

Story 1159 (1989 Tape 11

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Keloğlan<sup>1</sup> and Ali Cengiz

Once there was and once there was not a keloğlan who lived with his mother. They were very poor people

One day Keloğlan agreed to get married. His mother had said to him, "Son, find a girl for yourself and get married.

One day when Keloğlan was going to the bazaar, he heard the viziers of the country shouting, "O people, turn your heads away and do not look back! Our beautiful princess will pass this way, and anyone who turns his head to look at the princess will be beheaded!"

Keloğlan said to his friends, "I want to take a look and see the princess, but I know that if I should do that they will cut off my head."

"Don't look in that direction, Keloğlan! Don't look!"

But Keloğlan did not listen to his friends' words. He turned and looked at the princess, and he fell in love with her

<sup>1</sup>The 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 conceal their hair by covering it either with a sheep-skin turned inside out or with the cleaned lining of a sheep's stomach.

immediately. None of the guards saw him look at the princess, so he was not punished.

When he reached home, he said to his mother, "Oh, Mother, I have fallen in love with the daughter of our padişah. Please go and tell the padişah that I should like to marry her. If I cannot marry her, I shall die!"

When she heard these words of Keloğlan, his mother became very upset, but she went to the palace immediately. When she there, the viziers asked her, "Where are you going, sister?"

"I have to say something to our padişah. Otherwise my son die." Feeling very sorry for this poor woman, the viziers decided to permit her to speak to the padişah. When she entered his room, she said to the ruler, "My padişah, I have a son who has fallen in love with your daughter. With your permission, I should like to have the princess as a wife for my son."<sup>2</sup>

The padişah answered Keloğlan's mother this way. He said, "There is a set of tricks known as the Ali Cengiz game. If your son knows how to play this game, I shall permit him to be married to my daughter. Otherwise I shall refuse him permission."

Keloğlan's mother said, "Very well," and went home. When

the cleaned lining of a sheep's stomach.

<sup>2</sup>No one in Turkey would ask for the hand of a girl in this way, but there is no reason why an eight-year-old child would have to know the correct way. The formulaic opening remark in a matchmaking discussion is this: "I have come with the will of Allah and the permission of the Prophet to ask for the hand of your daughter for X."

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mother last*

Keloğlan returned home that evening, his mother told him about the padişah's condition for his marrying the princess.

Keloglan did not know anything about the Ali Cengiz<sup>3</sup> game, and he was very disappointed by the padişah's requirement. He sat thinking for a while, and then he went outside to get some fresh air. As he was walking along the shore of a lake and thinking about the padişah's condition, he suddenly heard a voice speaking to him. It said, "Hey, Keloğlan, I can teach you an Ali Cengiz game in the course of a single day."

Keloğlan was pleased with the owner of that voice, and he went along with that man to the man's house. When he got there, Keloğlan met this man's three daughters. One of these girls said to him, "Don't give a correct answer to any question that our father may ask you. If you do, you will never be able to leave this house again. Give some wrong answer to every question he may ask."

Keloğlan decided to do exactly as the girl had told him to do. On the following day he did not give a right answer to any of the man's questions but thought of some incorrect response. After getting nothing but incorrect answers to his questions, the man said, "Keloğlan, you did not listen to me carefully.

<sup>3</sup>Although there are different forms of the Ali Cengiz game most of them involve magic and multiple transformations of the contestants.

Get out of here, for you are a stupid boy!"

When Keloğlan got home, his mother asked him, "Son, why did you do that? Why didn't you listen carefully to what the man said?"

"But, Mother, the man's youngest daughter warned me not to answer any of his questions correctly. If I had answered any questions correctly, I'd have become a prisoner of that man for all the rest of my life

When his mother heard this, she hugged Keloğlan and said, "Oh, my clever son!"

On the following day Keloğlan said to his mother, "Now I shall turn myself into a lamb. When someone comes along, you should sell the

Keloğlan became a lamb, and his mother sold that lamb to the first man who came along. To escape, Keloğlan turned himself into a sparrow, but the man turned himself into a falcon and pursued him. Then Keloğlan turned into a rose and fell beneath the feet of the princess. The falcon then turned into a child and tried to get the rose from beneath the feet of the princess. But the princess refused to give the rose to the child and instead placed it on her collar. When the child began to cry, the padişah said, "Daughter, don't make the child cry! Give him the rose!"

The princess answered, "No, Father, I shall not give away any rose which I have placed on my collar

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As soon as she said that, Keloğlan returned to his original form and said, "My padişah, this has been an Ali Cengiz game."

The padişah was surprised to hear this, but he was satisfied that Keloğlan had completed the requirement for marrying his daughter. The wedding feast took four days and four nights,<sup>4</sup> and after the wedding was completed, the princess and Keloğlan lived happily for a long time.

<sup>4</sup>It is a convention that the children of padişahs and other prominent people have wedding ceremonies that last an impossible forty days and forty nights. It is not possible to say whether the child heard four for forty or simply decided on her own to change the number.