

Story #415 (Tape #5, 1972)

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Köroğlu

Cante fall

Once Köroğlu stayed at the home of a <sup>?</sup>widow as her guest. He had gone to her house to stay only a single day, but he had already spent three days there and did not know when he would leave. His hostess was a rather wealthy woman and she wondered why Köroğlu stayed so long. Was it perhaps because he was poor? Did he need money? She therefore filled two plates with food and one with gold and sent these to Köroğlu. He ate the two plates of food and looked at the plate filled with gold.

"Apparently," he thought to himself, "this woman thinks that I am a poor man." Accordingly, he filled the two empty plates with gold and then sent all three plates of gold back to the widow.

When the woman saw the gold, she came to Köroğlu's room herself. She said to him, "Brother, since you are so wealthy, why do you continue to stay here? Why do you not go on your way?"

"It is a habit of mine that keeps me here," Köroğlu said. "I never leave the house of a woman who has accepted me as a guest without marrying her."

The woman was at first unwilling to comply with Köroğlu's wish, but Köroğlu found some leading members of the village who agreed to plead his cause as düürs [matchmakers]. Through their assistance he was enabled

to marry the woman finally. He slept with her for one night, and then he arose the next morning and said, "I shall be leaving today."

She pleaded with him, saying, "We have only now just found each other! How soon you are leaving!"

But Koroğlu said, "No, I must go." Before he left, he gave the woman a sword, saying, "If the child is a son, give him this sword and let him search for me."

utes, a son was born to Koroğlu, a black-eyed son.

old enough, his mother sent him to school. On the day that he received his diploma from elementary school, the son of Koroğlu became involved in a

fight, on the way home, with another boy. This other boy was kel [bald]. *kel/oglu*  
He was also a very intelligent boy and had received higher grades than had the son of Koroğlu. The bald boy made fun of his low grades. In return, the son of Koroğlu hit him upon his bald head, making blood flow.

bald boy ran to his mother and told her what had happened. Upon hearing this, the woman came out of her house and shouted at the son of Koroğlu:  
"You brat! You whose father and mother <sup>[sic]</sup> are not known, O bastard! How dare you hit my son?"

Koroğlu's son was very disturbed by this incident. When he reached home, he asked, "Mother, who is my father? Tell me, for I want to know."

She answered, "Your father was a farmer who died. May he rest in peace."

But the boy did not believe this. "Mother," he said, "tell me who my real father is."

"Well, your father stayed with me for just one night, and after that Allah gave you to me."

Quest — for father  
Upon hearing this, the boy decided to mount a horse at once and go in search of his father. His mother said, "Since you are leaving, son, take this sword left by your father. It was your father's wish that you wear this sword while searching for him."

The boy took the sword, mounted, and set out. Along the way, he came upon a camel caravan. (In those days there used to be large camel caravans.) He saw that the camel drivers had tethered their camels in a bare spot rather than on a grassy plot nearby. He shouted to the camel drivers,

Why did you tether your camels at this dry, bare spot rather than over there where there is plenty of grass?"

"That is Koroğlu's pasture," one of them said. "If he came and discovered that we had camped on it, he would kill all of us."

The young man said, "You just go and tether your animals there, and let that cuckold come and kill me if he wishes." The young man took his and some of their horses and tethered them on a grassy plot.

Koroğlu had been watching from a distance, and he had seen what had gone on.<sup>1</sup> He sent one of his men with orders to drive these people away from his land. But when this man arrived, Koroğlu's son tied his hands and threw him in a ditch. Koroğlu sent another man, but he was treated in the same way. When a third man was handled in this manner, Koroğlu realized that something was wrong. The men had not returned, and the strange horses were still grazing on his pasture. Finally, Koroğlu mounted his

<sup>1</sup>In variants of this episode in the Koroğlu cycle, Koroğlu watches from Çamlıbel with binoculars.

horse and went himself to the place. Let us hear what Koroğlu will sing for the young man he meets there.

*Carte Blanche  
Thyself*

O son of a merchant, who passes this way,  
Will you not pay the toll for this road?  
Pay the toll that is charged for this road,  
Or your head will come off, O son.

Now let us hear what the young man's reply will be.

Who passes this way is the chief of the merchants.  
He will pay no toll or anything else.  
He surely won't pay any toll.  
Move along, then, or lose your own head.

After this, the son and the father fought for a long time. The young man knew that it was his father he fought, but Koroğlu did not at first know that the boy was his son. What the young man really sought was a test of strength with his father.

They fought hard, but Koroğlu was never able to bring down his opponent. He finally said to himself, "If I could just knock him off his horse, I think I could beat him then." To the boy he said, "Our horses are tired. Let us proceed to fight on foot."

"I shall accept this suggestion on one condition."

"What is that condition?" asked Koroğlu.

"It is that whoever throws his opponent will then cut his throat."

"Very well," said Koroğlu.

As soon as Koroğlu dismounted from his horse, the young man threw him to the ground and tied his hands and feet. But when he brought his sword



forward, as if to cut Koroğlu's throat, his father shouted, "Stop, you son of a bitch."<sup>2</sup> I am your father!" Koroğlu had recognized his son by his sword.

*Forbidden chamber - 40th*  
Koroğlu then took his son to his palace at Camlbel. He gave his palace women forty keys to the forty rooms of the palace, but he warned them, "You may show him the first thirty-nine rooms, but do not show him the fortieth."

The women took him to each of the first thirty-nine rooms. When they stood before the fortieth room, the young man said, "Open this door. I wish to see what my father keeps in this room."

The women said, "Your father has nothing but old saddles in this room. They are not worth seeing."

"But I want to see them."

When they refused to unlock the door, he kicked it in and entered. There he came face to face with a picture<sup>3</sup> of a woman on a window, and as soon as he saw it he tell in love with the woman and fainted on the spot. The palace women ran to his father and reported what had happened. When Koroğlu arrived there, he saw that his son was in pitiable condition. us listen now to what he will sing for him.

Let me send Ayshe to take care of him.

Let him take her to his room;

Let him take her to his room;

Let him take her to his room.

<sup>2</sup>This is literally what Koroğlu says at this point: it oğlu it.

<sup>3</sup>The narrator says it was a photograph; we have called it a picture simply to avoid the obvious anachronism.

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Although the young man lay unconscious on the floor, he could hear what was being said. He thought to himself, "My father has no idea why I fainted. What he is saying has nothing to do with my problem." Let us hear how he will reply to his father.

O my father, you once left my mother

And came here to this palace.

4

My eyes are fixed upon that window.

When Koroğlu realized the true nature of the situation, he said, "Son, I have lost 1,500 men trying to possess that beauty, and I succeeded in attaining only that picture of her. How could you possibly go after her?"

"Father, you must show me the way. I shall then go and bring her back."

Koroğlu mentioned only the place where she lived. "She is at Akshehir," he said.

The young man took a saddlebag of gold from his father's treasury, put it on his horse, picked up his saz, and set out at once for Akshehir. After arriving there, he dropped his saz and broke it as he was riding along the city streets. Searching for a shop at which to have it repaired, he asked another young man, "Is there a saz shop here somewhere?"

"Yes, there is--right over there."

He went to the saz shop, thinking to himself, "If I praise the master,

4This sung line is not clear enough for us to understand.

he will probably do a good job on my saz." Now let us hear how he praised the master.

Hey, my master, I came from Çamlıbel, asking my way,  
And after searching I have found your shop.  
If my saz is broken, I had rather be dead.  
Take my saz, O Master, for it holds all my sense.

The master thought to himself, "There are ninety-nine cities between here and Çamlıbel. Is this fellow crazy?" Let us hear how the master will reply.

Where Çamlıbel is there is a level piece of ground  
Where ducks and geese keep singing songs.  
You must be blind to break a saz like this.  
Take it back and then get out of here.

The young man realized that there was no way to succeed by being gentle, so he started bearing harder on the master. Let us hear what he sing this time.

O Master, grow not angry now at me  
Or I shall draw at once my curved sword,  
And with it I'll chop off your head,  
O Master who must be an infidel.

When the young man sang in this manner, the master sweated through the back of his shirt. He had three daughters living on the floor above, girls on whose faces he had never allowed the sun to shine, so protected and sheltered were they. The master asked for help from them now. Let us hear what he will say now.

O girls, bring now the cups and glasses,  
And sherbet in the golden bowl.  
And let my boy sit down and take his ease  
While I am working to repair his saz.

The three daughters came down from the floor above. When the young man looked at them, he thought that one of them looked very much like Telli Senem.<sup>5</sup> As he was gazing at them, trying to decide which of them it was who looked so much like the girl he had seen in the picture, the master called, "I have fixed your saz." When he was handed the saz, the young man threw the master a golden coin. "I have worked all these years," the master said, "and I have never before been able to earn a gold coin like this." At the joy of having earned such a gold coin, the master started dancing. As we have already mentioned, the girls had never before been allowed out of their quarters, and when they saw their father dancing, they thought that they were also supposed to dance

While the people of Akshehir are all watching them dance, let us see what the young man will do. Well, he went and became the guest of an old woman who lived on the edge of town. He said to the old woman, "Grandmother, is there a girl in this place named Telli Senem?"

"Yes, my son, there is. Her wedding has been going on for thirty-seven days, and on the fortieth, she will come down as a bride."<sup>6</sup>

W. L. G.  
Cassidy  
(celebrity)

<sup>5</sup>This is the first time that the girl in the picture has been identified by name. In most of the K ro lu tales she is called Telli Hanım, and that name is provided at the time the young man sees her picture and faints.

<sup>6</sup>The word used here is inmek, meaning simply to descend. In this context, however, it refers to the moment that the bride gets down from the horse cart which takes her to her bridegroom's home.

"Well, grandmother, can we go to the wedding house?"

"How can we?" asked the old woman. "It is at the house of a mighty padishah. They would not admit such poor people as we are."

"You take this gold and with it buy some woman's clothes for both of us. We shall put these on and then go to the house where the wedding is going on."

"All right, son. We shall put them on and go."

The old woman went and had woman's clothes made for them. They <sup>sgu<sup>ra</sup></sup> dressed themselves in these and went to the padishah's palace. After entering the palace garden, they moved among the people until they reached the edge of the pool. There the young man saw Telli Senem, the girl whose picture he had seen, and he fainted again. When the wedding guests had dispersed, there were left only the young man and the old woman, who was moving around him. She kept watching him, but since he did not come to himself, she finally went home. The young man remained lying there until morning.

The city water was cut off during the night, and so when she awakened in the morning, Telli Senem could find no water with which to wash her face. She therefore sent one of her attendants to get water from the pool. When the servant had taken water from the pool and was about to return with it, she saw the young man. He was so handsome that attendant just stood looking at him, unable to leave the spot. Telli Senem sent another attendant for water, and she too was held there by the handsomeness of the young man. She sent attendant after attendant until finally all forty of them were standing and staring at the young man.

Telli Senem became angry and said, "Where have all these whores<sup>7</sup> gone?" When she went to the pool herself, she saw that her forty attendants were standing around a young man with their üçkürleri<sup>8</sup> each broken at one point. But when she gazed at him, her üçkür was broken at forty places. For the sake of decorum, she ordered her attendants to leave. "You line up and proceed to the palace, you whores. Aren't you ashamed at yourselves for standing staring at a young man this way?"

Just at that time, the young man revived. Now let us hear what he will say to Telli Senem. He took his saz and started singing.

...

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And are you not the one called Telli Senem,

With forty narrow-waisted girl attendants?<sup>9</sup>

The girl hesitated to look back to see for whom these words were intended, but Hasan<sup>10</sup> started again

Oh, don't keep walking, stopping, looking back,

Placing your gathered locks within your bosom.

<sup>7</sup>The word whore here, and the word cuckold, which his son calls Koroğlu at the time of their fight, may seem incongruous in a tale that is almost a fantasy. Turkish peasants actually use such terms, even in family squabbles.

<sup>8</sup>An üçkür is the gathering or puckering string used to tie together at the waist, <sup>the</sup> Turkish baggy trousers that peasant women wear.

<sup>9</sup>These first two lines are unintelligible on the tape.

<sup>10</sup>Although the son of Koroğlu is always called Hasan, this is the first time in this tale that his name is given.



My name is Hasan;<sup>10</sup> do not make me "burn,"<sup>11</sup>

O girl, you infidel, let them fall loose

Don't burn me, let them fall, O daughter of a monk.

The girl understood clearly now that the words were intended for her.

Let us hear now how she will reply.

Where do you come from, O young man?

You must have lost your mind along the way,

For now you seem to wish to risk your life.

Do not remain, young man, whom they will kill

When the young man heard these words he thought that she must not have recognized him, and so he decided to reveal his identity.<sup>12</sup>

The place from which I come is Çamlıbel;

My family is the house of Koroğlu.

Oh, tell me by the truth of your two breasts,<sup>13</sup>

Are you the girl that they call Telli Senem?

When she heard these words, the girl was fascinated by the young man.

She had, in fact, seen him in her dreams the night before, and she had been told in these dreams that Hasan the son of Koroğlu would come and

*Believed in  
dreams*

<sup>11</sup>In Middle Eastern love poetry, unrequited love may cause a person to "burn"; the term is also used, among mystic poets, to indicate the effect of spiritual love that develops as a result of unconsummated earthly love. See, for the best-known example, the story of Leyla and Mecnun.

<sup>12</sup>Literally, the narrator says here that Hasan will "recite his künve." Künve can mean patronymic, a military list of names, or the contents of one's individual I.D. card or "dog tags": name, age, serial number, etc.

<sup>13</sup>We are not at all certain about this line, the reference to her breasts being unclear.

carry her away.<sup>14</sup> Now that she recognized him, she made a cup of coffee for him. As he drank it, the young man told her that he had come to take her away with him.

The girl said, "I shall go with you, all right, but only on a certain horse here owned by a man who is a friend of your father. If you bring that horse, I shall go with you."<sup>15</sup> *Janh - as*  
*with rest*

Hasan went to the man who owned the horse Telli Senem wished to ride<sup>15</sup> and asked this man for a horse.

The man said, "Your father and I are old friends. You may take not just one horse but a thousand, if you wish."

The young man took the horse and returned with it. They then mounted their horses and rode a great distance.<sup>16</sup> Finally the young man said to Telli Senem, "We are tired. I have been without sleep for I do not know how many nights. Let us stop here for breakfast and then ride farther."

As they were eating breakfast and resting there, the young man fell asleep with his head in the girl's lap. This girl (you will remember) was the daughter of a padishah, and this padishah was now pursuing them

<sup>14</sup>In many Turkish tales, especially those involving love, people see their future lovers or mates very clearly in a dream. The vision of his "dream girl" is the experience which reveals to a man that he is destined to become an âşık (minstrel or "lover poet").

<sup>15</sup>The identity of the particular horse, the name of its owner, and the episode in which it is secured require several hundred lines in many versions; here it is all greatly telescoped.

<sup>16</sup>Again, there is considerable telescoping here. When a princess elopes with a stranger, they cannot simply ride away. Many variants trace in detail the planning and execution of this escape.



closely with an army. Let us hear what the girl will sing to awaken the young

A great many soldiers are coming, my man, my man,

With bayonets longer than their rifles.

O Hasan, my man, it is time to open your eyes;

I would offer my life for the sake of your beautiful eyes.

Hasan awakened and, looking, saw that the number of soldiers was not as frightening as he had supposed. He rode against this group of soldiers, killing about half of them and dispersing the rest. Shortly after this they proceeded on their journey.

After going for a long distance again, Hasan again slept with his head in the lap of the girl. This time a greater number of soldiers overtook them. Let us hear what she will sing this time in order to awaken Hasan.

Soldiers are coming in columns, my man,

Swinging their rifles and bayonets.

How long a time my bey now sleeps.

Awake! I'd give my life for those two eyes.

Hasan awakened and, looking around, saw that there were really a great many soldiers this time. He said, "If I can ride through their ranks twice, once going and once returning, I am sure I shall not be killed, even if their number were ten times what it is. But if I ride through them the first time and then fail the second time, you must save yourself." Saying this, Hasan left, and the girl, sitting on her horse, watched him go.

Hasan made two attempts to ride through the ranks of the enemy, but the girl saw him complete only the first attempt. Actually, Hasan had, as be-  
killed half the troops on his first charge and then, while returning, had dispersed the rest.

In the meantime, the girl, who had failed to see Hasan return, rode in the direction of the battle. When Hasan appeared, riding toward her all by himself, she could not see him clearly, for her eyes were bloodshot.<sup>17</sup> She struck ninety blows at Hasan, while Hasan could not very well strike knowing who she was. Hasan fell from his horse.

The girl then went elsewhere in search of Hasan's dead body. When she failed to find his body, she returned to the spot where Hasan had fallen from his horse. When she saw Hasan, she asked, "What happened to  
Who did this to you?"

"No one but you did anything to me," Hasan said.

"It cannot be helped now," she said. She gathered flowers and applied them to Hasan's wounds. This went on for one day and then five days. She gathered flowers to make an ointment which she applied to his wounds, and by the fifth day, the wounds had healed somewhat.<sup>18</sup>

In the meantime, Koroğlu one night had a dream in which he was shown the miserable condition of Hasan. Taking a platoon of soldiers,

<sup>17</sup>This may mean, as it does in much Turkish heroic literature, that she cried tears of blood, a metaphor for great grief.

<sup>18</sup>In variants of this tale, as in The Book of Dede Korkut and elsewhere, the person who heals the hero's wounds is directed, usually by a saint such as Hızır, to mix certain flowers with mother's milk, a signal that the cure will be a miraculous one.

Köroğlu set out in search of his son. As Hasan was lying on a stone one day, he saw a number of horsemen riding in their direction. As they approached, he was able to recognize his father. Telli Senem had rolled up her skirts to fight. Let us hear what Hasan will sing to make Telli Senem roll down her skirts again.

The one who approaches is coming from Çamlıbel.

He comes to us here from the family of Köroğlu.

O girl, it is proper to roll all your skirts back down.

They'd be shameful if rolled as my father approaches us here.

But the girl thought it was the force of her own father that approached, and so she mounted her horse at once. Let us hear what she will say as she approaches Köroğlu.

O Father, this must have been written by Allah;

It must have been he who sent you this way.

My eyes, you will see, are filled up with anger;

Do not come near me, O Father; I'll kill you.

Köroğlu said to himself, "I have no daughter. From where did she spring?" Let us hear what Köroğlu will sing to the girl.

My holdings include neither vineyards nor gardens;

Pomegranates and quinces are fruits I don't grow.

Nowhere have I ever had any daughter;

Tell me, O maiden, whose daughter are you?

To this the girl replied as follows:

I am your vineyard and garden, O father;

Pomegranates am I and your quinces too.

I am the beloved of young Hasan Bey.

And you? Who are you? Who are you? I say.

Köroğlu was anxious to discover the condition of Hasan, whether he was wounded or not. Now let us listen to what he asks the girl.

are the big mountains all covered with black?

is troubled Senem all broken apart?

And what of my son, Hasan Bey--is he wounded?

Let me know; let me hear all about this at once.

To this the girl made reply.

Oh, yes, the big mountains are covered with black,

And Senem, all troubled, is broken apart,

And your son, Hasan Bey, has been weakened by wounds,

fewer than ninety in all, my dear sir.

Köroğlu came and looked at Hasan Bey, who was lying on a large stone.

Oh, my son, my Hasan is lying on stones;

Let your blood be spilled on my breast on the stones.

Whatever your sins of the past, O my son,

I willingly carry them now on my head.<sup>19</sup>

Köroğlu set up his tent on the spot, and they remained there until Hasan's wounds were all healed. After that, they returned, taking Telli Senem, to Çamlıbel, where a wedding was held that lasted forty days and forty nights. Thus, their wish was fulfilled, and may we also be happy.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup>He is, in other words, shifting all responsibility for Hasan's behavior in life to himself.

<sup>20</sup>The literal expression here is, "And may we also sit above."