

Story #632 (1961-62, Tape #13)

Narrator: Hatice Genç, 60

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Keloğlan and the Hoca who owned a Bath -- Turkey

There once were a hoca and his wife who owned a bathhouse. They had a keloğlan [baldheaded boy] who cleaned the furnace and kept the fire going in the bathhouse. The keloğlan, however, was very clever. cleverness -- of keloğlan

The hoca would go to the bathhouse every day and sit at the cashier's place. Every once in a while the keloğlan would say to his mother, "It is very hard to get any money from the hoca. He does not pay me my wages."

His mother said, "Oh, son."

The keloğlan then asked, "Do you still have the long dress you wore when you became a bride? And the long hair you had which got cut off?"

"I do," said his mother.

"Can you get them for me?" asked the boy.

Imposture - keloğlan
pretend to be a
girl

So he put on his mother's wedding gown and placed her hair on his bald head. Tying a thin scarf over the hair, he went to the bathhouse. When he got there, he asked the bath keeper, "What are you doing, uncle?"

The hoca replied, "I am just sitting here, child."

"When will the men come out so that I can go in?" asked the

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keloğlan.

The hoca: "They'll be out any time now, but I could give you a separate room, and you could stay there."

The boy: "No, I couldn't stay there. Whenever they get out, I shall then come back."

The hoca then said, "Could you go get my dinner from my home, daughter?"

The boy replied, "Where is your home, uncle?"

"Right across the street."

The keloğlan went across the street, knocked on the door, and told the wife that the hoca wanted his dinner. She went in and got his dinner and took it to the hoca. The hoca ate his dinner which the keloğlan had just brought and started making advances to the "girl." ^{sexual}

The next day, the keloğlan told his mother he would go to the hoca once again [in disguise]. His mother said, "All right."

And the boy once again went to the bathhouse. The hoca, seeing the "girl," said, "Would you go and get my dinner again, daughter? This time, have my wife make chicken and rice and maybe some chicken soup, too."

"All right." said keloğlan

He went to the hoca's wife, got his dinner, but took it to his mother instead of taking it to the hoca. His mother exclaimed, "How wonderful," and they sat down and ate the dinner and drank the soup.

Meanwhile, the hoca waited and waited for his dinner, but when no one brought it to him, he went to his house to see what had happened. He asked, "Whatever happened to my dinner?" Meanwhile, his wife, after giving the boy the dinner, had had to go on an errand.

The "girl" then told the hoca that there were guests waiting for him at his home and took him to his house. When they arrived, the boy said, "The company is downstairs," and directed him down some dark stairs. The hoca, misinterpreting the "girl's" intentions, started to descend the stairs merrily. The keloğlan then gave him a swift kick from behind, and the hoca tumbled down to the bottom of the stairs. The boy left the hoca there, with bloody ^{note -- bloody} nose and mouth and his legs ^{leg -- injured} hurting, and returned to his own home. When the hoca's wife returned, she exclaimed, "Oh, my God. What a state you are in!" She went to get a doctor. ^{mouth -- bloody}

(In the old days doctors used to go down the street crying, "Doctor, doctor." Of course that was a few hundred years ago.)

Right then, the bald-headed boy got quickly into a doctor's costume and went by the hoca's door crying, "Doctor, doctor. Is there anyone who needs a doctor?"

The hoca meanwhile, was moaning and crying and would not let his wife touch him. His wife said, "Hoca, we must call the doctor. Look, he is just passing by. Let me call him."

"But, woman, we will have to pay him one gold piece," exclaimed

*Impertune -- keloğlan
pretend to be a doctor*

Costume -- of doctor

the hoca.

Then the woman said, "Well, let us sacrifice one gold piece so that you can get better."

So they called the doctor in. The doctor examined the hoca thoroughly while he asked the wife to leave the room. Then he said, "Hoca, you can never get well sitting here. I will take you gold piece, but I must take you to the bathhouse and apply these ointments in the heat."

[Ahmet Uysal: "On the belly stone?"

Narrator: "Yes, on the belly stone."]

pt Turkish bathhouse

But the hoca protested, "How can I get there?"

The keloğlan said, "We'll get you there, but there must be no one else there, while I minister to your wounds."

And he took him to the bathhouse. He washed his head with soap and wrapped it with a head dress. Supposedly he was a doctor. Then he oiled his body, but used naphtha and also treated him in several other ways. The poor hoca was all broken up by the day's events anyway. The keloğlan left him there moaning and went straight to the hoca's house.

He found the hoca's wife there and told her the hoca was just fine, and that she should go get him, because he had been unable to get him out of there. The hoca's wife went to the bathhouse to

¹The belly stone is a large round stone, heated or in a not part of the bath, but in an area of dry heat rather than steam.

fetch her husband, but could not find him anywhere. Finally, she found him lying on the belly stone moaning and groaning, lamenting that he was dying. His wife helped him up and they made their way home. On the way, the hoca said, "Woman, the keloğlan is behind all these mishaps that have befallen me."

And the wife replied, "Is that so, husband?"

The hoca had a faithful man. He called him and told him to get a camel and parade it on the streets, crying out, "A camel for a ride. For a piece of gold, a camel to ride."

Meanwhile, the keloğlan was preparing himself. While the man paraded the camel in the street, he ran into a fortune-teller who cried, "I tell fortunes. Have your fortune told, and be more fortunate." The faithful man got to talking with the fortune-teller. Meanwhile, the bald-headed boy came riding on a mule and recognized the hoca's faithful man. He approached him and told him the fortune-teller was very good at her trade and that she was an exceptional fortune-teller. While the faithful man became engrossed in conversation with the fortune teller, the keloğlan ran off with the camel. In the midst of his fortune-telling, the faithful man happened to look up and exclaimed, "Whatever happened to the camel?"

Camel -- stolen

The gypsy fortune teller, in her dialect, said, "Oh, the camel. The fellow standing by took it a long time ago."

The poor faithful man was distraught at having lost the

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hoca's camel. He went to the hoca and told him what had happened. The hoca was angry at the loss but told the faithful man to go out and cry out, "Camel meat! Camel meat! For the love of God, who has some camel meat?"

So, the faithful man went out on the street, and together with the street watchman cried out, "Some camel meat! Some camel meat! For the love of God, who has some camel meat?" The bald-headed boy's mother, who was at home, heard the street criers and came out to inquire why anyone should want camel meat. She asked the faithful man why he needed camel meat, and he said, "Oh lady, we have a sick man, and the doctor says that the only thing that will cure him is eating some camel meat."

The keloğlan's mother said, "My poor fellow, I wish I could help you out, but our camel meat is all finished. However, the head remains, and I could give that to you."

The faithful man happily exclaimed, "May God bless you, lady, and all your household as well. May all that you touch turn to gold." And he quickly marked the door of the bald-headed boy's house with an "X" sign in tar.

At about this time the keloğlan returned home and asked his mother, "How are you, Mother? How is everything going? Do we have meat to eat?"

And the mother replied, "Everything is fine, son. But the meat is all finished. I had the head of the camel that remained, but there was a fellow walking the street asking for camel meat,

and I gave him the head."

"Oh, Mother. What did you do? What kind of a fellow was he?" asked the bald-headed boy.

And the mother said, "Well, son, he was asking for camel meat because he had a sick man who could only be cured by eating some camel meat."

The keloğlan was very alert and grasped the situation immediately and said. "It is some kind of a trick. Look, he took the head of the camel, but also marked the door with tar. We should have some tar around here. Would you fetch it for me?"

His mother went and brought him a pail of tar. The bald-headed boy took the tar and made the same mark on every door in his neighborhood. *Trickster -- marks many houses with tar -- after discovering his own has been so marked*

Meanwhile, the hoca, having been informed of the latest developments, went out to find the keloğlan's house. When he discovered that all the houses had the same mark, he became furious with his faithful man and shouted, "May both your eyes never be blind! How can I ever find the keloğlan's house when you have made the same sign on every door?" Since they were unable to find the house, they returned. The hoca tried and tried to find a way to catch the keloğlan. Come what might, he was determined to catch him. They kept watch, and when the keloğlan was seen riding his mule, they went after him and caught him. They told the sultan's men that he was a thief and had him thrown into jail.

The keloğlan found out that the keeper at the jail was a *keeper -- of jail*

story lover. He struck up conversation with the keeper, and after they had talked about general subjects for a while, he asked him, "Uncle keeper, do you like tales?"

The jailer brightened with enthusiasm and replied, "I love tales."

The keloğlan then said, "I'll tell you the most beautiful tales in the world, but you will let me go free for twenty-four hours."

The jailer said, "If you tell me stories, I'll do anything you want."

So, the keloğlan told him many wonderful tales, and the jailer was overjoyed by them, and he let him go for twenty-four hours. The keloğlan went straight to a furrier's shop and had a devil costume made of fur. He had small bells sewn on every bit of fur. The costume was completed in twenty-four hours, and the keloğlan returned to jail, just as he had promised.

The jailer was delighted to see him and said, "Good for you, my boy. You came back just as you promised. You can be trusted on any account."

Upon hearing that statement, the keloğlan said, favor to ask of you.

him which passage he should take, where the guards slept, and so forth. He stressed the importance of being careful about the

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guards and told him they would cut him into bits if they caught him.

[Ahmet Uysal: "Was the jail part of the sultan's palace?"]

Narrator: "Yes, they were both in the same building."]

So, the keloğlan took some sleeping powder--yes, sleeping powder--and went along his way sprinkling the powder here and there as he encountered adversaries, and finally got to the sultan's sleeping chamber. He stood by the sultan's bed, and when the sultan woke up, he told him he was the Angel of Death² (Azrail) and that he had come to take him. The sultan became very frightened, Azrail got on his knees and begged him to spare his life and promised him anything his heart might desire. As the keloğlan moved closer, all the bells on his costume jingled. The sultan was so terrified that he almost died, right there and then. The keloğlan continued frightening him and asked him for his daughter. "Otherwise I shall come every night to you until I have your soul So, if you do give me your daughter, it will be best for you. Otherwise, I shall be back each night for you."

The frightened sultan, in order to save his soul from the devil, promised to announce the giving of his daughter's hand to him the next morning.

(I should have told you that the Angel of Death asked for the

²The Moslem and Jewish Angel of Death is Azrail. He is not usually pictured as a devil but as a winged being. The devil figure often comes for the soul of a person whose death is due in the Christian tradition, as with Faust.

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sultan's daughter not for himself but for a friend who was in jail.)

[Woman interrupts to recapitulate action and remind narrator where he had left off.]

So the sultan ordered the keloğlan to be released from prison, and the keloğlan got out of jail. The sultan told him he would give his middle daughter's hand in marriage to him and that there would be ^{(celebration -- of} forty days and forty nights of celebration.

The keloğlan protested slightly to this fortune, but, of course, inwardly he was rejoicing at this turn of events. Everyone was astounded that the sultan would give his daughter to a poor keloğlan. But everyone celebrated forty days and forty nights.