

Story 900 (1964 Tape 3)

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Province of Manisa

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The Köse,<sup>1</sup> the Swindlers, and the Sheep in the Sea

This is a true story. It took place in a village of my own kaza of Alaşehir.

There was a köse living in our village who was so shrewd<sup>How shrewd</sup> that no one could deceive him. "How can we fool that köse?" the people there used to ask each other

One year there was a drought in our area, and as a result of that drought, the köse had a very bad crop. So the köse was poor that year, but he wanted very much to have his son married. He said to his son one day, "Take these two oxen to Sarıgöl<sup>2</sup> and sell them so that we shall have enough money for your wedding." There was a famous animal market there at Sarıgöl, but that town was notorious for dishonesty and crooked dealing. The köse's son was a naive

<sup>1</sup> The köse is a type character in Turkish folktales. He is a beardless man with short legs and a heart-shaped face. He is shrewd, grasping, unscrupulous, and at times cruel. He is almost inhuman in his excess of these qualities, and as a result he is considered monstrous, and receives no more sympathy or compassion than does a witch, a giant, or an ogre. In the modern world he may be a replacement for the older villains of supernatural origin.

<sup>2</sup> Sarıgöl is another kaza town in Manisa Province, not far from Alaşehir.

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boy and really no match for such people

As soon as the boy arrived in the marketplace, he was approached by a swindler. This swindler asked, "How much do you want for this ox?"

"So much," said the boy, naming a figure

"I'd like to buy this ox, but its ears do not match the ears of any of my oxen. Shorten its ears, and I'll buy it."

The boy said nothing at first, but when the man was about to move along, the boy called to him and said, "All right, I'll shorten its ears for you."

The boy took a large pair of sheep shears and trimmed the ears of the ox down to a shorter length. When the swindler examined the ears, he said, "Oh, you made them too short to match the ears of any of my oxen. I don't want your ox."

A second swindler came along and looked at the second ox. "How much do you want for this ox?"

"So much," said the boy, naming a figure

"I would buy this ox from you, but its tail is so much longer than the tails of the oxen I have at home. It would look very strange among them. If you will shorten the tail of this ox, I'd buy it from you."

When the son of the köse cut off the tail of the ox,

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the second swindler said, "Oh, you have cut off too much! The tail is now so short that this animal will not even be able to brush the flies away. I don't want such an ox!"

When no one would buy his mutilated oxen, the boy not know what to do. But soon a third swindler came along and said, "Those oxen are fit only for slaughtering. Why don't you kill them so that I and other butchers can buy their meat?"

The boy slaughtered the oxen and looked for the butchers, but they were nowhere to be seen. The butchers a man to the boy to warn him: "If a veterinarian should come along and examine this meat, he would probably say that it is not fit for human consumption. Why don't you take these carcasses elsewhere and sell them?" When the boy could move the heavy carcasses, the butchers' agent offered to dispose of them for him.

When the boy returned home, the köse asked him for money from the sale of the oxen, but the boy had not gotten any money from them. The boy then told his father, step by step, what had happened to the oxen. When the köse heard this story, he was angry at his son for being such a fool, but he said nothing. He was a very shrewd man who never accepted defeat.

Going to Sarıgöl himself, the köse found out the names

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of the three swindlers who had cheated his son. He then invited these three men to dinner at his home the following day. On the way home, he caught two <sup>125-126</sup>rabbits and put them in a cage. The following day he said to his wife, "When our guests arrive, I shall be in the field working. Pretend to send one of these rabbits to me with the message that I should come home."

When the guests knocked on the door, the köse's wife said to them, "My husband is in the field, but wait here and I shall send him a message by means of our rabbit, saying that you have arrived."

"How could a rabbit carry a message?" they asked.

"Well, our rabbit has been specially trained to do that," she said, releasing one of the rabbits. Of course, the rabbit just ran away, but the guests had no way of knowing that, for it was only a few minutes before the köse appeared to welcome them.

After greeting the three guests, the köse shouted to wife, "Woman, prepare some food for our guests!"

While she was doing this, the köse and his guests talked together. Finally, one of the guests asked, "Köse, would you be willing to sell us your trained rabbit?"

"It is too valuable to sell," he answered.

"But we shall pay you thirty pieces of gold for this

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rabbit," they said

The köse finally agreed to sell the rabbit for this price, and he handed the men the second rabbit from the cage. After eating dinner, the guests thanked the köse and departed with their rabbit. When they arrived home, they showed the rabbit to all of their friends. They then ordered it to carry a certain message from the home of one swindler to that of a second swindler. Of course, when the rabbit was released, it just disappeared. When the three swindlers realized what had happened, they said, "That köse has cheated us. Let us go tomorrow and avenge ourselves against him!"

The köse knew that they would return in <sup>126-128</sup>anger, and so he prepared another trick for them. He said to his wife, "When those three swindlers come tomorrow, I shall shout at you and curse you and pretend to cut your throat. Take the windpipe from a cock, fill it with blood, and tie it around your neck, and I shall cut that. Then when I play a few notes on this <sup>flute</sup>flute, you will come to life again and get up."

When the three arrived the next day, they found the köse and his wife having a fight. "You cursed woman!" the köse shouted, knocking his wife to the floor and pretending to cut her throat. When the three swindlers observed this and saw the blood on the floor, they were shocked. "What a

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terrible thing you have done!" they said

"I was teaching my wife a lesson.

"But you have killed her!" they said.

"Oh, that is nothing!" he said. "I shall revive her now." Saying this, he played a few notes on his flute and restored his wife to life.

*Korun Jethi*  
*Shan*  
The three swindlers looked at each other in amazement. Then one of them said, "Köse, will you sell us that wonderful flute?"

"No, I might need it again," he answered.

"We shall pay you 100 gold pieces for it," they said. They thought that they could sell it again for much more than that price.

When the köse finally sold them the flute for slightly more than that amount, the three swindlers took the flute and departed, very pleased with their purchase. When they returned home, they had a dinner, to which they invited several friends. After the guests had arrived, the food was still not ready to be served. Pretending to be angry over this, the three swindlers cut their wives' throats. When the guests protested against this outrageous behavior, the swindlers laughed and said, "Don't worry. We shall cure them." One of them then started playing the flute, but the dead wives did not move

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"You are not playing it correctly," the second swindler said. "Let me play it." His playing had no effect either.

"Let me try it," said the third, but he, too, failed to revive the women.

The guests departed as quickly as they could. After they were alone again, the swindlers said to each other, "That terrible köse has cheated us again! He made us kill our wives!" They agreed that on the next day they would kill that köse.

Going to the köse's house the following day, they grabbed him, tied him in a bag, and took him to the seashore to drown him. One of the swindlers suggested, "Before we throw him into the sea, let us go and eat some of his food." The others agreed to this, and the three returned and forced the köse's wife to cook a meal for them.

Tied inside the bag, the köse heard sheep bells and knew that a flock of sheep was passing. He began shouting, "No, I won't do it!

"What are you doing in that bag? And who is it that you will not marry?"

"Oh, Shepherd," said the köse, "I have refused to marry the padişah's daughter, and now they are taking me to the palace against my will to marry her anyway."

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"What a fortunate thing!" said the shepherd. "I wish I were as lucky as you. I should be very glad to marry padişah's daughter.

"Well, friend, you can do so if you wish. Simply change places with me, and they will take you to the palace.

The shepherd untied the bag and released the köse, and then the shepherd himself climbed into the bag. After the köse had tied the bag securely, he took the shepherd's flock began herding it toward a pasture

The three swindlers finished their meal and returned to seashore. There they threw the poor shepherd as far out into the sea as they could, and after the bag had sunk, they started home. They had not gone very far, however, when they the köse grazing a flock of sheep. "We drowned you!"

said, "What are you doing here with these sheep?"

"No, you did me a great favor, for the sea along the shore is teeming with sheep. If you had only thrown me farther out, I might have gotten more than these forty sheep!"

"Can we also get sheep in this way?" they asked.

"Of course," said the köse.

They all returned to the seashore, where they threw one of the swindlers into the water. As he sank, he made a noise

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in his throat which sounded like "Kırk, kırk, kırk!"<sup>3</sup>

"You see," said the köse, "he is saying 'Forty, forty, forty!'"

"I want forty sheep, too!" each of the other swindlers exclaimed.

They threw the second swindler into the sea, and when he disappeared, the köse threw the third one after him. köse then returned home with his flock of sheep and began preparations for his son's wedding.

<sup>3</sup> As the swindler was drowning, he made a gurgling noise that sounded like "Kırk, kırk, kırk." In Turkish the word kırk means forty.