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Lal gece

By Unknown

Nephew, you've been through a lot...
...spending your life behind bars.
I've had a big part in that, I know.
Now off you go, have your wedding.
Know happiness from now on at least.
Go have a wedding worthy of
this family's rank and honour.

- Off you go, sweetheart. Goodbye.
- In the name of God!
- God speed and good luck.
- Amen, amen!

May God bless you with happiness.
In the name of God, the Merciful...

- Don't cry, dear. I can't bear it.
- Goodbye, little sister.
- May God make you happy.
- Amen, amen.

God speed and good luck.

You're carrying the family's honour.
May God make your new home a happy one.
Be sure not to let the family down.

- Don't cry, don't cry.
- C'mon, let's take her out.

From the groom's sister-in-law.

God bless! Congratulations!

A bracelet from the groom's sister.

God bless!

I'm his uncle's wife. God bless!

A bracelet from the bride's sister.

God bless!

A bracelet from the groom's cousin.

Congratulations!

It's beautiful.

Thank goodness you're out of jail!

We're all glad to have you back.

I hope by the grace of God

you'll see better days from now on...

...and that we can all get together
like this now and then.

May God keep anyone

from going to jail again.

Amen, amen!

Over to you, musician!

Play and let's celebrate.

- God bless!
- May God grant a happy home!
- C'mon, sweetheart.
- Congratulations! God bless!
- Thanks, thank you.
- Where should I put these?
- Over on the table there.
- God bless! May she be happy.
- Thanks.
- Where should these go?
- Take them to the table over there.
- Good luck!
- God bless!

Now off you go.

Leave your sweet things behind
and take the bitter with you!

- May God give you his blessings!
- Be happy in your home!

God bless you all.

Thanks, everyone.

May God give you happiness!

Amen. And may He grant the same
to your daughters.

God willing!

How's it going, sweetheart?

Are you all right?

God bless you and make you happy.

You've come to your new home.

Always be happy and at ease
in your new home.

Do as your husband says.

Be comfortable here.

Remember your husband's honour
and your family-in-law's honour.

Don't cry, dear. OK?

We've all been brides like you.

We'll all done it.

We've settled into our new homes.

You'll be happy in your home too.

OK, sweetheart? Don't be upset,
or you'll make me upset for you.

This is your home.

No matter if your husband
beats you or curses at you...

...you're not to walk out of that door.
This is your home.
Now here's the bridal sheet.
You sleep on this with the groom.
Then they'll come by at dawn.
They'll knock on your door
at the time of morning prayers.
You must fold the sheet
and give it to them at the door.
Then you can go back to bed
and sleep in peace with your husband.
OK, dear?
May God give you peace and happiness.
Be happy and comfortable here.
This is your home.
I'm leaving now. Goodbye, God bless!
This is your home now.
You arrived in a white wedding dress
and you'll leave in a funeral shroud.
Whether your husband beats you
or curses at you, you can't leave.
OK, dear? Good night then.
Welcome.
Welcome to your new home.
They're just playing jokes,
silly asses!
Are you scared?
But there's nothing to be scared of.
It's a tradition.
They're just friends playing jokes.
It's all part of the wedding thing.
You deserve better than this, but...
Please accept it
as something grander.
My, it's hard work getting to see
that pretty face of yours!
Well, in that case
let's try another way.
I don't seem to have pleased you
with my wedding gift.
Let me go and fetch you
the entire jewellery shop then.
Glory be!
God has given you all the beauty

in the world, bride.
The bride seems not
think much of the groom.
No, don't think that.
At last we hear the bride's voice.
Of course, if I was blessed
with the beauty of the full moon...
...I'd be coy too.
But I'm not being coy.
Hmm, the bride isn't being coy.
In that case, what is she doing?
I'm not being coy.
I'm just scared.
C'mon, am I that ugly?
God forbid!
That's not what I meant.
I'm just... I'm just scared.
Fate has brought us together.
We're husband and wife now.
Well...
We're considered so.
Like it or not,
we can't change that.
Now...
What should I say to you, bride?
My mother was around your age
when they married her to my father.
So 13 or 14.
My father was a formidable man.
He was known as 'Sosur'.
That's a name they call grouchy men.
For a whole seven years...
...he refused to take her
to see her mother and father.
Now my gran was a very gentle lady.
And one day she said to my father...
"Really, don't be so heartless.
Take the woman to her family."
"Let her see her mother and father
before they're dead," she said.
No one was expecting my father
to do anything like this.
But he said, "Get the horse ready!"
So the horse was got ready

in the stable.

My mother was helped onto the horse.

Now this was a huge stable.

The richest man in the village,
his stable.

My father walked her back and forth
from one end to the other 15-20 times.

Then he helped her off and said,

"Here we are at your parents' house."

Why are you laughing?

Well, isn't the bride
going to pour some water?

We must perform our ablutions
before the prayer ritual.

Don't worry, I can do it.

In the name of God...

Thanks.

Well, doesn't the bride
have a towel in her trousseau?

Am I supposed to pray alone?

May God bless you

with His compassion and mercy.

Is there someone at the window?

Hey, what's going on?

What are you doing?

Why have you turned on the light?

I get scared in the dark.

Look, there's nothing
to be scared of.

It's just my friends playing jokes.

You see, it's a custom.

A longstanding custom at weddings
for the groom's friends to play jokes.

They knock on the windows,
throw stones...

...they bang on the door
and run away.

Sometimes they even hide
in the bridal chamber.

- But why would they do that?

- Look, there's no one here.

Well, when the bride and the groom...

...get down to that business...

What business?

Coming into the bridal chamber...
- I mean, doing together what...
- Suppose they've hidden in here?
Look, they haven't.
For goodness sake!
That was in the old days.
But suppose they've hidden under there?
C'mon, what would they be doing here?
Ah! But they're all here!
For heaven's sake, there's no one.
Have a look! Bend down.
You see? There, it's OK.
Besides...
...no one would really dare
come into my bridal chamber.
Why not?
Are they scared of you?
Well, a bit.
Why?
Because you're older than them?
Do you find me old?
No. Don't think that.
Do you want some sweets?
Come and sit down.
Let's eat sweet things
and talk about sweet things.
Well, aren't you going to have any?
Why not?
Well, you're not eating yours.
But sweets and cigarettes
don't go well together.
Where do you keep all that smoke?
In my lungs.
My dad blows his out straight away.
Why do you hold yours in?
If something's troubling you,
it just stays in your lungs.
So there's nothing troubling your dad.
What's troubling you then?
Well.
You know...
...I was in prison.
- It's easy to feel troubled there.
- Were you in for long?

Quite some time.

Yes, quite some time.

It's fate.

But that's OK.

Now I've married a beautiful,
dark-eyed girl like you.

But my eyes aren't that pretty.

My dad used to call me 'foal eyes'.

No, c'mon!

You have the eyes of a gazelle.

But a foal's eyes
are prettier than a gazelle's.

- That's why he called me that.

- Ok.

I'll call you 'gazelle eyes', though.

But I'm not that pretty.

Here, take a look.

Are you pretty or ugly?

C'mon, there's nothing
to be ashamed of.

Look!

Do you have gazelle eyes
or foal eyes?

You see how beautiful you are?

Which one's a gazelle?

There, that one.

But she has eyes like a bird!

A gazelle's eyes aren't like that.

They're bigger.

Did you make this?

A cell mate of mine was making it
and I gave him a hand.

Yadigar. That was my friend's name.

My name was here too,

but it must have worn off.

What do you think?

Do you like it?

Yes, I do, but...

It's a bit crooked.

And your work's perfect, is it?

That's crooked too.

No chance!

You don't even know how to embroider.

- Do you?

- Of course I do.
- Shall I show you what I've made?
- Go on then.
Well, well, well!
A snow-white trousseau,
a red, red rose...
...a bride pretty as a rose.
So let's see what treasures there are
in our bride's trousseau.
That's a present
from my big brother.
My mum made these.
And these ones too.
My sister-in-law made these.
And my big sister did these ones.
Look, this one I made.
I did the embroidery.
Well!
What nimble fingers my wife has.
It's a bit crooked there, though.
But never mind, it's beautiful.
Who made this?
I did that one too.
Where did you learn
to make things like this?
My dad taught me. He's an embroiderer.
He does embroideries.
It's a little bit crooked but...
She's a beautiful woman.
And her eyes are like yours.
She isn't a woman.
She's Shahmaran.
C'mon, I know who Shahmaran is.
- Do you really?
- Of course.
Go on then, tell the story.
Let's see how well you know it.
For goodness sake!
Is it really the time for this?
Once upon a time, there lived a lad
with a heart of gold.
Pure as the driven snow he was.
He wouldn't even squash an ant.
But he had some nasty friends.

As everyone does.
One day, these friends suggest
going for a walk in the mountains.
Camsab, that's our lad, says OK.
So off they set.
They climb to the top of a mountain
and wander among the rocks.
Then all of a sudden...
...they push Camsab into a cave.
It's pitch black in that cave.
You can't see a thing.
Camsab looks around in despair
for a way out.
But there isn't one.
He has no idea
how he's going to get out.
But then he notices
in the corner of the cave...
...a tiny pinprick of light.
He begins digging at once.
He digs and digs in that corner.
He digs for so many hours
he wears himself out.
Finally he breaks through to a hollow.
And before him
he sees a magnificent throne.
He flops down on the throne
with exhaustion and falls asleep.
Hours go by,
he has no idea how many.
Then he wakes up
and sees before him...
...an amazingly beautiful woman.
The picture of dark-eyed beauty.
But then looking at her lower half,
Camsab sees a snake!
A snake woman!
She isn't a snake woman.
She's Shahmaran.
Well, whatever... Shahmaran.
So he looks at the woman.
He looks a little lower.
And oh my goodness, what does he see?
A snake!

He looks a bit lower...
...and has the fright of his life.
Because down there...
...in the snake-half of the woman...
...there are thousands of snakes
all in a slithering tangle together!
I thought you knew this story.
How come you're scared?
I'm not scared.
It's the most exciting part,
that's all.
Well, considering you've stitched
such a beautiful picture...
...you must know the rest of the story.
I do, but...
...you're better at telling it.
Now the snake woman realizes...
...how terrified Camsab is.
So she explains,
"This is an underground kingdom."
"And I," she says, "am the queen."
"We people of this kingdom,"
she says...
"...we know
all the secrets of the world."
"Now that you've stumbled upon us,"
she says, "you count as one of us."
"We won't harm you," she says.
Then they fall in love, get married
and live happily ever after.
There you go, that's the story.
Is that it?
Isn't there more?
That's all for today.
I'll tell you the rest another time.
You can't do that!
It's a sin.
God, now I'm done for!
Why is it a sin?
Some stories are enchanted.
Once you've started, you must finish.
Otherwise bad things will happen.
What does that mean?
Say I don't finish Shahmaran's story,

what will happen?

A snake might crawl into the bed.

That's the first time

I've heard anything like it.

It's true.

It happened in our village.

You mean if I don't finish the story...

...Shahmaran will get so angry
she'll send a snake into our bed?

Yes. It happened in our village.

Now listen.

Don't believe

old wives' tales like that.

Well?

So is the bride miffed at the groom
on the very first day?

No, I'm not miffed.

Just a bit scared.

Look, what would a snake be doing
in this spotless house?

Don't believe such nonsense.

Do you know how to play cat's cradle?

What? You mean have a game now?

Why would you know?

It's a girl's game.

Why not? Men are better at it.

Let's play then and see.

But look, I have one condition.

Whoever loses has to do
exactly what the winner wants.

- OK?

- OK. You start.

Are you sure?

Let go.

- Shall I let go?

- Go on.

Well, I won. Now you have to do
everything I say.

Thanks.

C'mon!

Take your shoes off
and come and lie down here.

You must be exhausted.

- Shall I bring over the nuts and stuff?

- Nice idea, yes.
So... Where were we?
You said they live happily ever after,
but that's not how the ending goes!
Well...
Camsab and Shahmaran...
...love one another
more than life itself.
But there's something troubling Camsab.
And he can't talk about it.
He misses the land where he grew up,
the land of mountains, sea and sun.
Actually, Shahmaran knows this.
And one day, Camsab says to her...
"I miss the mountains, sea and sun
of my homeland. I want to go back."
And Shahmaran says...
"I was afraid of this."
"I knew you'd want to go some day."
"There's just one thing," she says.
You've learned all our secrets..."
"...including where we are.
You mustn't say a word to a soul."
So Shahmaran sends her beloved
on his way.
Camsab arrives back in his homeland
and takes up life in his village again.
Around the same time...
...the sultan of the land falls ill.
All the doctors in the land
put their heads together...
...they consult their tomes,
they do this and that.
But not one of them can decide on
either the illness or a cure.
Then a man of great wisdom says...
"If anyone knows the cure..."
"...it's Shahmaran,
the snake queen of the underworld."
But where in the world
does Shahmaran live?
No one knows.
This time, another wise man
comes up with a suggestion.

"Let's get everyone in the land
into water," he says.
"That way, we can tell at once
if anyone knows Shahmaran."
So they travel all over the land
giving everyone a good soaking.
They come to Camsab's village
and take him off to be soaked as well.
They give everyone a soaking.
Then they take one look at Camsab...
...and find his skin
turning into snakeskin.
There's such a cruel vizier in charge...
...who has Camsab tortured so brutally...
...that in the end Camsab breaks down.
And he gives away the secret
of where his beloved Shahmaran lives.
They send soldiers
to bring Shahmaran back.
Now Camsab is mortified
at having betrayed Shahmaran...
...a woman he loves enough
to die for her.
In fact, he's so stung by shame
that he'd like to crawl into a hole.
But Shahmaran is so well-meaning
and knows that Camsab is too...
...that she realizes
Camsab didn't set out to betray her.
So she says, "Now you've caught me
I'll tell you my secrets."
"Anyone," she says,
"who takes a bite out of my tail..."
"...will win the key
to all the secrets of the world."
"But take a bite out of my breast,
and you'll die on the spot," she says.
Now remember, the vizier
has his eyes on the sultan's throne.
So he goes straight for the tail
and gobbles down a piece.
And Camsab, anxious for a way
to die with his beloved...
...takes a bite from Shahmaran's breast.

Well, you know how stories go.
The vizier dies there and then...
...Camsab lives
and the sultan recovers.
In fact, Shahmaran realizes all along
how evil the vizier is.
So she gives up her own life
to save her beloved.
This, you see, is
a woman truly in love.
And that's where the story ends.
They went on
to live happily ever after.
All right then?
You've had your story.
C'mon, what's there to cry about?
She sacrifices her life,
the thing most precious to her...
...for a man she really loves.
If I were Camsab, I'd do the same.
And you're my Shahmaran!
Are you going to eat me then?
If I ate you, I'd be left all alone
in this big wide world.
Really! We have so much to eat here.
Bride, c'mon, turn down that bed.
It's almost morning.
Otherwise...
Enough dallying around, c'mon!
Or they'll whisk you away too.
And I won't lift a finger.
Mother...
Mother!
Here, have some water.
Thanks.
Go on, turn down that bed.
Turn down the bed, go on.
Well? Are you getting into bed
in your wedding dress and tiara?
Come here.
Come on.
In the name of God, the Merciful...
C'mon.
- Turn off the light and come to bed.

- But I get scared with the lights off.
Why do you get scared?
There's no one here except us.
- Are you scared there are spirits?
- I feel uncomfortable.
Uncomfortable about what?
Uncomfortable about that.
You're uncomfortable about him?
But he isn't even alive.
My late father...
Have you got what you wanted now?
Now look.
It's almost morning.
I've had it with your silly excuses.
The more I go along with you,
the more excuses you make up.
If you don't want me...
...you should have thought of it
back in your father's house, not here!
If you want to go, there's still time!
Your father's house is that way! Go!
C'mon, come here.
Sit down.
Sit down!
Look, I'm doing
everything you say here.
What more do you want?
I'm scared.
Why? Am I some kind of monster?
No, don't say that.
I'm not scared of you.
What are you scared of then?!
Look, just talk to me, bride.
Tell me why you're scared.
I'm scared of your moustache.
So it's this you're scared of.
My moustache scares you, does it?
We didn't know
the bride minded moustaches.
Had we known beforehand, we'd have
brought her a groom without one.
Don't say that!
Don't say what?
You wanted a clean-shaven groom,

so here he is.

Well?

Do you like the new groom?

What's wrong?

You've become like a different man.

That's what you wanted,

so that's what I did.

But that isn't what I wanted.

God! First you're scared to tears
of my moustache.

And now you say

you don't want it shaved off!

Look, we're not the same age.

You may find me old.

You may even think

you're too young to marry.

But...

In fact...

I don't think

you're right for me either.

I'm an old man.

I'm an old man.

But what can we do?

Call it fate, call it destiny.

Call it custom, tradition,

whatever.

It's brought us together.

Huge families and clans...

...made a pact to have us married...

...to stop the murders and bloodshed
between them.

And here we are playing games

in the bridal chamber!

I can't force you to be my wife!

- I'm sorry. It's not like that.

- Then what is it?

Look, you've made me look ridiculous.

There's nothing I haven't done,

nothing I haven't stopped at...

...to please you.

But every time,

you find a new excuse to avoid me.

You don't have to keep

inventing excuses to avoid me.

The door's there.
If you want someone else,
if you want to go, the door's there.
Go on, get going!
Go on!
I fend for myself honourably in jail
for all those years...
...and come back to my own house
to be made a fool of!
What am I but a fool anyway?
What else have I been?
I didn't mean anything bad.
You've got the wrong idea.
What am I but a damn fool?
What am I but a damn fool?
My mother says, "Marry this girl."
I marry her.
"Divorce her," she says.
I divorce her.
My uncle says,
"Your mother's a stain on our honour."
I kill my mother.
I kill her!
I spend 20 years in jail.
I get out. And my uncle says,
"This man's an enemy."
I kill him too
and spend more years in jail.
Then they tell me to marry you.
And I do.
What else am I but a fool?
Of course I'm a fool.
I'm a damn fool.
You took me for a man, did you?
You were scared of my moustache.
You thought there was a man underneath?
Look.
You told me to shave it off
so I did.
Don't talk like that, please!
I'll do whatever you say, promise.
- You'll do whatever I say?
- Yes, if you stop talking like that.
Right, I'd forgotten.

The bride is
scared of things like that.
- I should keep my mouth shut.
- It's OK. I'm not scared any longer.
So you've stopped being scared.
But I'm scared.
Any minute it'll be time
for the morning call to prayer.
The groom hasn't fired twice
from the window yet...
...to present the bridal sheet.
The sheet's still spotless.
I wonder what they'll say.
Will they think the bride's scared?
Or will they think
the groom isn't up to it?
What do you think?
Which of us is more scared?