

Story 2199 (1962 Tape 75)

Narrator: Unidentified

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Ankara Province
and of Turkey

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Man Persecuted Because of Wife's
Great Beauty

There once lived a young man named Hasan who was a fisherman. He made his living by catching fish and then selling them in the marketplace. One day he caught three fish, one of which was so attractive that he decided not to sell it but to keep it for himself. He sold two of the fish, but he took the third one home with him. When he arrived there, he placed that special fish in a wooden pot of water, but then he forgot about it completely.

When Hasan returned home from work on the following day, he had a surprise awaiting him. He discovered that his ordinarily unkempt house had been put in order and thoroughly cleaned. In fact, everything had been so completely polished that it shone. On the next evening he not only found the house clean, but he also found a steaming meal on the table awaiting his arrival. Hasan exclaimed, "Allah, O Allah, what is going on here? I have no family or relatives in this world, but I have here a

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feast prepared for me. I have never before tasted such delicious food. My door has been locked tightly during my absence, but by some means my house has been cleaned and my food has been cooked. How could all that happen?" After this had continued for several days, Hasan said to himself, "I simply must find out what is happening here!"

On the following day Hasan only pretended to leave home. Instead, he hid himself in the house so that he could observe what took place there. After awhile he saw the special fish jump out of the pot into which he put it, but as soon as the fish struck the floor, it became a very beautiful girl, the prettiest girl that Hasan had ever seen. As she began to do her household chores, Hasan began, secretly and silently, to edge toward the pot. If he could destroy that pot before the girl could return to it, she would have to remain a human being. But the girl also knew this, and when she saw Hasan moving toward the pot, she exclaimed, "Please do not destroy my pot!" Paying no attention to what she said, the young man grabbed the pot and threw it into the flames of the fireplace. "Alas!" said the girl. "Because you destroyed my hiding place, you will soon undergo a series of sufferings."

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This occurred on the day when the padishah was riding through the streets of the city to examine the living conditions of his subjects. He and his group rode here, they rode there, and just by chance they rode through the section of the city where Hasan lived. As he passed Hasan's house, the ruler saw the beautiful fish girl. He took just one look at that girl, and then he fainted, falling from his horse to the ground. His attendants rushed to the padishah, picked him up, and carried him back to the palace. They did not understand what had happened to him, but grew increasingly alarmed as he remained unconscious for 24 hours

When the padishah finally woke up, one of his viziers asked, "What happened to you, my padishah?"

"What is the name of that part of the city where I fainted and fell from my horse?"

"It is known as Fishermen's Quarters."

"And who owns that house before which I fainted?"

"That house belongs to Fisherman Hasan."

The padishah then called in all of his viziers and had all other people removed from that room. He then said to those present, "There is nothing seriously wrong with

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me. I saw an extremely beautiful girl looking out of the window of Hasan's house. Never during my whole life until then had I seen such a beautiful person. If you can find some way to get that girl for me, your positions will be secure, but if you fail to get her, you will all lose your jobs."

The viziers went apart and talked about this problem. "What can we do?" one of them asked

"To whom should we go for advice?" asked another

A third said, "Let us require Fisherman Hasan to bring to the palace three eggs. When he breaks the first egg, a black donkey will come forth from it. When he breaks the second egg, a white donkey will emerge from it. When the third egg is broken, a red donkey should appear. If he produce three donkeys in that way, it will meet with our approval, but if he fails to do so, we shall have him executed. Then the padishah will easily be able to take Hasan's wife." They called Hasan to the palace and explained to him the tasks he must complete in order to remain alive. They also told him what would happen if he failed to complete those tasks.

Hasan was very sad as he left the palace, and he

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arrived home in deep thought. His wife observed this and asked, "What is the matter, Hasan?"

Hasan told her the orders he had been given. He then asked, "Is it possible to carry out such orders? If I cannot carry them out, the viziers will take you away from me and give you to the padishah."

The girl responded, "Hasan, I told you that you would suffer if you destroyed the wooden pot in which I lived when I first came here, but you refused to pay any attention to me."

They then went to bed, but an hour or two before dawn the girl awakened Hasan. She asked him, "Do you remember exactly where you were standing when you caught me in your net?"

"Yes, I do."

"Well, go to that spot again. Cast your net into the sea three times, and as you are doing so, say, 'Your sister requests that you bring me three special eggs in a small box.'"

Hasan left home and went to the place on the shore from which he had caught the fish girl. He lowered his net and said, "Your sister asks for three special eggs in a

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box." Then he waited. Soon a box rose to the surface of the sea, and a wave carried that box into Hasan's net. He picked up the box carefully and started walking homeward slowly

Near a cemetery along the way he came to a pasture where farm animals were grazing. This reminded him that he was supposed to be carrying three donkeys within the three eggs in the small box he was taking to the palace. He thought, "I don't believe that donkeys will come forth from those eggs. Let me test one of them." Taking an egg from the box, he cracked its shell against a gravestone. Suddenly a black donkey sprang forth and ran among the farm animals, scattering them briefly. This pleased Hasan so much that he picked up a second egg and prepared to crack it too against the gravestone.

At that moment the fish girl appeared and shouted, "Don't do that, Hasan! Please don't do that. Take the eggs to the yard of the palace, where some of the padishah's animals are grazing."

Hasan followed her directions. He went to the palace gardens and announced that he had completed his assigned task and returned. "Very well," said one of the viziers "Let us see the eggs you got."

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Hasan took one of the eggs out of the box and broke its shell. A red donkey leaped out. It ran among the padishah's horses braying and kicking. When the viziers saw what was happening, they shouted, "Enough, Hasan, enough! We do not need to see any more of those special donkeys!"

Hearing that, Hasan left the palace and returned home. He said to his wife, "My task has been completed."

In the meantime, the padishah had again assembled his viziers. He said to them, "Find some other way to get that woman for me. If you do not do so, consider yourselves already dead."

The viziers withdrew and consulted each other about this matter. They said to each other, "What should we do? How can we handle this difficulty?" After more discussion, they made a decision. "Let us call this foolish fisherman and order him to bring to the palace a newborn baby who can talk with us." They thought this was impossible

When Hasan was summoned to the palace this time, he asked, "Yes? What is it that you want me to do now?"

"Hasan, we want you to bring here a newborn baby. Bring it into the presence of the padishah, where it will speak clearly, tell lies, and deceive all who hear its

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comments. Everything will go well for you if you can do that. If you cannot do it, you will lose both your wife and your life.

Again Hasan returned home in sadness and deep thought. His wife asked, "Well, what is it this time, Hasan?"

Hasan answered, "This time the viziers want me to bring a newborn baby which can talk and tell them lies."

His wife responded, "I told you that if you destroyed the wooden box in which I lived briefly, you would bring upon yourself great trouble and suffering." They went to bed without further discussion, but before dawn the fish girl awakened Hasan. She said to him, "Go to such and such a place along the shore and let your hands fall into the water. As you do so, cry out, 'Your sister wants a newborn baby that entered this world today. She will later send the baby back safely to you.' Then wait there patiently for a little while."

Hasan followed these directions carefully. He went to the place on the shore which she had indicated, and he repeated exactly the words she had ordered him to say. After he had waited briefly, he saw a box rise to the surface of the sea. Waves pushed the box carefully to the place where

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he was standing.

Hasan took the box and started his return trip. As he was passing the cemetery, Hasan heard a voice saying, "Please, uncle, I need to pee." Hasan looked to the right and to the left, but he could see no one near him. Then listening more carefully, he realized that the voice was coming from the box. As soon as Hasan opened the box, the baby took a deep breath and said, "Uncle, have you never seen a baby before? I was about to die for lack of air in that box. Put me down. I need to pee." But after Hasan put the baby on the ground, it said, "I am too embarrassed to pee right in front of you. Move farther away."

"You are too young to feel embarrassment," said Hasan. But the baby ran away and hid itself. Hasan could not see where he had gone, and so he began to search for him intently. Finally seeing it behind a gravestone, Hasan caught it and put it back in the box.

Hasan then continued homeward, and he was almost there when the baby began to cry out again. He called, "Let me out of here I must get out of this box."

Uncertain about what to do, Hasan released the baby. The infant ran about here and there with its navel dragging

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on the ground. People in the area who observed this could not really believe what they were seeing.

Running this way and that way, the baby reached the palace, much to the amazement of the padishah and the viziers. The baby climbed the palace stairs and entered the presence of the padishah. Going to the center of the room, the baby said, "Selamünaleyküm."¹ But so frozen in astonishment were all the others in the room that no one made the proper response to the baby's greeting. The baby then asked, "Am I in the wrong place? Is this the middle of the forest--or what?" He began to pee again, this time right in front of the padishah.

One of the viziers cried out, Stop! Stop!"

The baby responded, "Are you here? Is there a human being here in this room?"

"What do you think you are doing?" demanded the vizier.

"Nothing," said the baby. "I greeted all of you when

¹Selamünaleyküm/Aleykümselam--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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I entered the room, but no one had the courtesy to respond. I seemed to be all alone here, even though I had supposed that I had come to a ruler's palace.

The attendants brought a small chair for the baby to sit upon. Then they asked him to tell a good story which was actually a lie.

Addressing the ruler, the baby said, "My padishah when I was 15 or 16 years old, I raised a crop of water-melons. The first two melons to ripen were gems. I kept them for myself, eating one immediately and setting the other aside. After harvesting a good crop of ordinary melons I sat down to enjoy the second of my gems.

"After sharpening my knife, I cut into that special melon, but unfortunately the knife slipped from my hand and sank into the melon. That knife had been a gift to me from my grandfather, and I valued it so highly that I immediately jumped into the melon in an effort to recover it. But alas, my padishah, the interior of that melon was far larger than I could have dreamed. It was like a city filled with streets and houses and marketplaces."²

The viziers agreed among themselves that the baby

²Accounts of incredibly large vegetables are common in folktales. See Aarne-Thompson type L960D and Eberhard-Borataw types 358 and 363.

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had fulfilled the request made to him and so they excused him. "All right, son, you may leave now if you wish."

After the baby had disappeared, the padishah again urged the viziers to find a way to deliver Hasan's wife to him. He said, "I am losing patience with you. If you cannot devise some effective solution for this situation, I shall find new attendants. I shall leave you here alone for an hour, and when I return, I shall expect to have you present me with a plan that cannot fail."

Most of the hour was spent examining this idea and that idea, none of which seemed very promising. Finally they accepted a suggestion from one of the older viziers. He said, "Let us entrust Hasan with the care of forty bits for a day. He should take them to a forest early in the morning to feed. After herding them and guarding them all day long, he should return all forty of them to the palace just as darkness falls. If he fails to accomplish this task, we shall have him beheaded."

After receiving the padishah's approval of this plan, they summoned Hasan to the palace and explained it to him. "Hasan, tomorrow morning we shall turn over to you forty rabbits. You will take them first to the forest to feed

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After that you will herd and closely guard them all long. Then just as darkness is falling, you should return all forty rabbits in perfect condition to the palace courtyard. If even one rabbit is lost or injured during the day, you will be beheaded for your carelessness. The padi-shah will then be given your beautiful wife."

As he had done after receiving his previous tasks, Hasan returned home in sadness and despair. Sensing Hasan's discouragement, his wife asked, "What do they want you to do this time?"

"I am in great trouble again, and I am afraid that this time I shall not be able to overcome the difficulty. Hasan then explained to his wife the latest task which the viziers had given to him. They then went to bed, as she had previously done, the fish girl awakened Hasan shortly before dawn and gave him instructions for the day ahead.

She said, "Go again to the place on the shore where you netted me. You do not have to dip your hands into the water this time. Simply say, 'Your sister wants to see Keloğlan.'³ She needs to talk with him, but afterwards

³The word keloğlan means bald boy, but the baldness is not that caused by aging. It is caused by ringworm infestation of the child's scalp. This disease often strikes younger

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will send him back.' You need not wait for Keloğlan to appear. Instead, return here.

Hasan went to the special place along the shoreline and called out, "Your sister wants to see Keloğlan. She needs to talk with him, but after their conversation has ended, she will send him back to you." Having delivered that message, Hasan started out for home again. When he

there, he discovered that Keloğlan had arrived there ahead of him and was already talking to his wife. She told Keloğlan everything that was involved and told him to be at the palace courtyard later that morning.

Pretending that he was Hasan, Keloğlan went to the palace, greeted the ruler, and said, "Yes, my padishah, I am ready to undertake the task assigned to me, but I prefer to be disguised as a keloğlan while I am doing it."

and perhaps improperly tended children of larger peasant families. It is encouraged by uncleanliness. Until recently, rural families did not have modern means of bathing. In folktales the keloğlan is a definite personality type, a winner and a sympathetic figure. In tales the keloğlan image is often used as a disguise. Whatever a keloğlan's first name may be, we seldom learn it; the word keloğlan is simply capitalized to provide a quasiname, Keloğlan. The fish girl's request for help from her own supernatural world is not unusual, but why the helpful agent from that world should be a keloğlan is not explained. Irrational from a narrative point of view is Keloğlan's almost complete replacement of Hasan in the conflict with the padishah

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"Very well," answered the ruler. "My viziers give you the rabbits you are to tend today."

The viziers gave Keloğlan forty rabbits. They said, "Take these rabbits to such and such forest on so and so mountain and feed them.

Keloğlan followed these directions, and when he reached the feeding place, he tied one of the rabbits to a bush, thinking that the others would not stray away from captive. To encourage all of them to remain at that spot, he placed a spell upon them with the charming music he played upon his kaval.⁴

In the late afternoon the son of the grand vizier rode up to that place on his horse and called, "Selamüna-leyküm, Keloğlan

"Aleykümselam," responded Keloğlan.

"How are you doing, Keloğlan? I came out here to hunt but so far I have seen no quarry. I do not wish to return to the palace empty-handed. Give me a rabbit so that I shall have some evidence of being a successful hunter."

⁴The kaval is a fipple flute similar to the Western instrument called a recorder. It is often played by shepherds who use its magical qualities to influence the behavior of their flocks.

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"Alas, vizier's son, I cannot do that. They counted forty rabbits for me to herd today. Unless I return forty of them this evening, I shall be beheaded. I cannot, therefore, give you one of them."

"That will be no problem," said the vizier's son "I shall be the one who will count the pack of rabbits tonight, and I shall simply skip one number. Don't worry."

"No, that is not possible," answered Keloğlan. When he was offered a large bribe for one of the rabbits, Keloğlan answered, "No, there is nothing that I can accept, neither money nor anything else."

The son of the vizier thought, "Who would know that a vizier's son did such a thing? The padishah promised to give his daughter to me if I could get the wife of Fisher-

Hasan for him. One of these rabbits must somehow be

But as soon as the vizier's son turned around and seized a rabbit, Keloğlan took a burning stick from his campfire and struck him with it. That boy from the palace

to his horse, mounted it, and cried out, "I am burning! I am burning!"

When the son of the vizier reached the palace, the padishah asked him, "Well, what happened?"

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"I got it! I got a rabbit!"

As evening approached, Keloğlan prepared to return to the palace. He counted his rabbits, and there were 38, 39, 40. Among them, however, there was one wild rabbit. He took the pack of rabbits back to the palace, where the padishah, the grand vizier, and that vizier's son began to count them--38, 39, 40. The padishah objected, saying to the boy, "But you told me you had acquired one of these rabbits."

"Here it is," said the vizier's son. "I got this from Keloğlan. I am telling you the truth."

"Get out of here! You are a liar anyway," said his father. "Tomorrow I shall get one of those rabbits, and you will see."

On the following morning Keloğlan was again entrusted with the forty rabbits. When he reached the feeding place in the forest, he tied one of the rabbits to a bush, built a fire, and put a stick in that fire. He then climbed a tree and played magic tunes on his kaval.

In the late afternoon the grand vizier came riding along on his horse. He approached Keloğlan and called out, "Selamünaleyküm."

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"Aleykümselam," responded Keloğlan

"I am the grand vizier," said the rider. "I have been hunting today, but I have not killed any game or even seen any worth killing. I do not want to return to the palace empty-handed. Give me a rabbit to take back as evidence that I have been hunting.

"No, I cannot do that. These rabbits were counted before I left the palace this morning, and there were forty of them. When I return to the palace this evening, they will be counted again, and unless there are still forty in my pack, I shall be in serious trouble. I am responsible for those rabbits

"Don't worry," answered the vizier. "I can skip a number when I count the rabbits this evening."

"No, no! You shouldn't skip anything. I cannot accept that offer."

"You are very rude, and you should be ashamed of yourself," said the vizier.

"I do not agree with that," said Keloğlan, and when he saw the vizier grab a rabbit, he pulled the stick from the fire and struck the back of the thief with it--just as he had earlier struck that thief's son. But the vizier

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mounted his horse and escaped.

When the vizier announced at the palace that he had brought one of the rabbits from Keloğlan's pack, the padishah was greatly pleased. He felt confident that his problem had been solved, for he could not imagine that a grand vizier would lie about such a matter.

As evening approached, Keloğlan counted the rabbits in his pack, and the number came to 38, 39, 40, including two wild rabbits. He then took the pack to the palace where both the vizier and the padishah counted them again, ending with number 38, number 39, and number 40. Turning to the vizier, the ruler asked, "Didn't you tell me that you had gotten a rabbit from Keloğlan's pack?"

The grand vizier protested, "I did get one from his pack! I am not lying Here it is!"

"Hah!" answered the padishah. "We have reached the point at which I myself shall have to take one of those forty rabbits! You will see how many rabbits Keloğlan will return with tomorrow at this hour!"

On the third morning Keloğlan again left the palace with forty rabbits. Again he went to the forest to feed those animals, and when he got there, he followed the same

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procedure he had used before. He tethered one of the rabbits to a bush to keep the others from scattering. He built a fire and put a long stick in it. After that he spent his time playing magical tunes on his kaval.

As the afternoon was passing, Keloğlan saw the padishah approaching. "Selamünaleyküm, Keloğlan," the ruler called.

"Aleykümselam, my great padishah," Keloğlan responded.

The padishah used the same approach to Keloğlan that the vizier and his son had used. He said, "I have had an unsuccessful day of hunting, and I have no game to show for all my efforts. That is why I have come here. If you will give me one of your rabbits, I can take it to the palace and display it there with pride."

Keloğlan responded, "No, I cannot give you a rabbit. The rabbits will be counted when I return to the palace this evening. If one is missing, I shall pay for that loss with my head."

"Don't worry about that, son. I shall do the counting at the palace, and I shall count one of the rabbits twice. No one else will know the difference

But Keloğlan refused. "No, no," he said. "That is impossible."

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The ruler persisted, "Son, if you will give me a rabbit, I shall pay you so much money that you will never any more for the rest of your life. I shall pay it to you in golden liras." When the guardian of the rabbits still refused to yield, the padishah said, "You are only a keloğlan. No one else will offer you so much. You should be ashamed to treat me so rudely, for I am the padishah of this land." When Keloğlan remained silent, the ruler pondered and pondered upon this matter. Then he seized a rabbit and mounted his horse to flee, but as he was doing so, he was struck on the back by the flaming stick Keloğlan pulled from the fire.

When Keloğlan arrived at the palace that evening, his pack of rabbits was counted not by just one person but by three: the padishah, the grand vizier, and the vizier's son. Before witnesses they had to admit that Keloğlan had returned from the forest with forty rabbits, though they not know that three of those animals were wild rabbits.

The padishah then issued an ultimatum to his viziers. "You will have one more chance to solve our difficulty. If this last attempt fails, do not report any longer to the palace for work, for I shall have hired new viziers.

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The viziers agreed on a means of ending the long ordeal. They announced, "Tomorrow morning four people will ascend the minaret of the mosque near the palace. All but one of those four people will tell a lie." Town criers were sent out to invite all of the residents of the city to attend that occasion

Just after sunrise the next day the people assembled to witness the final act in the conflict over the beautiful fish girl. Keloğlan, the padishah, the grand vizier, and the vizier's son ascended the minaret. Keloğlan addressed the crowd. He said, "Hey, great people! The grand vizier's son, then the grand vizier, and finally the padishah each asked me for a rabbit to take home after their unsuccessful hunting trips. When I refused to give a rabbit to the vizier's son, he tried to bribe me. After I had refused his offer, I struck him on the back with a burning stick. I treated the boy's father, the grand vizier, the same way on the second day. When the padishah came to me on the third day and offered me a great amount of gold for a rabbit, I branded his back also with a flaming stick. If you do not believe what I have just told you, you can find your own proof by examining the burned

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backs of these three liars."⁵

⁵The narrator lost control of his story when he introduced Keloğlan into the action. After Keloğlan appears in the tale, the two principal characters (Hasan and his supernatural wife) never reenter the action.