

Story 1297 1989 Tape 1

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Keloğlan¹ and the Lost but Recovered Ring

Aladdin?

Once there was and once there wasn't in a certain part of Turkey a keloğlan who lived with his mother. They were very poor, but Keloğlan did nothing to improve their situation. He sat about lazily or he lay about sleeping.

Keloğlan's mother slowly spent most of the money which she had inherited from her husband at the time of his death. One day she gave her son a gold piece and said to him, "My baldheaded boy, take this piece of gold to the marketplace and with it buy some bread, some cheese, some olives, and some olive oil.

Taking the money from her hand, Keloğlan said, "All right, Mother," and started out for the marketplace. Along the way he saw some neighborhood children playing with a puppy around which they had tied a rope. Hearing the puppy barking

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¹The word keloğlan means bald boy, but the baldness is not that caused by aging. It is caused by ringworm infestation of the scalp. This disease often strikes the younger and perhaps improperly tended children of larger peasant families. It is encouraged by uncleanness. In folktales the keloğlan is a definite personality type, a winner, and a sympathetic figure. In tales the keloğlan image is often used as a disguise. Disguisers hide their hair by covering it either with a sheepskin turned inside out or with the cleaned lining of a sheep's stomach.

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and whining in pain, Keloğlan felt sorry for the animal.

"Children, my friends, please do not do that. You are intelligent children, and you should not do such a thing to an innocent puppy. This puppy is a living creature and it has feelings, just as we do. You may injure it by doing that."

But no matter what Keloğlan said, the children refused to pay any heed to his words. They said, "Ha-a-a, ha-a-a, Keloğlan! Go and take a look at your bald head, but do not bother us!"

Keloğlan gave up all attempts to argue with them and proceeded on his way. But he had taken only a few steps when he heard the puppy crying piteously again, and he could not help returning to it. He said, "Children, you are civilized people. You cannot mistreat an innocent puppy in this way. It is a living creature, and it has feelings just as we do."

But again the children ignored what he said. They taunted him, saying, "Ha-a-a, ha-a-a, Keloğlan! Go and take a look at your bald head, but do not bother us!"

Then Keloğlan began to think about what he might do to free this innocent puppy from the cruelty of the children. Suddenly he remembered the gold piece that he had in his pocket. Turning again to the children, he said, "If you will free that puppy, I shall give you a gold piece with which you

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could buy something for yourselves." When the children got that money, they dropped the rope binding the puppy and they ran away. Keloğlan released the puppy and went back home

When his mother saw him returning empty-handed, she asked, "What have you done? Where is the food?"

Keloğlan answered, "Mother, while I was on the way to the marketplace, I saw some children torturing a puppy. I could not stand their doing this, and so I gave them the gold piece to free the puppy."

"Oh, my bald son, my stupid son, my good-for-nothing son How on earth could you do such a thing? What are we going to eat, and how are we going to survive?" She was very angry at Keloğlan, but there was now nothing that she could do about what had happened. After a while she called her son to her and said, "Here is the next to last piece of gold that we have. Take it to the market and get the food which I told you to buy before."

"All right, Mother," said Keloğlan. He took the money and set forth again toward the marketplace. This time as he walked along he saw the children playing with a ^{CAT}kitten. They had a rope tied around the kitten, and they kept jerking it back and forth by yanking on the rope. He said, "Children, don't do that! Shame on you! It is sinful to do such a thing!"

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"Ha-a-a, ha-a-a, Kelođlan! Go and take a look at your bald head before you speak to us in that way."

Kelođlan said no more and started to walk away. But when he heard the kitten shrieking in pain, he turned back and pleaded with the children again. "Children, my friends, you are intelligent, too intelligent to do such cruel things to a harmless little kitten. You may injure this creature which has life and feelings like our own." No matter what he said, however, the children paid no attention to his words. Then Kelođlan remembered the piece of gold in his pocket. "Take this money," he said, "and free the kitten. Then go and buy something for yourselves." As soon as they saw the money, they took it and left. Untying the kitten, Kelođlan set it free. Then he returned to his home

When his mother saw him coming, she again asked, "What did you do? Where is the food? Didn't you buy any?"

"Mother, this time when I was on my way to the market-place, I saw some children torturing a small kitten, I asked them to stop their cruel behavior toward the cat, but they refused. Unable to bear the pained screams of the kitten, I finally gave them the gold piece to set the kitten free."

"Oh, my bald boy, my stupid boy, my good-for-nothing son! How could you do such a thing? How are we going to survive?"

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What shall we eat and drink? How in the world could you do such a thing?" She was very angry, but there was nothing that she could do about it. After a while she called her son to her again and said, "Here is our very last piece of gold. If you fail to buy food with this coin, we shall have nothing at all to eat. This is our last chance to buy some food."

"Mother, I promise that this time I shall buy food, no matter what else may happen. Believe me!" Saying this, he put the coin in his pocket and left the house.

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 time he saw that the children were abusing a baby snake. They had a string tied around it, and they were twitching it to the right and to the left. Again he tried to reason with the children. "You are too clever and too refined to do such an evil thing to a small and harmless snake! What did it do to you?"

"What is the matter with you, Kelođlan? Worry about your own bald head and do not bother us!"

Kelođlan started away but then he heard the baby snake again hissing loudly, as if it were in pain. Not being able to stand this, Kelođlan returned and tried a second time to persuade the children to stop their cruel behavior, but the children ignored his pleas. Then he remembered the gold coin in his pocket, but he was so upset about the suffering of the

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baby snake that he forgot completely the promise he had made his mother to buy food with the coin. It was not until he had untied and released the snake that he suddenly remembered the promise he had given. He then began to wonder how he could explain all of this to his mother. Turning this problem over and over in his mind, Keloğlan walked along aimlessly. His footsteps carried him to a small valley, where he sat down upon a large stone. As he sat there, two thoughts filled his mind. One thought was about his being hungry. The other thought concerned what he was going to tell his mother. As he was thinking deeply, he became aware of a rustling noise. Looking up, he discovered that the rustling noise was being made by the approach of a huge snake. He was frightened by the sight of such a large snake

The snake said to him, "Hello, Keloğlan! What are you thinking about so deeply?"

"Nothing of any importance."

"Then do not think so deeply! I have been looking for you," said the snake.

"Why should you be looking for me? What is the matter?"

"Well, today you saved the life of my baby."

"What baby?"

"Why, the baby snake that you rescued from the children

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That little snake was my baby. Because you saved its life, I shall give you anything you wish. What do you wish?

"What do I wish? Nothing," said the boy.

"Very well," answered the snake, "but I shall give you my address so that you will know where to find me if you ever find yourself in need or in difficulty."

"All right," said Keloğlan, but it was only after the snake had left that the boy came to his senses. "I am in need right now! I am hungry, and my mother is waiting for me at home! I shall go to the huge snake and ask for something right away!" He found the address which he had been given, but only with some difficulty. As he was approaching the front door of the house at that address, he was stopped by several guards.

"What are you looking for?" they asked him.

"I am looking for the very large snake which gave me this address," he said, showing them the written address.

"That snake is our leader and master," said the guards, and they led Keloğlan into the presence of the great snake.

When the snake saw Keloğlan, it said, "Welcome! Have a seat." Then after they had talked for a while, the snake said, "You may take anything that you wish from this room." Keloğlan wandered around the room and was fascinated by all of the things he saw there. He finally chose to take a small ring. The huge snake then said to him, "Keloğlan, this is not only

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a ring to wear on your finger, for it has other more important uses. Whenever you want something, all you have to do is to knock this ring against something. After you have done that, forty giants will appear and ask you, 'What do you want, our master?' Those giants will be visible only to you

Keloğlan was overjoyed by what the huge snake had told him. Taking the ring, he ran home at once, for he now would be able to provide the food which he was supposed to have bought with his mother's last gold coin.

When his mother saw Keloğlan approaching their home, she was alarmed, for she observed that he was returning empty-handed again. She exclaimed, "Oh, my son, what have you done to us? Where is the food you were supposed to bring? What are we going to eat and drink?"

"Don't worry, Mother. Everything is going to be all right." Going to his room, he sat there for a few minutes to catch his breath. Then he put the ring on his finger and knocked it against the table.

Forty giants appeared immediately and asked, "What is your command, our master? What is it you want?"

"Prepare a good meal for me and my mother." After a brief time had passed, Keloğlan glanced at the table and saw that it was covered with every kind of food he had ever seen. He then

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called out loudly, "Come, Mother! Let us eat!"

His mother was quite bewildered when she saw the many dishes of food. She was speechless, but to herself she thought, "How could he have prepared all these different kinds of food in such a short time? And how could he have done this while he was sitting here in his room?" But she ate as much of the food as she could without asking any questions

For Keloğlan and his mother, life now became very easy. Whatever they wanted they simply asked for, and almost immediately these things just appeared before them

After living comfortably for some time, Keloğlan decided that he wanted to marry the padişah's daughter. He called his mother and said, "Mother, go to the palace and ask the padişah for the hand of his daughter in marriage to me

"Oh, my bald son, my stupid son, my good-for-nothing son! What are you thinking about? Where is the padişah and where are you? You seem to forget your bald head. Furthermore, you have no job. How could you possibly marry the padişah's daughter?"

"No, no!" shouted Keloğlan. "You go and do as I directed! I want the padişah's daughter I want the padişah's daughter!"

After further argument about this matter, the woman got dressed and went to the palace. When she was finally admitted

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into the council room, she found that the padişah was not there. There were in that room, however, three chairs--one made of gold, one made of silver, and one made of bronze.² She sat down in the bronze chair. After a short while some servants of the padişah entered the room and put some money in her hand. They then said, "Go home now, mother."

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When she got home, she said, "My son, I sat in the bronze chair in the council room. Servants gave me some money and told me to go home. Here I am."

14 "Did I send you there for money, my clumsy mother?" asked Keloğlan angrily.

The next morning Keloğlan directed his mother to go to the padişah's palace again. "Go there and ask for the hand of the padişah's daughter in marriage to me.

"Don't do this to me!" she pleaded. "I am unable to handle such a matter."

"Yes, you can do it, Mother!" said Keloğlan

Returning to the palace, the woman went into the council

²As the folk audience would recognize at once, these chairs are symbols. A symbolic language or communication is engaged in by any stranger or visitor who sits in any one of these chairs. As it develops later in this tale, sitting in the bronze chair signals a request for alms; sitting in the silver chair makes a request for a job. Sitting in the golden chair indicates that the visitor has come, as matchmaker, to ask for the hand of a girl of marriageable age in that household.

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room and this time sat down in the silver chair. Immediately some servants entered and asked, "Woman, it must be a job that you want. Come with us!" They took her to the palace kitchen, where she worked all day long. In the evening they gave her some money and sent her home again

When she arrived there her son asked, "Well, what happened?"

"Today I sat on the silver chair in the padişah's council room. As a result, they gave me a job in the kitchen, where I worked all day long. When evening arrived, they gave me some money and sent me home, Son.

Keloğlan was very angry at what she had reported. He said, "You will go to the palace again tomorrow, and this time you will sit in the gold chair."

Following these directions, the woman went to the palace on the next day. This time when she entered the council room, she went to the gold chair and sat down upon it. Seeing this woman sitting in the golden chair, the padişah's daughter recognized her at once as Keloğlan's mother, She went at once to the golden chair and kicked the woman so hard that she fell from the chair onto the floor

Still crying when she got home, Keloğlan's mother said, "Oh, my bald son, my stupid son, do you now see what kind of

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difficulty you have caused me?"

"That is no excuse, Mother. You must go to the palace again tomorrow."

Next morning the woman went again to the palace and again she sat in the golden chair. Again the padişah's daughter entered the room and kicked her out of the chair. She kicked her so severely that the woman left the palace in great pain and confusion. When she got home, she said to Keloğlan, "Look at how I am suffering! Why don't you give up the idea of marrying the padişah's daughter?"

"No, no, I shall never give up my wish to marry the padişah's daughter!"

On the following day the woman went still once more to the palace, but this time the padişah noticed her as she entered the building. He asked his daughter, "What does that woman want here?" When he got no answer, he asked the woman herself, "Mother, what do you want?"

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The woman responded, "I have come by the will of Allah and the consent of the Prophet to ask for the hand of your daughter in marriage to my son."³

"What kind of job does your son have?"

³This formulaic expression is the opening remark of all matchmaking efforts in Turkey. Although the matchmaker cites

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"He has no job. He does nothing," the mother answered.

"Very well, then," said the padişah. "You go back to your son and tell him that if he can make yonder mountains disappear tonight, I shall think about his proposal.

"All right," said the woman and left.

Keloğlan was waiting impatiently for his mother at home. When she arrived there, he asked, "Well, what happened?"

"What you should have expected to happen. They did not consent to give their daughter to you. In order to avoid giving the girl to you, the padişah said that he would consider the matter only if tonight you can make the mountains opposite the palace disappear. It is impossible to do that, of course."

"Don't worry about that, Mother. I shall get rid of those mountains.

"Oh, my stupid son!" exclaimed his mother

That night Keloğlan put the magic ring on his finger and knocked it against the wall. Forty giants appeared at once and asked, "Our master, what do you wish?"

the "will of Allah," that is something he/she hopes for more than he/she can demonstrate. If this were said in English rather than Turkish, we might say that it is in the optative subjunctive mode.

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"During this night you are to cause the disappearance of the mountains just beyond the padişah's palace."

Saying, "We accept your order, our master," the giants then disappeared. As soon as they had left, Keloğlan fell asleep.

When the padişah arose the next morning, he gazed out the front windows of the palace and was amazed to discover that the mountains had disappeared. Where they had once been was now a perfectly level plain. "Allah, O Allah!" he said. "How could he have accomplished this task?"

As soon as Keloğlan woke up that morning, he awakened his mother too. "Mother, let us look out and see if the mountains still stand opposite the padişah's palace." They looked out and saw no mountains at all, but only a smooth plain. "Go again to the palace, Mother, and we shall see what the padişah does after this.

When she went to the palace and was shown into the presence of the padişah, she said, "Your Majesty, the mountains are gone."

"Yes, your son actually made them disappear. Now I have another (task) for him to undertake. Out there where the mountains once stood, I want him to create a small sea for me

shall tell my son your wish," said the woman and left.

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When she got home, she said to Keloğlan, "That padişah will never give you his daughter. He now demands that you create a small sea opposite his palace in the place where the mountains once stood.

"Don't worry, Mother. Doing that is one of the easiest things in the world to accomplish."

After darkness had arrived and his mother had gone to sleep, Keloğlan put on his magic ring and rapped it against the wall. When the forty giants arrived and asked for his orders, he said, "Tonight I want you to create a small sea opposite the padişah's palace in the place where the mountains once stood.

"Yes, master," the giants said.

When the padişah looked outside the following morning, he saw a clear blue sea stretching away from his palace a considerable distance. Astonished, he exclaimed, "Allah, O Allah! How in the world did he manage to do that?"

Again Keloğlan awakened his mother early to see that he had fulfilled the padişah's orders. "Mother, go to the palace again today. Let us see what the padişah says now."

The mother was amazed at the newly created sea before the palace. Getting dressed properly, she again went to palace to talk with the padişah. The padişah said to her,

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"Your son has done very well again. This time he created a sea opposite this palace. But I have a third request to make of him. I want him to build a golden palace that matches my silver palace in every detail. I want him to build it on the other side of the newly created sea directly opposite from my palace."

Saying only, "All right," the woman turned away and went home. There she said to her son, "The padişah wants you to build a golden palace exactly like his silver palace. He wants it built across the sea on the shore exactly opposite from his own palace. This, of course, is impossible."

"It may not be impossible, Mother. Don't worry about it." After his mother had gone to sleep, Keloğlan rapped the ring and called the giants to him. When they arrived, he said to them, "I want you to build a golden palace exactly like the padişah's silver palace. I want you to place it across the sea on the shore directly opposite his palace."

"Yes, master," said the giants and disappeared.

In the morning when the padişah gazed out his window, the sun was glittering so brightly from the gold palace on the opposite shore of the small sea that he could not open his eyes all the way. It was so bright that he could only squint at it. "Allah, O Allah!" he said. "I shall never get rid of

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that keloğlan!"

Awakening his mother that morning, Keloğlan said to her, "Go to the palace again today. Let us see what else the padişah can think to ask for!"

When she arrived at the palace, she was met by the padişah, who said to her, "Your son has done all of the things that I requested of him, and I shall not ask for anything more. I shall now give my daughter to your son in marriage."

His daughter was greatly upset by this decision of the padişah, for she was secretly in love with another man. She thought this way and she thought that way in an effort to find some solution to her problem, but she could not think of anything to avert her marriage to Keloğlan. After the usual wedding celebration of forty days and forty nights, the girl was delivered to the nuptial chamber, and the two became man and wife.

After their marriage, the padişah's daughter was surprised to see how Keloğlan managed to live. He did no work at all, but still he led a comfortable life. Even though he sat about all day long, meals appeared before him, and all of his needs were somehow taken care of. "How does he manage this?" she asked herself. One day she began following him

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around from a distance and secretly observing everything he did. She saw that he had no special skills or talents, and she finally concluded that all of his power was in some way derived from his ring.

While Keloğlan was sleeping on the following night, his wife slipped the ring from his finger and put it on her own finger. When she rapped it against something, as she had seen Keloğlan do, she suddenly saw forty giants standing before her. They said to her, "What is your command, our master? What do you want us to do?"

She answered, "First I want you to put this keloğlan in a bag and throw it on a garbage dump on a distant shore of the sea. After you have done that, come back here again." After the giants had put Keloğlan in a bag and thrown him on a distant garbage heap, they returned. "Now," said the padişah's daughter, "I want you to bring my lover to me." This they did very quickly, and Keloğlan's wife and her lover enjoyed the rest of the night together.

When Keloğlan woke up just before dawn, he realized that something smelled bad. When he managed to tear the bag and get out of it, he found that he was no longer in his palace. "Allah, Allah! Where am I?" When the light increased, he discovered that he was in a garbage dump. He was utterly confounded by the situation in which he now found himself.

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"This must be some trick of the padişah's daughter! But what can I do now?"

As Keloğlan was sitting there deep in thought, a dog came along and barked, "Hav! Hav! Hav!"⁴ It then asked, "Keloğlan, ağa bey,⁵ what are you doing?"

"What should I be doing? I am thinking very deeply here among all of this rubbish

"What is your difficulty, Keloğlan, ağa bey?"

"Go away Don't cause me further trouble!"

"Keloğlan, you do not recognize me. I am the one you rescued from the cruel children

"Oh, yes, you are right! I did not recognize you."

After they had become better acquainted with each other, the dog asked, "What is your problem? What can I do to help you?"

After Keloğlan had explained his wife's treachery and his loss of the magic ring, he said, "But what can you do about

⁴Although American dogs are thought to bark, "Bow! Wow! Wow," Turkish dogs are perceived to be saying, "Hav! Hav! Hav!" when they bark.

⁵An ağa (English, agha) is a rural landowner, sometimes wealthy, often powerful. The word does not indicate an official title but describes an economic status. They are often the principal employers of farm workers, and they are often viewed by their employees as harsh, driving, and abusive. The term ağa is also used in a complimentary way, as an honorific, for

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this? My palace is on another shore of this sea. We have no means of crossing this sea, and so there is nothing that we can do to resolve my problem

"I can swim to your palace, but after I get there, how should I go about getting the magic ring from the finger of the padişah's daughter?"

"I do not know how you could manage to do that.

After they had been talking for a short while, they a kitten approaching them. "Meow, meow, meow! Keloğlan, bey, how are you?"

"Go away! Do not add to my troubles!"

"Keloğlan, ağa bey, don't you remember me? Some time ago you rescued me from some cruel children."

"Yes, I remember that now."

"Keloğlan, ağa bey, what is the matter? What can I do for you?"

"I have a palace on a distant shore of this sea. I acquired both the palace and my wife, who is the padişah's daughter, by means of a magic ring. But my treacherous wife

a distinguished or just older person than the one using the term. Thus an older brother is called ağa bey by his younger siblings. Ağa bey may be used as a deferential term to one older or more prestigious than the speaker. A taxi driver may refer to his passenger as ağa bey; a salesman speaking to a male customer may call him ağa bey.

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stole my magic ring, and I am powerless without it. She had me cast upon this garbage dump."

"But we can get that ring back for you, Keloğlan, ağa bey. This dog can swim to your palace, and I can ride on his back. I have many friends among mice to whom I have been kind, and they will help me retrieve the ring."

"Can that really be done?"

"Yes! Do not worry about it any longer."

The kitten mounted on the back of the dog, which then swam to the distant shore where Keloğlan's palace stood. When they arrived there, the kitten went to the basement of the palace and called together all of the mice who lived there. After explaining what she wanted from them, the kitten asked, "Which of you is the cleverest mouse here?"

"It is our lame brother over there. He is the cleverest of all of us."

The kitten then said to that lame mouse, "Then you are the one who can accomplish this task. Go and get the ring from the padişah's daughter!"

That night the lame mouse made its way to the room of the padişah's daughter and began searching for the ring. It was nowhere to be seen in the room, and it was not on the finger of the sleeping girl. Because of the difficulty the girl had

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in breathing, the mouse concluded that she must have the ring hidden beneath her tongue. Returning to the kitten, the mouse reported, "The ring is hidden beneath the tongue of the padişah's daughter. How can I get it? What should I do?"

The kitten said, "Plunge your tail into some oil. Then return to the girl's room and put the tip of your tail into her nose. That will make her sneeze, and when she sneezes, the ring will fall out of her mouth

The lame mouse followed these directions. He plunged his tail into some oil. Then, returning to the girl's room, he moved his tail lightly inside the nose of the girl. As the kitten had predicted, the girl sneezed, and when she sneezed, she spat out the ring. Grabbing the ring, the lame mouse ran quickly and gave it to the kitten

The kitten then went back to the seaside and mounted once more on the back of the dog. The dog swam and swam and swam until they had reached a point quite close to where Keloğlan was waiting for them. Then they began to argue about which of them was to give the ring to Keloğlan. The kitten said, "Without my efforts you could never have recovered the ring, for it was I who engaged the clever lame mouse and it was I who thought of a way to get the ring out of the girl's mouth."

"Yes, but if it had not been for me, you would never

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have reached the palace to do that. You could not have swum there. I was the one who swam and swam and swam to carry you there, and so most of the effort in this whole undertaking was mine.

"No, I contributed more to the recovery of the ring!"

"No, I did!"

This argument grew more heated, and soon the two were actually fighting with each other. As this struggle continued the ring slipped from the kitten's paw and fell into the sea.

"Oh! What can we do now?" the one asked.

"Nothing!" said the other. "The ring is gone!"

Continuing on to where Keloğlan was waiting, they said, "Keloğlan, ağa bey, we recovered the ring from the daughter of the padişah but on the way back we dropped it into the sea!"

"What can we do now?" asked Keloğlan, but no one of them could think of any way to recover the magic ring from the sea. They all sat on the shore staring into the water and brooding. After a while a fisherman came along selling fish. Keloğlan searched through the fish that the man offered for sale, and he finally found a small fish that had a bulge in its throat "How much would this fish cost?" When the fisherman told him the price, Keloğlan searched through all of his pockets and found just barely enough to pay for the fish. Cutting open the

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fish, he retrieved the ring from its throat. Then, after placing the ring on his finger, he knocked the ring against a stone and called the forty giants to his presence

"What is your command, our master? What do you want us to do?"

"Go to my palace. Put my wife and her lover into a large bag and throw that bag on the other side of that garbage dump. After that, I want you to take the three of us back to my palace."

After he had been back in his own palace for a while, he called the forty giants to him again and gave them these orders: "Find the country whose padişah has a daughter who is the most beautiful girl in the world. After you have found that girl, bring her to me."

"Very well, master," said the giants

After the most beautiful girl in the world had been brought to the palace, she and Keloğlan were married. By good fortune the girl soon fell in love with Keloğlan and he with her. In this happy state of affairs, they began to lead a very satisfying life together. Keloğlan moved his mother, the dog, and the kitten into the palace to share with them their good life.

In the meantime, Keloğlan's first wife and her lover

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remained at the distant garbage dump. They were forced to lead the same kind of existence that Keloğlan's first wife had planned for him.