

Story 2081 (Dictated)

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The Shepherd and the Black Sheep

Once there was a very poor shepherd who was in love with the daughter of his bey.¹ Although the bey's friends tried to persuade him to give his daughter to the shepherd, the bey refused to do so. When the shepherd continued to ask for permission to marry the girl, the bey at last assigned the shepherd a task. If the shepherd could fulfill that task, he would win the hand of the bey's daughter

As the shepherd listened, the bey said, "On a very hot day you are to take to the brook for water my large flock. While all the other sheep are drinking,

¹In the Republic of Turkey there are no beys. This old term refers to a Turkish aristocrat of the Ottoman, Seljuk, and pre-Seljuk times, and goes back to the 8th or 9th century--and perhaps earlier. The bey was a landed nobleman, sometimes wealthy and often politically powerful. In the 10th-century Book of Dede Korkut he was a tribal chief or one of his close associates. The Turkish bey was roughly equivalent to a British lord or baron.

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you are to prevent my one black sheep, a bad-tempered creature, from drinking by means of a tune played upon your kaval.² If you can do this, I shall give you my daughter in marriage; if you fail to do it, I shall have you executed."

Almost hopeless, the shepherd nevertheless attempted to carry out this task on the next hot day. As the flock approached the brook, the shepherd played upon his kaval a tune directing the black sheep not to drink any of the water in that stream. The black sheep was just as thirsty as the other sheep, but it was restrained from drinking by the musical command directed at it.

I do not really know what it was that prevented the black sheep from drinking--whether it was the will of Allah or the power of love. But, anyway, the black

²A fipple flute (similar to a flageolet or recorder). It is a favorite Turkish folk instrument, and especially so among Turkish shepherds. Each shepherd supposedly has a set of tunes that serve as signals (like bugle calls in the army) to order the flock to graze, to drink, to gather round the shepherd, and to fold for the night. To those unacquainted with pastoral life, the effect of these tunes may seem magical.

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sheep did not drink even one swallow of water, and this love story ended happily.³

³The young narrator presents here a greatly truncated version of a much fuller tale which she had heard. Because this tale was then new to the collector, he did not query her about omitted passages. See ATON No. 387 for a much fuller and much richer variant taped later, in 1972. --See ATON Notes, Vol. XI, for further amplification of ATON No. 2081 and for scholarly references to the tale in general.