

Story #190 (Tape #3, Summer 1970)

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Köroğlu and Hasan Efe

(Bolu Bey,) as you know, was the Bey of Bolu. He had a groom from Sivri Hisar whose name was Ali. They used to take flocks of sheep to the Bolu mountains from Haymana. These yayla rights belonged to Bolu Bey, and he used to get rent from them.

One day, he called his groom and said, "Go and select a horse for me."

The groom, Ali, went and chose a colt which eventually would be a good horse. The jealous and evil courtiers said to Bolu Bey, "Bey, just take a look at the animal he selected from so many horses." It was a good horse. They told Bolu Bey that there were many fine horses in the herd, horses who would let no one control them. Bolu Bey looked at the animal and realized what he had done. Angry, he said, "Blind his eyes and throw the dog into the street, and if he does not die, let him go to his own village."

cruelty

As now, in those days, there were cruel men who earned their livings by blinding and hanging people. They brought him and said, "You committed treachery to our bey, hey? Then this is what you deserve." Saying this, they pushed skewers through both eyes and blinded the poor man crying. They put him on the horse he had chosen, tied his feet below, and sent him away--led by some charitable people--to his own country.

As he had been working for a bey and had had a good salary, he had

saved some money and had a farm near Sivri Hisar. He came to his village the neighbors asked what had happened to him.

He said, "The matter is such and such. I have been treated unjustly I was subjected to such treatment because I selected this horse. I was right, but I was treated unjustly."

He had a son, 15 or 17 years old. I do not know his real name, whether Ali or Mustafa, but he was called Koroğlu. He also had a daughter about 15 years old. When the young man heard his father tell what he had been subjected to, he took all these things unto himself, listening but doing nothing.

The colt was growing up in a stable, but the young man had his father's problem in his head as he wandered about. To cut it short, one day the daughter came and said, "Father, my brother sits in deep thought by the fountain. He does nothing but think wherever he goes "

"Call him.

She went to him and said, "Brother, my father wants you.

When he came, he said, "Son, what are you thinking about? Do you not stop at times and do nothing but think? What keeps you from all activity? You are a man like a lion, but you behave stupidly."

"Father, I am not stupid. I have my wits about me. I am always thinking about how I could avenge you against the man who did this to you. I am thinking of how to take revenge on the people who did such injustice to you

"Bravo! I hope God will help you in your effort. But, son, take good of this gray horse."

Anyway, let us not make it too long. He cared for the gray horse.

One day his father said, "Come, son. Since you cannot remain here, here

is my advice. Do not lo^osen your belt illegally [do not unbutton your trousers--look at anyone's wife]. Do not be cruel, and may God help you." He stroked his back and let him go.

He was a young man who played the saz. He used to tell his problems to others, singing to saz accompaniment

Verse: I am Koroğlu.

I wander about the woods,

And I am suspicious even of the winds that blow.

He told everyone he was the son of the blind man who was unjustly blinded by the Bey of Bolu. He took some companions and went to the Bolu mountains. One day while wandering about in the mountains, he heard that there was a bandit named Hasan Efe in some of the mountains. He also had his companions. Koroğlu one day mounted his gray horse and rode forth singing. The other bandits heard him singing and wondered who he might be: "Everyone else runs away from us, but this one puts his hand to his ear* and sings to us."

They lay in ambush, wondering who that efe [knight] might be. Then Hasan Efe shouted, "Hey, do you think these mountains are uninhabited? What do you mean by shouting so loudly?"

Koroğlu said, "I do not know who you are, man. Do not say lang ling [onomatopoeic for nonsensical talk], but come out and say to my face what you have to say."

The two came together and met each other, agreeing finally that this was the field of bravery and they should show it. Koroğlu defeated Hasan

* In order to hear their own voices better and know whether they are at the proper pitch, Turkish muezzins cover one ear. We have never seen asik poets or other secular singers do this, but this is what Koroğlu is doing here.

Efe in battle, knocking the sword from his hand.

Hasan Efe said, "Cut off my head."

Köroğlu answered, "No. I have forgiven you."

Hasan Efe said, "How is it you forgive me?"

Köroğlu replied, "Nothing is greater than forgiveness. I forgive you."

Then Hasan Efe stood up, saying, "My father used to say that one man is superior to another--there is always someone stronger--so do not be proud. I now see that this is true." And he kissed Köroğlu's hands.

Then Köroğlu told him what had happened to his father and how he had decided to take his revenge. Then Hasan Efe said, "I may be separated from my head, but not from you."

Verse: The head goes from me,

But Hasan Efe does not go from thee.

Hasan Efe called his companions and told them, "I am in the service of this man. He will be our chief. I have surrendered myself to him. If you also surrender to him, follow us."

They listened to him and found him right, and all joined in friendship.

People coming and going carried news to Köroğlu, and he used to send out bandits against people. He led many battles in the mountains. Anyway, let us leave this here.

The Bey of Bolu had a brother in Istanbul. He was either the mayor or the governor. He had a daughter by the name of Gulistan. His brother died one day, but he had said to his wife before his death, "My daughter is very beautiful and has reached a marriageable age. You cannot protect this daughter. You had better send her to my brother, Bolu Bey. He will have her married to a suitable man." She obeyed her husband's wish and sent her daughter to her brother-in-law. She sent her to him, but (may

his sins be his sins--God only knows about it), Bolu Bey had his eye fixed on this niece. One day he sent everyone from the house and ordered Culistan to bring his breakfast, and when she came with it, he would hold her and kiss her, and she would struggle to get away from him, laughingly. She used to be able to protect herself in this way, saying, "You are my uncle. Do not do that." She was a strong girl. This went on like this a few days.

The conflict between Bolu Bey and Koroğlu was widely known. One day the girl wrote a letter and gave it to an old man, instructing him, "You will deliver this to a bandit named Koroğlu who wanders in the forest."

That old man took the letter and found Koroğlu in the forest and delivered it to him. The letter said, "If you are as brave a man as I have heard, save me from this miserable situation [torture]."

Koroğlu called his companions together and said, "Friends, an old man brought this letter. Listen to what it says. Here--read it."

The companions looked and read. The letter said, "If you are as brave a man as I have heard, save me from this torture of my uncle."

Koroğlu concluded that apparently her uncle was doing something to this girl, and that was why she wanted to be saved. He consulted his friends, and they all agreed to raid the house of Bolu Bey and save the girl. (I have not mentioned the minute details).

It was Bolu Bey's custom to send his friends and his yes-men to get whatever beautiful woman he saw and wanted. They used to go and, no matter where the woman was, in the mountains or the rocks, at home or in the village, they would take her to the palace. But who could sue whom? [i.e., such crimes remained unprosecuted, for Bolu Bey was the authority in that area]. Drums were beaten, trumpets blown, to entertain him, and though he had so many concubines, he used to lift his hand and

shout, "I have no pleasure in this world. You do not entertain me." Although the cuckold had musicians on one side, and concubines on the other, he still said he had no pleasure, and shouted, "You do not entertain me." Let us leave those concubines and women abused in that manner.

When he [Köroğlu] lived in that mountain, Bolu Bey's soldiers were engaged in many skirmishes. He sent men to steal from Bolu Bey's herds, and they had many fights at Kanlıbel.* He had Hasan Efe and Ayvaz among his followers. They had many fights in the mountains, and, of course, we know many friends and soldiers were killed.

One day when Köroğlu wandered about in the mountains, a bearded man came. The old man said, "Sir."

"What is the matter?" Köroğlu asked.

"He took my son's wife away."

"Who did that?"

"The Bey of Bolu's men did it."

"Where?"

"Where should he take her? To his house. And she had a few children, though she was still a beautiful woman."

Köroğlu asked, "What do you want now?"

The old man said, "I heard that you wanted to take vengeance on him. So do I. I want to join your company, and I shall take vengeance, too."

Many people with such complaints used to come to Köroğlu, and among them were many long-haired and long-bearded ones, too.

One day a man came and said, "Sir"

"What is it?" Köroğlu asked

"I had a daughter. A man one day came and took her away and carried her to the mountains. I followed him and told your men about him. They
*Is this a corruption of Çamlıbel?

caught that young man and now they are bringing him over here.

Soon they arrived. "Is that the young man?" Koroğlu asked.

The old man said, "Yes, it is."

He [Koroğlu] sat down, and also his men sat down. He asked young man, "Young man, why did you take this uncle's daughter-in-law and take her to the mountains?"

"Sir," said the young man, "I asked for her hand by the will of God, but he would not give her to me. The girl and I agreed to elope, and we did this."

Koroğlu turned to the old man. "Uncle, this young man asked hand of your daughter with the will of God. Why did you not give her to this young man with the heart of a lion?"

The old man said, "Sir, he is a poor man--just as poor as I. How can he feed his wife?"

Koroğlu said, "How could he be poor? He has 100 sheep in our flock."
asked

The poor old man then ^{asked} the young man, "Son, why did you not say this before?"

Koroğlu said, "Very well, then, young man, take the girl," and he ordered his men to get the 100 sheep from the flock and gave them to him. The sheep were separated from the flock and the young man took them. Ayvaz and Hasan Efe were watching close by. Koroğlu said, "We made one more poor man happy, did we not?"

Hasan Efe said, "There is no match for you in bravery." They slapped each other's back and flattered each other.

One day they raided the palace. This was the time when the saying went round, "The iron pipe [gun] was discovered, and with that, chivalry ended." The Bey of Bolu had been brought some pistols--2-barreled guns. He used to keep them in his drawer. Koroğlu bribed one of Bolu Bey's men and had his

[Bolu Bey's] pistols unloaded. One day they raided the palace of Bolu Bey while he, the cuckold, was watching a woman dance and listening to music. One woman refused to surrender herself to him, but he whipped her into unconsciousness. When the woman was being carried out, unconscious, they raided the palace. Bolu Bey ran this way and that, but he could not escape. He said to Köroğlu, "What do you want from me?"

Köroğlu answered, "I want nothing from you but two eyes--the eyes of my father." He stretched him on the ground, pressed on his throat with his feet, and killed him there. He said to Hasan Efe, "I have killed this dog. Order that he be thrown away." This was done

Hasan Efe said, "Sir, let us plunder his treasury."

Köroğlu replied, "No--nothing of the sort. This is stolen property. We are not treasury thieves, but men of honor."

Hasan Efe said, "But, sir, there are so many women here, all unmarried. Let our young men each take one."

Köroğlu said, "No, no. They are all decent women brought here by force. Send each back to her own country [memleket] district."

Hasan Efe then said, "But, sir, Bolu Bey has his own wife. Let us take her."

Köroğlu answered, "That woman has no fault. All the villainy belongs to her husband. One should not take vengeance on a woman. She must have her parents. Send her to her country."

They sent her to her people. Then Köroğlu said, "Kanlıbel is waiting for us. Such and such enemy troops await us there."