

Story 1335 (1987 Tape 2)

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Location: İspahlar village,
Kizilcahamam kaza,
Ankara Province

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The Daughter of Pilgrim Ahmet Ağa¹

Once there was and twice there wasn't a pilgrim named Ahmet Ağa. One day he decided to make another pilgrimage to Mecca, but before he could do so, it was necessary for him to make some arrangement for the care and protection of his daughter. His wife had been dead for some time, and he could not leave his young daughter all alone. He decided to leave her in the care of the hoca² of their village, and he gave the hoca

¹An 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 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.

²A hoca is a preacher and the religious leader of a community. In pre-Republican times the hoca was also the community teacher. Separation of church and state in the Republic required that teachers be people of secular rather than of religious training.

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a large enough sum of money to pay for her food and other expenses. With that matter settled, Ahmet Ağa and his son loaded travel provisions on their camels and set out for Mecca

One day shortly after Ahmet Ağa had departed, the hoca asked the girl to clean his room and put it in order. While she was doing that, the hoca said to her, "Come over here and sit close to me."

I cannot do that," answered the girl.

"Yes, you can."

I cannot," she repeated. Then she ran to her own room and locked the door. For some time she refused to leave her room, for she did not wish to see anybody.

The hoca, who wanted to make love to this girl, was very annoyed by her seclusion. He went to a witch woman³ and hired her to help him. "Get that girl out of her room," he said, "and take her to the hamam⁴ "

³In Turkish folktales the word witch has various connotations. It may be a person associated with cosmic evil. It may be a person with supernatural powers who may or may not also be a ghoul. With or without supernatural powers, it may be an old woman available for hire to undertake nefarious deeds of various kinds. In this latest capacity, she may be simply a shrewd, wily, and unscrupulous accomplice in covert action against someone.

⁴A public bath, sometimes utilizing hot spring water, sometimes water heated on site. It was once more popular than it is now, when most families have their own bathing facilities. Baths were and are used for purposes of health and socializing as well as cleansing. Males and females used and use the hamam at different times.

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Baths public
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The witch woman took the daughter of Ahmet Ağa to the hamam. There the two began to scrub each other and enjoy themselves. But while they were doing this, the hoca was hidden in the hamam. After a few minutes the hoca stepped forth and ordered the girl to hug him. The girl refused to do this, but the hoca kept insisting that she should. In order to escape from him, the girl hit the hoca on the head with her bath dipper⁵ and fled home.

Angry at the girl for rejecting him in that way, the hoca wrote a letter to her father. In that letter he said, "Since you left, your daughter has become a prostitute who goes here and there with various men."

When Pilgrim Ahmet Ağa received this letter, he was ashamed and angry at the information it contained. He said to his son, "Return home at once and kill your sister. Cut her head off. Then dip some part of her clothing in her own blood and bring that garment to me as proof of her death."

When the son reached home and found his sister, neither of them said anything about what had happened. They just and looked at each other for a while. Then the boy led his

⁵Turkish baths have faucets and hot pools, but they usually do not have showers. Consequently, bathers rinse soap off their bodies by throwing water over themselves with bath dippers. Turkish bath dippers have no handles. They are rather heavy saucepans 7 to 8 inches in diameter.

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Book of garments

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sister--her name was Emine--to the nearby mountains. Once they were well into the mountains, he said to Emine, "Now I shall cut off your head."

"If Allah is willing to have you do that, then I can nothing against it," she replied.

Her brother started to cut off her head several times, but each time he was unable to bring himself to commit this act. Instead, he killed a crow, and then, after pulling off his sister's clothes, he stained them with the blood of that crow. Her brother then returned to (Mecca, and Emine remained there alone and naked for seven years. Then one day she was accidentally discovered and rescued.

One of the sons of the padişah of that land had been throughout his boyhood, so ill that he had never once left the palace. But by the time he had become a young man, his health had improved. He said to the padişah, "Father, today I wish to leave the palace and ride around this area for a while."

"Very well, Son. You have my permission to do so."

Mounting a good horse, the prince rode forth and headed in the direction of the mountains. As he was riding through the lower slopes of these mountains, he came upon Emine sitting, completely naked, beneath a pine tree. Startled by the sight of her there, the prince asked, "Oh, girl, are you a

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fairy or a jinn?"⁶

"I am neither a fairy nor a jinn but one of the creatures of Allah," she answered.

Without saying another word, the prince turned his horse around and returned to the palace. There he gathered some clothes for the girl and took them to her. After Emine was properly clothed, the prince took her to the palace to live. News of this was soon on the lips of everyone. People stopped each other on the streets and said, "The son of the padişah has brought home a mountain girl! Who is she and who were her parents?" Because there was no answer given to that question, people soon were saying, "She must be the child of a bear!"

Not even the prince himself knew what her origin was. He had never asked her any questions concerning herself. He had not asked her, "What is your name?" He had never asked her, "Who are you?" He had never asked her, "Where did you come from?" And the girl herself did not offer to give him any of this information.

Now that his son was well, and now that he had become a young man, the padişah one day suggested to the prince that it was time for him to be married. "I do not wish to be married," said the prince.

⁶If a person appears suddenly in an unlikely place, the viewer quite understandably becomes wary of the true nature of

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"Why not? Is there not some particular girl that you would be willing to marry?" asked the padişah.

"I should be willing to get married if you would permit me to marry the girl I brought here from the mountains. Otherwise I shall never marry

"Why that girl?" asked the padişah. "She is a mountain girl, the daughter of a bear

After the father and son had argued about this and discussed it for a while, the padişah at last agreed to having his son marry Emine. After the wedding celebration was completed, the two were married, and they continued to live comfortably at the palace. Within a few years they had two children, a boy and a girl

In the meantime, Pilgrim Ahmet Ağa had returned from Mecca and had steadily grown richer and richer. In fact, his wealth became so great that he was now known as one of the most prominent men in the land. From time to time his daughter heard news of his activities. She sometimes thought of

the intruder. The formulaic query in Turkish is İnmisin cinmisin?--are you a jinn or other supernatural being? In some early interpretations of the word, in seems to have meant human being, and so the response then is "I am human and not a jinn." But in most uses of this expression in the Archive holdings, the question seems to be that given in the text above, for otherwise the response "Neither" would make no sense.

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visiting him, but she said nothing about this until she had a quarrel with her husband.

Emine became annoyed with her husband because he now seldom asked her how she was feeling or whether she needed anything. In retaliation, she ceased speaking to him. The prince did not understand what caused his wife's silence, and so he worried about it much of the time. One day an old woman noticed his deep thoughtfulness and asked him, "My son, what is the matter? Why do you look so worried?"

"My wife no longer says anything to me. Perhaps she got bad news from the mountain bears, but she does not tell me anything about it."

"My son, buy some apples and give them all to one of your children but give none to the other child. Please do not who advised you to do this."

Following the old woman's advice, the prince bought some apples and gave them to one of his children. This caused the two children to start fighting with each other. Emine then said, "Your foolish father should have given apples to both of you!"

Hearing this, the prince said, "Aha! So now you are talking again! Why is it that you have not spoken for several days?"

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should I have to talk when nobody here cares at all for my comfort or happiness? I am the daughter of Pilgrim Ahmet Ağa of such and such village. My father did this and that to me, and now you have done so and so to me. I want to go to that village to see my father

the prince heard this, he went to the padişah and asked for permission to take his wife to such and such a village. His father said, "I cannot afford to let you go anywhere with that mountain girl. It might not be safe for you to do so." But after discussing this problem for a while, they agreed to have an Arab lala who lived at the palace accompany Emine during her visit to her father's village. Horses were prepared, and on the following day Emine and her two children, accompanied by the Arab lala, set out for her father's village.

After they had been traveling most of the day, they lost their way and failed to reach their destination. It became necessary for them to camp alongside the road for the night. When the children were asleep and it was time for Emine and the Arab lala to retire, the Arab said, "Let us sleep together tonight."

⁷Male tutor and adviser of wealthy or aristocratic boy. The lala sometimes continues in that role even after his pupil has grown into young manhood.

Lala
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I cannot do that," said Emine.

"If you do not do so, I shall kill one of your children."

When the woman said nothing, the Arab lala slaughtered her daughter. When she still refused to sleep with him, the Arab lala killed her son also. He then said, "If you still refuse to sleep with me, I shall kill you too."

"If Allah gives you permission to do so, then there is nothing I can do about that," said Emine. "But before you kill me, let me go outside of this tent and say my prayers."

no! If I permitted you to go outside, you would run away!"

I would not. I shall tie this rope around my waist, and while I am outside praying, you can hold the other end, pulling on it whenever you wish to reassure yourself that I am still tied to it."

The Arab lala agreed to this arrangement, and Emine went outside with a rope tied around her waist. When she came to a pine tree, she quickly removed the rope from her waist and tied it around the trunk of that tree. Then she ran down the hill on which the tent was pitched and crossed a creek. Reaching a large clump of bushes, she forced her way to the center of the clump and hid herself there.

When the Arab lala discovered that she had escaped, he

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returned to the palace and reported that Emine had run away.

"When she heard bears growling in the mountains, she killed both of her children and then ran off into the mountains

"Really?" asked the padişah.

"Yes, it is true," answered the Arab lala.

While everyone believed that the woman had run off into the mountains to rejoin her bear kinsmen, Emine was actually hiding in the clump of brush.

ing with his flock.

that area for seven years.

When the shepherd saw Emine, he was startled and asked, "What are you doing here?"

"Aman!"⁸ After I have told you the answer to that question, only you and Allah will know. Please guard my secret." After she had told the shepherd about her betrayal by the Arab lala, she said to him, "Please save my life and be a father to me. Bring me some clothes and then slaughter a goat for me, I shall give you all of the gold coins in my necklace."⁹

⁸ An exclamation of amazement, which may be taken as the equivalent of Alas! or Oh, my goodness!

⁹ Among Alevi people of southern Turkey and among Türkmen in Çanakkale Province, women often wear the family fortune in a necklace or in a band around their foreheads. While a prince's wife might well wear a gold necklace, it is very unlikely that it would consist of gold coins.

Shepherd
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"No, I do not want all of that gold. Just one piece will be enough for me." Then, as she had requested, he went to his home, got her some clothes, and upon his return he slaughtered a goat for her.

She used the goat's beard to make a mustache for herself. Then she turned the goatskin inside out and pulled it over her head in order to cover her hair and make herself look like a keloğlan.¹⁰ Going to her father in this disguise, she asked, "Pilgrim Ahmet Ağa, can you give me a job as a shepherd?"

"I already have a shepherd for my sheep and goats, but I have a large flock of turkeys for which I need a herder

Beginning on that day, Emine became the turkey herder Pilgrim Ahmet Ağa. She herded the turkeys all day long, and then at night she slept in a corner of the stable. She continued to do this for seven years, and during all that time no one knew that she was the ağa's daughter. They did not even know in all that time that she was a girl.

The padişah had died by this time and had been succeeded

¹⁰The 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 younger children of large 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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by the prince, Emine's husband. The new padişah decided one to pay a visit to his distinguished subject Pilgrim Ahmet. He took with him the Arab lala and went to the ağa's village.

Pilgrim Ahmet Ağa had a feast prepared, a meal that was to be served in his own home. They were then all to go to the village room¹¹ to drink coffee and talk with some of the leaders of the village. Hearing of these plans, Emine went to her father and said, "Pilgrim Ağa, may I also go to the village room tonight?"

"What would you do there, Keloğlan?"

"Yes, I know that I am baldheaded, but I should like very much to go to the village room tonight. I would sit behind door and remain there.

"Very well, then. You may come."

After the ağa and his guests had dined, they all went to village room. In order to provide some kind of entertainment, several of the people there told stories. After several tales had been told, Keloğlan stood up and said, "Brothers,

¹¹Within the houses in a village there are, of course, many rooms, but when someone speaks of The Room, he or she is referring to a special public room which serves at times as the office of the village leader (muhtar) and at times as the village guest room. It may also be the meeting place of the muhtar and his council of village elders.

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ağas, I should like to tell you a different kind of story. No one is to leave the room until I have finished the story, and someone should be stationed at the door to prevent anyone's leaving. Please permit me to tell my story, or I shall be quite offended."

"Get out of here, Keloğlan!" most of the others murmured.

"For the love of Allah, let me tell my story," said Keloğlan. This appeal caused the group to change its mind, and Keloğlan was permitted to proceed. He assigned one person to guard the door, and he himself sat in a chair.

"Once there was and once there was not a Pilgrim Ahmet Ağa who was a wealthy man. He was, in fact, so wealthy that he could not find a place where he could spend all of his money. He must have lost his mind temporarily, for when he went to Mecca he assigned an immoral hoca to take care of his daughter until he returned from his pilgrimage. Think of what might happen to such a girl! The hoca wanted to sleep with her, but she rejected his request. Then he hired a witch to take the girl to a hamam. The hoca was hiding in that hamam and wanted to embrace the girl. In order to escape, the girl struck the hoca on the head with her bath dipper and ran away. --Let us examine this hoca's head and see if there is any sign of that blow."

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The hoca stood up and, saying, "May Allah give me patience," started to leave.

But the son of Ahmet Ağa then arose and said to the hoca, "Stop! You may not leave!"

Keloğlan then continued. "The hoca must have written lies about the girl to Ahmet Ağa, for he sent his son from Mecca to kill his daughter. The son did not kill his sister but took her to the mountains and abandoned her there. She was found there by the son of the padişah, who rescued her by taking her to the palace of his father. She was soon married to the prince, and after a while they had two children, a boy and a girl.

"After several years that girl wanted to visit her father again. An Arab lala was assigned to take her safely to her father's village. As they traveled along, they lost their way and had to camp along the road for the night. There the Arab lala wanted to sleep with the girl, and when she refused his wish, he killed first one of her children and then the other. He intended to kill her, too, but she managed to escape.

At this point in the story, the Arab lala jumped up and drew his sword. But the padişah shouted, "Stop!" and commanded him to sit down again.

"After she fled from the Arab lala, the girl hid in a

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thicket of bushes until she was rescued by a shepherd. That good shepherd, who is here in this room, helped the girl to appear to be a keloğlan and then to get a job working for Ahmet Ağa as a turkey herder. That same good shepherd preserved the secret about who the keloğlan really was.

"I am that turkey herder and I am the daughter of Ahmet Ağa," said the girl, taking from her head the goatskin cover and throwing it upon the floor.

At that point almost everyone in the room drew swords, and in the brief fight that followed, the padişah and the son of Pilgrim Ahmet Ağa killed the hoca, the Arab lala, the witch woman. Pilgrim Ahmet Ağa wept and wept with regret for all of the suffering he had caused his daughter. The padişah took his wife and returned to that part of the country where their palace was located

They attained their wishes, and may we in time ascend to our own thrones.