

Story 2068 (Transcribed from his field tape by Ahmet Ali Arslan and used later in his unpublished dissertation.)

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### Keloğlan<sup>1</sup> and the Sheep in the Sea

Once in a small village there lived a keloğlan and his mother. There was a weekly custom in that village for each family, in turn, to give a dinner to which all of the other villagers except Keloğlan and his mother were invited. This was made possible by the fact that there were so few residents there. After this custom had gone on for some time, Keloğlan became disturbed that he and his mother were always excluded from the village dinners. One day he said, "Mother, I am unhappy that you and I are never invited to any of the village dinners. Let us kill

<sup>1</sup>The word keloğlan means bald boy. The loss of hair referred to comes not from aging but from ringworm infestation of the scalp. Ringworm is encouraged by uncleanness, and it is more common in remote rural areas where bathing facilities are minimal. In a large family the youngest children, often unattended, are prey to this disease. In folktales the keloğlan is a sympathetic figure: intelligent, courageous, and often lucky; thus, despite his handicap, he is usually successful. By selective extension, the word often has an altered connotation. Keloğlan may simply refer to the youngest child in the family, all the way from the royal household down to that of the most lowly peasant. As such, he retains all of the qualities of

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our cow and cook its meat so that we can invite everyone else to dinner. After that, they may include us in their dinners. There are 100 families in this village, and we shall announce that after 100 weeks have passed, we shall give another dinner."

"All right," said his mother

Keloğlan went out and killed the cow and cut up its meat neatly. After his mother had cooked the cow and made çöreks,<sup>2</sup> Keloğlan went from door to door inviting their neighbors to dinner. They all came to Keloğlan's garden, where they ate, drank, and enjoyed themselves.

During the following week Keloğlan waited for an invitation to the next village dinner, but no invitation arrived. The dinner this time was held only a few doors away from where Keloğlan and his mother lived, but neither of them was asked to attend it. Very disappointed, Keloğlan said, "Allah, O Allah! Why do you suppose they the bald boy except his baldness. Like everyone else, the keloğlan must have a name, but we almost never learn what it is. The word keloğlan is simply capitalized and serves as his name: Keloğlan.--Keçel is the Azeri dialect word used for keloğlan in this tale.

<sup>2</sup>A round, sweet bun, occasionally with a fruit topping.

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didn't invite us?"

"Perhaps they just forgot about inviting us," his mother said. "We may get an invitation to a later dinner."

When another week came, they were again omitted from the guest list. Keloğlan said, "This is the second time since our dinner that we have been ignored."

His mother answered, "Climb up onto the roof and walk back and forth saying loudly, 'Oho! Oho!' Perhaps one of our neighbors will hear you and be reminded to invite us to dine." But on the third week they still did not receive an invitation.

"Allah, O Allah!" Keloğlan said. "Mother should we do now?"

"I do not know. You killed our cow for nothing and now we have no milk. I used up our total supply of flour to feed the other villagers. What can we do? We shall starve to death without food."

He said, "Go and bring the hide of that cow to me. After she had brought that, he rolled it up and put it into a large bag. Loading the bag onto his donkey, Keloğlan set out for the next village. Because it

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starting to get dark by the time he arrived there, Keloğlan began knocking on door after door to ask for lodging for the night. After being refused by several residents of that village, he was finally accepted as a guest by a woman who felt sorry for him. "Come in," she said. "What do you have loaded on your donkey?"

"Nothing but a cow skin," answered Keloğlan.

"You may leave your donkey in the stable below," she said. After he had done that, he was given some bread and cheese to eat. Then, showing him where he was to spend the night, the woman said, "Go to bed now and get some sleep."

Keloğlan went to bed and pretended to be asleep, but he really remained wide awake. After awhile someone else knocked on the door and was admitted into the house. This second guest was the woman's lover. The lover said, "I am hungry."

"What shall I give you to eat?" asked the woman. "Oh, I know! I have two fresh eggs which my mother brought to me. Let me fry them for you." Hearing this, Keloğlan slipped quietly into the kitchen and took those two eggs.

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The woman went to the kitchen a few minutes later, put some butter in a pan, and placed the pan on the stove. But when she looked for the eggs, she discovered that they had somehow disappeared. "A thief must have stolen those eggs!" she exclaimed. "May his house fall down!" she said to her lover. "Leave the butter in the pan, and may it turn into a whole mound of butter. Rest for a few minutes while I run to my mother's house for more eggs."

While she was away, the butter did at first puff up into a mound, but then it melted down and began to simmer. Keloğlan quietly took the pan of butter and poured it into the open mouth of the dozing lover. The lover made only a gig, gig, gig sound and died. Keloğlan then returned to bed.

When the woman came back, she was surprised to find there was no butter at all in the pan. Annoyed, she asked her lover, "What did you do? How could you eat that hot butter? Get up and go home!" It was only then that she discovered that her lover was dead. She went right away and shook Keloğlan, saying, "Boy, wake up!" When Keloğlan pretended to be asleep, she repeated more loudly,



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"Boy, wake up!"

He asked, "Huh-h-h?"

She said, "Wake up! The son of the muhtar<sup>3</sup> was killed and dropped into my house through the chimney.<sup>4</sup> Get up and quietly take him back to his home."

"What will you pay me for doing that?" he asked

"I shall pay you 100 liras," she answered

"Give me the money now, but leave me alone a little while longer." After she had given him the money, Keloğlan went to sleep.

As dawn approached, the woman grew more and more concerned about getting rid of the corpse of her lover. She awakened her other guest and said, "May Keloğlan live long! Here is another 100 liras for you to take the body out of this house at once."

"I shall do that right away, but I shall need some helva<sup>5</sup> before I do." After the woman had very quickly

<sup>3</sup>The muhtar is the headman of a village, the only elected official that many rural residents see. All of the other officials are appointees of one or another federal ministry.

<sup>4</sup>Chimneys of Turkish rural homes are often very large. At their base they may have a fireplace and an oven which together may be 12 feet in width. The chimney top may be a meter square.

<sup>5</sup>A popular Turkish confection, helva is made of sesame oil, flour or cereal, and honey

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made some helva, Keloğlan placed the corpse on his donkey and tied him there with cords so that he sat upright and looked as if he were alive. Then he placed the dish of helva in the corpse's lap. By then it was dawn, and farmers and their servants were beginning to go to the fields to work on the crops. As Keloğlan approached a wheat field, he turned the donkey loose, while he himself dropped some distance behind. Because the donkey was hungry, it went at once into the wheat field and began to eat the grain.

When the owner of that wheat field saw this, he became very angry. He shouted to the man on the donkey's back, "Hey, you son of a donkey,<sup>6</sup> why are you letting your animal eat my wheat?" Unaware that the rider was dead, the farmer shouted, "Don't you hear what I am saying, you son of a donkey?" When there was still no sponse from the rider, the farmer struck the corpse on the head with his spade, and the dead body fell to earth.

Keloğlan then came forward quickly and said to the

<sup>6</sup>This is especially abusive language. Perhaps the next-to-the-worst slur one can cast at a Turk is to call him a donkey; the worst slur is to call him a donkey and the son of a donkey.

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farmer, "You killed this man. I saw you do it, and I shall make a complaint against you to the authorities. Why did you have to kill him? I should have been willing to pay for the small amount of wheat eaten by his donkey."

The farmer was shocked by this and pleaded, "Please don't file a complaint against me. If you will say nothing about this incident, I shall give you whatever you wish."

"I want 10,000 liras. If you do not pay me that amount, I shall go to the police and file a report against you."

"All right," said the farmer. He returned to his home, got 10,000 liras, and paid that large amount to Keloğlan.

Keloğlan took the money and started back to his own village. Along the way he buried the corpse, and then he himself mounted the donkey and proceeded. When he arrived there, he spoke very unpleasantly to other residents. He said, "Hey, you sons of dogs, how badly you have treated me! I killed my cow and invited all of you to a large dinner at my home. But how did you behave toward me? None of you invited me and my



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mother to the community dinners that you gave, but I no longer care, for I have become rich. I took the hide of the cow I had slaughtered and presented it to the padishah as a gift. He was so pleased that he gave me all this money, more than 10,000 liras."

After Keloğlan had left them, the other villagers said to one another, "What are we waiting for? Let each of us also take a cowhide to the padishah." Each villager slaughtered a cow, skinned it, and took its hide to the palace. When 100 men crowded around the palace door, holding up their cowhides, the guards shouted, "Go away. The padishah does not need any cowhides." When they did not leave quickly enough, the guards arrested two or three of them, and then the rest fled.

When they got back to their village, they decided to kill Keloğlan. But Keloğlan stayed inside his house and kept the door locked. They shouted, "Open the door! We shall kill you. We followed your example and took cowhides to the palace, but the guards prevented us from seeing the padishah. They threatened our lives and drove us away, saying that the ruler had no need for cowhides. Why did you lie to us?"

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But Keloğlan did not answer, and he kept his door locked. Unable to avenge themselves in any other way all of the men in the village defecated into Keloğlan's chimney. Keloğlan put all of this dung in a bag, loaded it on his donkey, and set out to seek his fortune. After traveling for some distance, he came upon the encampment of a caravan of merchants. It was early evening by then and Keloğlan decided to spend the night a short distance from this group without getting too close to them. He stayed about 500 meters away from their encampment.

The merchants saw him, of course, and they asked each other, "Who is that man over there? Let us go and find out what he is doing there. He must see our large encampment, with all its horses and camels. Why doesn't he come and join us?"

The caravan leader sent a couple of men to talk with Keloğlan. When they got close to him, they said, "Selam-ünaleyküm."

"Aleykümselam,"<sup>7</sup> responded Keloğlan.

<sup>7</sup>This is a traditional exchange of greetings between Muslims not well acquainted with each other. It means roughly May peace be unto you/And may peace be unto you too. If Selamünaleyküm is not responded to, the speaker should be wary of the one so addressed.

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"Who are you, brother? What are you doing here?"

Keloğlan answered, "I am a merchant, like each of you, but I am unwilling to come any closer to your camp because my donkey is carrying a very valuable cargo. I am afraid that in a crowd of people someone might steal it from me."

When the two men returned to their encampment, they reported to their leader what Keloğlan had said. "Leave him alone for now," said the leader. "After he has gone to sleep, take a roll of fabric and exchange it for whatever it is that he has in the bag on his donkey."

Keloğlan lay upon the ground and pretended to be asleep. When he saw a man cautiously approaching him, he pretended to snore loudly. The man from the merchant camp took the bag of dung and left in its place a roll of excellent fabric. After waiting until everything was quiet at the caravan camp, Keloğlan very quietly slipped away and returned to his village.

On the following morning Keloğlan unrolled a couple of meters of the fabric on his doorstep so that passersby would surely see it. When several villagers had been

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attracted to it, Keloğlan said to them, "You sons of dogs, did you think that you were harming me by defecating into my house through the chimney? You helped me instead of harming me! I took your dung to the padishah, and he was so pleased to receive it that he gave me this roll of very expensive fabric in exchange for it.<sup>8</sup> Look at it! It is so precious that it would cost 500 liras to buy such cloth!"

Amazed by this news, the villagers began at once to dig dung from the toilets behind their houses. After every man had filled at least one bag with dung, all set out for the palace. When they arrived there, they were stopped by the guards, who asked, "What are you doing here?"

"Each of us has brought a gift for the padishah."

"What are those gifts?" asked the guards.

"They are bags of human dung." When this information was delivered to the padishah, he ordered that all of the villagers be arrested and put in jail. The guards

<sup>8</sup>In some variants of this tale the trickster makes more convincing his account of the padishah's interest in human dung by telling the villagers that the ruler is having a dung palace constructed and needs more building materials. See ATON No. 231.

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were able to catch only five or six of the peasants, however, and the rest all fled back to their village. There they began at once to chase Keloğlan, for this time they were really determined to kill him.

Keloğlan ran out of the village very fast and managed to keep well ahead of his pursuers. After awhile he met a shepherd leading a large flock of sheep along that road. The shepherd said, "Selamünaleyküm."

"Aleykümselam."

"Brother, why are you running so fast?" asked the shepherd

"Why shouldn't I run fast? The padishah insists that I should marry his daughter, but I do not want to marry her. He has sent out people to catch me and take me to the palace, but I am trying hard to escape them."

"I should like very much to marry the padishah's daughter," said the shepherd. "Why don't you change clothes with me and let your pursuers capture me? You can take this flock of sheep, for when I begin living in the palace, I shall have no need for them."

After he had dressed in the shepherd's clothes, Keloğlan led the sheep away and started back to



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village with them. The angry mob which had been chasing him grabbed the shepherd wearing Keloğlan's clothes and threw him from a cliff into the sea. The waves were high there, and the former shepherd was quickly drowned.

When Keloğlan's enemies returned to their village and saw him leading a flock of 500 sheep, they were astonished. "What is this, Keloğlan?" they asked.

"You sons of dogs, you threw me from a cliff into the water below. There are thousands of sheep grazing on the bottom of the sea at that place, and I was able to lead 500 of them out onto dry land. I am just now getting home with them."

At first the villagers did not want to believe him because he had deceived them twice already. "How else could I have gotten 500 fine sheep?" he asked them. And no one could deny that he did indeed have 500 excellent sheep.

Those who heard Keloğlan's account went to the cliff and jumped into the sea. All of them expected to lead a flock of sheep out of the water, but all of them drowned instead. Then an old woman approached Keloğlan and said, "Keloğlan, I should like to have my son own a flock of

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sheep too. Will you please take him to the cliff and throw him into the sea too?"

Keloğlan did what she had asked him to do. As the woman's son was drowning, he made a gig, gig, gig sound in his throat. "What is he saying?" asked his mother

"He is asking you what you want--whether you would prefer to have male or female sheep."

"I want female sheep," she answered. "Male sheep give no milk."

More than half of the men in that village had drowned, and the remainder hated Keloğlan even more than they had before. Keloğlan and his mother decided to leave that village and live elsewhere. And they lived elsewhere very comfortably, for there was good income from a flock of 500 sheep.