But the youth would not listen. “No,” said he, “till my sister and my brothers are rescued, and the Dew killed, I cannot rest.”

Rising from his corner, he shook the ashes from him, and at that moment such a storm arose that all the farmhands ran home, leaving their ploughshares in the fields. The simpleton collected all these shares together

and took them to a blacksmith, requesting him to make of them a spear which, when thrown into the air, should fall on his finger without breaking. When the smith had made the spear, the youth threw it up in the air, and as it fell back on his little finger, it broke in fragments.

Again the simpleton shook the ashes from him and another storm arose which sent all the field labourers hurrying home. Again he collected the ploughshares and took them to the smith. The second spear was made, but this also was shattered at the trial. For the third time the youth raised a storm, after which he collected all the remaining plough shares and had them made into a spear. This time it did not break when it fell back on his finger. "That will do," said the simpleton, and went his way.

Before long he arrived at the baking-oven. The baker greeted him, and learning that he was on his way to kill the Dew, informed him that he could accomplish his purpose only after eating the bread, and drinking wine out of the vessel that he would find farther on. The simpleton accepted his task, ate up all the bread, drank all the wine, and as he journeyed further he came to the wooden and iron bridges, with the apple-trees beside them.

The Dew was watching anxiously, and his courage sank when he saw the youth's actions. "Any child of man can go over the iron bridge," thought the simpleton to himself, and so he chose the wooden one. "There is also no art in eating sweet apples," he said, and chose those that were sour. "With this fellow we must deal in a different manner," called the affrighted Dew to his wife. "Get ready my spear; we must fight it out"

The simpleton had already seen the Dew afar off; he walked directly up to him and greeted him civilly. "If thou hadst not greeted me," said the Dew, "I should have swallowed thee." "And for my part," retorted the youth, "I should have killed thee with a spear-thrust hadst thou not returned my greeting."

"If thou art so valiant," said the Dew with the three heads, "have at thee with the spear!"

The Dew, taking his spear in hand, threw it with all his might at the youth, who caught it on his little finger, where it was shattered to pieces. "Now it is my turn," said the simpleton. He threw his spear with such force that, as it struck the Dew, the latter's spirit departed through his nose. "Strike once more, if thou art a good fellow," gasped the Dew; but as the youth answered "Never!" the Dew breathed his last. Now the youth sought the Dew's wife. When they opened the body of the wizard, the two brothers and their sister came out. With the simpleton they now wended their way homeward.

While in the stomach of the Dew the brothers and sister had become very thirsty; coming to a well they requested their younger brother's help in procuring water to drink. All took off their girdles, fastened them together, and let the eldest down the well. He was scarcely half way down when he began to bellow with fear: "Oh, draw me up, I am burning!"

He was pulled up immediately, and the second brother next essayed the task, but the same thing happened also with him.

"Now it is my turn," said the simpleton, "but mind you do not draw me up however much I may beg you to do so." So they let him down, and though they heard his cries of fear they took no heed, but lowered him to the bottom of the well. Here he found a room, and entering, he beheld three maidens, beautiful as the full moon. They were very much alarmed at sight of the youth, and implored him with tears to leave the Dew's cave, but he would not listen.

To be brief he killed the Dew and delivered the three maidens, whom the wizard had robbed from their father, the Sultan, seven years before. The simpleton intended to give the two eldest in marriage to his brothers and wed the youngest himself. Having filled his jug with water he led the maidens to where the rope still hung. The eldest was the first to be drawn up, and the eldest brother took her under his care, as his youngest brother requested; then ascended the second, who was to be protected by the second brother; lastly, the third maiden was helped up. She advised the youth to ascend first and allow her to follow him. "Thy brothers will be angry that thou hast chosen the most beautiful maiden for thyself," she said, "and from envy they will not draw thee out of the well."

"Then will I find my own way out," answered the youth.

Seeing that she could not persuade him, she took a box and gave it to him, saying: "When thou art in danger, open this box. If thou strikest the flint it contains, an Arab will appear and execute all thy commands. If thy brothers should abandon thee here in the well, go to the Dew's palace and stand by the pond there. Two sheep come daily, a black one and a white one; if thou shouldst seize the skin of the white one, thou wouldst be conveyed to the surface of the earth; but if thou shouldst seize that of the black sheep, thou wouldst go down into the under ground regions."

On this she was drawn up to the top of the well. Hardly had the brothers set eyes on her than they both fell in

love with her, and as she had foretold, they left the simpleton down the well.

What was he to do now? He went back to the palace, stood by the pond, and awaited the coming of the sheep. Presently a white and a black sheep sprang in. The youth seized the black one instead of the white, and in a trice found himself in the underground country. "I will take a stroll about this territory," he thought to himself, and began to walk on.

He walked day and night, up hill and down dale, till, unable to go farther, he stopped to rest by a tall tree. His eyes beheld a long snake creeping up the tree. The creature would have swallowed a nest of young birds if the youth had not rescued them just in time.

Grasping his spear firmly in his hand, he severed the snake in two, Then he stretched himself out under the tree, where, overcome by fatigue and the great heat, he fell sound asleep.

Meanwhile came the little birds' mother, who was the emerald anka, queen of the Peris. Seeing the sleeping youth, she mistook him for the enemy that year by year killed her children, and would have torn him to pieces had not the little birds cried to her to do him no harm. They told her how he had killed their enemy the snake, and looking round, the anka saw the severed body of the reptile.

She flicked the flies from the sleeper, and spread her wings to shield him from the sun, so that when he awoke he saw the bird's wings over him like a tent. The anka told him she wished to reward him for his generous deed, and inquired what he would like. "Transport me to the surface of the earth," was his answer.

"I will take you up," said the emerald-bird, "if you have forty hundredweight of mutton and forty bottles of water. Put them on my back and then get up yourself. When I say 'Gik!' feed me, and when I say 'Gak!' give me drink."

The youth thought of the box. He opened it, took out the flint and struck it. "What is thy command, my sultan?" exclaimed the Arab of the monstrous lips, who instantly appeared. "Forty hundredweight of mutton and forty bottles of water." In a few minutes the meat and the water were on the bird's back; the youth also mounted, and when the anka cried "Gik!" he gave her meat and when she cried "Gak!" he gave her drink. She flew from one plane of the earth to the other, and ere long reached the surface, where the youth alighted. The bird promised to wait until he returned.

The youth now took out the box and commanded the Arab to bring him news of the three sisters. In a short

time the Arab brought the maidens themselves. They all mounted on the bird's back, loaded her with meat and water, and flew away to the native land of the three maidens,

“Gik!” cried the anka, and they gave her meat; “Gak!” and they gave her water. But as there were now four human beings to be fed also, there was not sufficient meat to last throughout the journey and there was no more wherewith to supply the bird. When the anka cried “Gik!” the youth took his sword, cut a piece from his leg and stuck it in the bird's beak. The anka, perceiving it was the flesh of a mortal, ate it not, but held it fast in her beak. When they reached the land of the three sisters, she told him that it was impossible for her to go farther.

His leg was so painful that the youth could not walk a step. “Go,” said he to the bird, “I will rest here a little.”

“Oh, you foolish youth!” answered the emerald-bird, and taking the flesh from her beak she pressed it into its place. Instantly the leg was healed.

Great was the astonishment in the town at the homecoming of the Sultan's daughters. The old Padishah could scarce believe his eyes. He embraced and kissed them, heard their story, and gave his kingdom as well as his youngest daughter to the simpleton.

The youth invited his mother and sister to the wedding, and his sister was given in marriage to the son of the Vezir. The rejoicings lasted forty days and forty nights, but happiness until the end of their days.

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