

Story #108 (Tape #45, 1961-1962)

Narrator: Ömer Uysal, in late 60's

Location: Adana, capital city of Adana Province; narrator, as a boy, had grown up in Western Turkey, Karaağaç, Bursa Province

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Köroğlu Rescued from Bolu Bey's Dungeon by Demircioğlu

One day Köroğlu's 500 heroes were at Camlibel. Ayvaz and Dağıstanlı Hasan were also there. Bestek Mustafa was with them, too. They were having a meeting. When Köroğlu came, they all stood in silence. Aware that something was going on, Köroğlu said, "Friends, you look as if you have been thinking about something. If it is anything connected with me, let me hear it."

Bestek Mustafa stood up and said, "We want you to give your horse to Ayvaz so we can all go to Iran and do some plundering there and bring booty back to Camlibel."

Köroğlu agreed to this, and his 500 heroes left Camlibel for Iran and Köroğlu stayed behind and entertained himself with [woman's name].

There was a lover poet in Bolu who had a brother who wanted to go with the poet and talk with Köroğlu at Camlibel, but the lover poet said to his brother, "You had better not go, because you might say something wrong and Köroğlu might chop your head off."

"No," he insisted, "I shall come with you." In the end, the poet had to take him along, too. Köroğlu had come down to the famous fountain near his house and was sitting there and he was, in fact, looking for something for amusement. When he saw the lover poet coming toward him, he asked, "Oh, poet, what brings you here? The hungry

wolves [his raiders] have gone to Iran and left me alone. I wish you could entertain me a little."

The lover poet played a few tunes to him on his saz, and when he had finished, his brother, Deli Oğlan [the mad boy], said, "I am going to sing, too."

"You be quiet," said his brother, the poet.

Köroğlu intervened and said to the brother, "All right. Let us hear you sing."

He sang, but Köroğlu did not like the way he sang, so he slapped him and killed him. By way of apology, he turned to the poet and said, "I am sorry I killed your brother. You know what an irascible man I am. Take this gold and forget about it."

The poet said, "Do not worry about it. May you live long, Köroğlu. Just forget about it. He was a mad fellow, anyway." The poet knew that if he had said anything unpleasant to Köroğlu, it would have meant his

too. The poet put the money he got from Köroğlu in his pocket, but he went straight to Bolu Bey. He said to Bolu Bey, "Köroğlu's hungry wolves have gone to Iran to pillage, and Köroğlu is alone at Camlıbel. It is the right time for you to go and capture him."

Köroğlu was looking out of the window of his house when he realized he was encircled by troops. They entered the house and found a woman in his bed. He was captured and bound hand and foot. While being carried to Bolu Bey, he sang a few songs on the way, in which he said that he was not really Köroğlu, but Köroğlu's servant. The commander of the troops also heard him singing and said to his men, "This is Köroğlu's servant. Let him go. We do not want him."

They released Köroğlu and let him go, and then returned to Bolu and arrested the lover poet for misinforming them. When they questioned

the lover poet, he said, "That was Kōroğlu himself. He is so wise that he can call himself whatever he likes, servant or anything else. Go and capture him again. Just watch him. If you see that he is going through the middle of the field, that is not Kōroğlu. If you see that he is going along the boundary between two fields, it is Kōroğlu.*

Another clue by which to know him is that his mouth smells bad."

On the way, Kōroğlu took off his clothes and had just his underwear and vest on. When he finally reached home, he went to ~~the~~ stables and lay down there, suspecting they would return to search for him. They found him sleeping in the stable and smelled his mouth. It really smelled bad. They said to him, "Get up." They arrested him and brought him down to Bolu Bey bound hand and foot.

Bolu Bey told his men to throw him in the jail, which was in the basement of his daughter's palace. "Throw him in jail and turn the water in on him," he said. "I am going to torture him to death." Kōroğlu was given a piece of bread in the morning and one in the afternoon.

The hungry wolves of Kōroğlu were returning from Iran. There was a place where Kōroğlu used to meet them with his saz on their return. When they reached that point, they looked, but saw no sign of Kōroğlu. Demircioğlu said, "We left Kōroğlu alone at Camlibel, and you know that he has many enemies. Anything might have happened to him. You stay here while I go and find out if he is all right." He went and searched the house for Kōroğlu, but could not find him. He returned and told his friends what he had seen.

The others said, "Let us go and plunder Bolu Bey's town."

Demircioğlu said, "No, no. If we all go, they may kill him. You

*Kōroğlu had a reputation for not destroying peasants' crops. He did not ride or walk through them.

give me forty days and I shall go and see what I can do. If I return in forty days, all right. If I do not, then you search for me." He armed himself and mounted his horse and put his saz on his shoulder and went directly to the territory of Bolu Bey. He found Bolu Bey's house and began playing his saz, and his men reported to him that there was a remarkable saz-playing poet in the nearby coffee house.

"Have him come here," said Bolu Bey.

Demircioğlu went to Bolu Bey's house and sang and played the saz for him. His performance was so skillful that his fame soon spread all over town. The daughter of Bolu Bey heard about him and she said, "So many lover poets and saz players and singers come to my father's house, but he never sends one of them to me. I demand that he send this one to my house."

Bolu Bey said to Demircioğlu, "Go and entertain my daughter with your saz a little."

Demircioğlu went to the house of Bolu Bey's daughter, and when she asked who he was, Demircioğlu said, "I am Ali the Lover Poet." He played and sang for her, and finally she fell in love with him. Several days later, Demircioğlu and Bolu Bey's daughter were returning from a walk and when they reached the house, they saw a man sitting at the entrance. Demircioğlu asked the daughter of Bolu Bey, "Who is this man?"

She said, "My father has a prisoner down in the basement

Demircioğlu asked, "Who is that prisoner? Can I find out his name?"

"I do not know. He is a man that my father holds there."

Köroğlu had been having a very bad time without food and drink in the basement filled with water. At dinner time Demircioğlu was sulking and refused to touch any food.

"Why are you not eating?" asked the daughter of Bolu Bey.

Demircioğlu said, "I am not going to eat as long as that poor man there is kept hungry. Is he not a Moslem brother? I will not eat unless he eats."

Köroğlu in normal times used to eat one lamb by himself and drink one keg* of rakı by himself. Demircioğlu said to the daughter of Bolu Bey, "Send this poor man a lamb and a keg of rakı. Your father is a very cruel man, and I hope you will not be like him." Köroğlu had a big feast that night.

Demircioğlu's beard had grown considerably and he needed a shave badly. His hostess, the daughter of Bolu Bey, said, "I shall call my father's barber to shave you."

After the barber had shaved Demircioğlu and had gone back to Bolu Bey's house, he told Bolu Bey that the lover poet who played and sang for him many days ago was still staying with his daughter. In the meantime, Demircioğlu had found a way which led to the entrance of the jail. He heard Köroğlu singing:

The door of this jail is made of iron,

I cannot lie because my bed is mud

My heart is as dark as this jail.

They have killed me in this jail.

Köroğlu was singing to himself in this manner.

Demircioğlu had brought Kırat. Demircioğlu killed the jail keeper and brought Köroğlu out.

*The word the narrator used was teneke--tin, or tin plate, but in recent times tin can, especially a petrol can, a British container, square-sided, holding five gallons. Most oil and gasoline in Turkey was long supplied by British firms in the Middle East, and the British petrol can became a common container and measure. When emptied of their petrol, they were highly prized containers for liquids, grain, soft white cheese--almost anything.

"Is Kırat here?" he asked.

"Yes," said Demircioğlu.

Demircioğlu took Bolu Bey's daughter on his horse behind him and they all went to Camlibel.