

Story 2077 (1967 Tape 1)

Narrator: Aşık¹ Dursun Cevlani

(Story learned from Aşık
Mehmet Ali Ekber, of
Tufargan kaza, Tabriz
Province, Iran)

Location: Kars, capital of
Kars Province

Date: January 4, 1967

The Story of Bey² Böyrek

Hey, Ağas³! I will tell you the story of Bey Böyrek. What day of Ramazan⁴ is this? It is exactly the eleventh day of Ramazan. Yes, there are many days more to come. If God allows us good health, I will tell you a few more stories.

Let me say this at the beginning:

We cannot beautify an ugly one;
It is unfair to seek an ugly one;

¹ Aşık is used as a term for singing poets, the minstrels or bards of medieval time. The word is also used for person who is in love with somebody.

² In Republican Turkey there are no beys. The term refers to a Turkish aristocrat of 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.

³ An ağa is a rural landowner, sometimes wealthy, often powerful. The word does not indicate an official title but describes an economic status. They are often the principal employers of farm workers, and they are often viewed by their employees as harsh, driving, and abusive. The term ağa is also used in a complimentary way, as an honorific, for a distinguished or just older person than the one using the term. Thus an older brother is called ağa bey by his younger siblings. Ağa bey may be used as a deferential term to one older or more prestigious than the speaker. A taxi driver may refer to his passenger as ağa bey; a salesman speaking to a male customer may call him ağa bey.

⁴ Ramazan (English, Ramadan) is a month during which faithful Moslems fast. Between sunrise and sunset nothing-- not even a drop of water-- passes their lips. They do, however, break the fast after sunset and eat plentifully during the night. Stores are not open at night, and so most families stock supplies ahead.

Srory 2077

The days are coming and passing by,
So we'll not lengthen a little one⁵.

Let us begin our story.

A shah was ruling the country of Yemen, and Egypt was ruled by a bey named Ak Kavak. Now, our story begins in Yemen.

The shah of Yemen had a vizier called Kel⁶ Vizier, the son of Baltacı. The shah of Yemen was very rich, with wealth enough to feed all the people in the world. He had a daughter, but no son. Because he had no son, the shah grieved most of the time. One day, the shah was sitting on the palace balcony with his vizier, and they were looking around. In a few minutes, schoolchildren appeared on the street going back to their homes from school. They were playing, running, even wrestling as they walked on the street. Upon seeing the children, the shah took a very deep breath and said, "Oof! Oof!⁷" which turned the mirror of the heavens black⁸.

⁵ The poem here is not sung, but simply told by the narrator. It is told as the beginning sentence of a tale to replace the "once upon a time" type formulaic expression which takes the audience to the world of story from the world of storytelling time. The first two lines of the poem are not very well attached to the last two lines. In the Turkish storytelling tradition, the narrators find this kind of poem or saying useful as an announcement that they are beginning their stories.

⁶ Kel or 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 uncleanliness, and it is more common in remote rural areas where bathing facilities are minimal. In a large family the younger 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 the qualities of 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.

⁷ This is an expression of sadness or exhaustion.

⁸ An idiomatic expression suggesting that even the sky and other elements of nature reflect human grief.

Story 2077

“Look at me, my shah,” said the vizier. “There are some people who do not have food either for dinner or for breakfast. You have wealth enough for all the people in this world. What else do you need which makes you take a deep breath like that?”

The shah thought, “Look at him! Look at this crazy man!” and then he replied to his vizier, “Yes. I have much wealth and many goods, but who will be in charge of them when I die? I have no son who will keep my palace open, provide water to one who gets thirsty, and keep a fire burning in my fireplace so my chimney will still send smoke⁹. Yes, I have a daughter. She will get married to someone and keep her husband’s house open. How I wish God had granted me a son!”

“May God grant you a son, God willing,” said the vizier. Then he continued, “God is generous. Do not worry so much, my shah. It is in God’s hand. God gives trouble and the solution together.”

“That is right,” the shah replied.

A few more days passed, and once again the shah and the vizier were together. The shah said to his vizier, “Let us disguise ourselves as ordinary people and take a walk on the streets of our city to see in what condition the people are living. We have never done that before; we have never seen the living conditions of our people. We have never taken a walk in disguise. If we do not see the real-life situation of our people, what good is there in my being shah and your being my vizier?”

Having decided to go in disguise, they put on dervish¹⁰ costumes and then began walking like ordinary people on the streets. They walked on the streets until noon. When it was time for the noon prayers, they had reached the shah’s rose garden at the edge of the city. They entered the garden, where they first took their ritual ablutions¹¹

⁹ As in the Book of Dede Korkut and other traditional works, a fire on the hearth and smoke coming from the chimney signal that the family is alive; absence of those indicates the end of that family.

¹⁰ Dervish is a term for the people of any sects in Islam in Ottoman time. They were to perform prayers all the time and did not seek for worldly wealth. Thus they were considered poor and everybody provided them food and clothing.

¹¹ According to Islam, before performing prayers ordered by God, a person has to take ritual ablution. The ablutions referred to here are, of course, the ritual washing before each namaz service, whether at the mosque or in private. Hands, elbows, face,

Story 2077

and then prayed. When they were about to finish their prayers, a dervish appeared there. Upon seeing a dervish there, both of them said, "Selamünaleyküm" to the dervish.

The dervish replied, "Aleykümselam¹², shah of Yemen and your vizier."

Astonished by his response, the shah asked, "Well, we are also dervishes like you. Tell us which one of us is the shah and which is the vizier."

The dervish, pointing at the shah, said "You are the shah and he is the vizier."

The shah asked, "How did you know that I am the shah and he is the vizier?"

The dervish answered, "My shah, you are so new in this world. So many people have lived in and passed away from this world. You are a man who has been here just a few days. I could even provide you information on Süleyman the son of David."

Upon hearing the words of the dervish who stood before him, the shah said, "Since you knew that I am the shah and he is my vizier, then you must know the cure for my worry."

As the dervish suggested, they raised their hands upwards and prayed to God, and then put their hands on their faces as they finished their prayer. The dervish then reached to an apple tree from which he picked a ripe apple. He handed it to the shah, saying, "My shah, take this apple. When you are at your palace, perform your midnight prayer and beg a son from God before you go to sleep. Then cut the apple into two pieces; eat half of it, and have your wife eat the other half. Also make sure that your mare in the stable of your palace eats the peelings of the apple. After nine months, nine days, and nine hours pass¹³, you will have a son, God willing. Also, your mare will give birth to a male colt. Name the boy 'Bey Böyrek' and the colt 'Bengiboz.' The colt will have wings and, God willing, will be able to fly. It will fly wherever it is needed." After these instructions, the dervish said, "Look at those people coming."

mouth, nose, ears, and feet are all washed three times, and neck and hair are cleaned with wet hands before religious cleanliness is attained.

¹² This is the traditional exchange between Moslems, especially if they are not acquainted: Peace be unto you and And may peace be unto you, too.

¹³ Among the people of rural areas this is a kind of folk expression indicating the period of human gestation.

Story 2077

The shah and the vizier turned in the direction the dervish had pointed out, but to their surprise, there was no one coming. As they were going to say no one was there, they could not even see the dervish. "Unfortunately, there is no one coming or going, but we lost the dervish whom we found too late and lost too fast," the shah said sadly.

The shah and the vizier looked for the dervish here and there, but could not find him anywhere. They thought, "The dervish gave us whatever he could." The shah and the vizier returned from there to the palace and continued to perform their daily work. Let them do their own work.

That evening, the shah went to his private quarters. After he had performed his midnight prayer, he went into his bedroom. There, as the shah's wife was helping the shah to take his sash off, the apple dropped onto the bed. The sultana, the shah's wife, upon seeing the apple, became angry at the shah; she turned her face in another direction and stayed a little apart from him.

Having seen his wife's actions against himself, the shah said, "My dear! My soul! Why are you upset, and why did you turn your face from me?"

The sultana answered, "This is what upsets me, my shah. Are you not ashamed of yourself? You had no habit of hiding an apple in your sash when you were young. Now that you are older, you have become a crazy man who hides an apple in his sash."

Smiling, the shah explained, "No, my two eyes, no. What you said is not right. Bring the golden tray and the diamond knife from the shelf. This is not the kind of ordinary apple that you know."

As asked by the shah, the sultana brought the golden tray and the knife. The shah cut the apple into two pieces. The shah and his wife each ate half of the apple, and they had their mare eat the peelings from the apple¹⁴. From that night on, the front part of the sultana's skirt got swollen. Pardon my saying this, my dear beys. This is an expression. Do not take it wrong. This is the way to express her situation. I meant that she became pregnant, but the asiks polish it a little bit as they explain before the audience. You know it.

¹⁴ The narrator here somehow forgot what he said about the advice of the dervish that the shah and his wife each must eat half of the apple and the mare eat the peelings. But in actual narration, the narrator says that the shah and his wife ate one half, and they had the mare eat the other half and the peelings from the apple.

Story 2077

Nine months, nine days and nine hours passed, and someone brought good news to the shah, saying, "Congratulations, my shah! Your wife has given birth to a son." Hearing this long-awaited news, the shah sank down to the floor and prayed to God. He had had a daughter, but no son. The news made the shah happier than ever before. Following his prayer to God, the shah ordered, "Release all the prisoners, clothe the barefooted, provide food for the hungry ones, and ornament the city with more lights." The people who had heard the news came to congratulate the shah. They named the boy, as instructed by the dervish, "Bey Böyrek." Eleven months passed, and other good news arrived from the shah's stable that the mare had borne a male colt which could speak. They named the colt "Bengiboz."

Little by little, the boy at home and the colt at the stable grew up. The boy became seven years old. The shah summoned all the teachers in his country to choose a teacher for his son. Among the teachers, there was a forceful one who said, "I would like to teach Bey Böyrek under one condition. That is, you must give him to me now and get him back seven years from now. Within that seven years, you cannot see the child. This evening, while the boy is sleeping, I will send some of my students to your home, and they will take the boy in his bed to the school." The shah accepted the condition. On that evening, the teacher sent a few students to the shah's home, and they took Bey Böyrek to the school as he slept in his bed.

The next morning, the students gathered in a classroom and waited quietly. When all the students were there, the teacher said, "Read as you usually do." The students began reading. They were reading aloud.

Bey Böyrek woke up with the loud noise made by the students. He called to his father and his mother, "Father! Mother!"

The teacher appeared before him and said, "Keep quiet. There is no mother or father here, my son. I am now your father and mother. You have become my son. There are only you, Bey Böyrek, and I. No one else is here besides us."

"Well, my teacher," said Bey Böyrek. "So I have become your son! I understand and have nothing to say about it. But what develops from a stranger? And what develops from a hill like a pile of ash?"

Story 2077

The teacher answered, "Well, nothing, of course, develops from it. When the wind blows, the ashes will blow and fill in the lower places." Then the teacher made it clear. "You have become somewhat like my son."

"What do you mean?" Bey Böyrek asked.

The teacher answered, " See! You did not understand what I meant. Hear this. Your father owed me so much that he could not pay it back. In return, I took you instead of the money your father owed. Now, listen to me carefully! As you achieve success a certain amount of the loan will be reduced from your father's debt." Bey Böyrek understood what it meant, and thought to himself that the teacher had taken him there to educate him. So Bey Böyrek completed each level of his courses by keeping himself always at the first place.

Let me tell you a little bit about Kel Vizier, on the other hand. Kel Vizier was plotting against the shah. He had looked for an opportunity to get rid of the shah from the ruling post so he himself could become the shah of their country. Let him stay there, and go back to Bey Böyrek.

Bey Böyrek studied at the school for seven years. Upon completing his education at school, he had a hunting team. He was going hunting almost every day and passing his days with these kinds of things. Time passed, and Bey Böyrek became fifteen years old. He grew so strong as a wrestler-warrior that no one was able to defeat him.

Let me provide you with some information about the country of Egypt, and let Bey Böyrek keep on hunting around his home city.

In the country of Egypt there was a daughter of Ak Kavak, the bey and the ruler of the country. She was named Turuncu Hanım. Well, she was a very special girl, not just any kind of girl. What I mean is that she was an extraordinary girl. Turuncu Hanım was a famous wrestler-warrior. She set this condition for anyone who wanted to marry her. Whoever would be able to put her on her back in wrestling she would marry. She, however, had a trick. Under her warrior costume she wore a shirt with a magic spell, so no one could win against her. She also had a magic spell hung on the neck of a goose which could not be shot by anyone who targeted it. Another charm which she made she placed in a cup which was put on a tree as a target for her challengers, but because of the charm in the cup, no one could be able to hit the cup.

Story 2077

Kel Vizier knew about Turuncu Hanım. One day he thought to himself, “This is my best opportunity: I shall tell him about her beauty, but not mention how difficult it is to get her, so he will go for her and never come back. Anyway, the girl will behead him. As soon as he goes away, I shall take care of his father, a business easy for me to handle.”

Having made his decision on this matter, one day Kel Vizier asked Bey Böyrek, “Would you come over here, my son? Listen to me now. My son, you will gain nothing by hunting. You cannot become famous by hunting.”

“So, what should I do?” asked Bey Böyrek.

Kel Vizier answered, “Oh, my son. You can do so much. They say that in the country of Egypt there lives the daughter of Ak Kavak Bey. It is said that she is the most beautiful girl in this world; there is no girl better than she. Everybody says that she is such a fine wrestler-warrior that no one has been able to put her on her back. They also say she has some other skills, but I do not know. If you have enough courage to go there, overcome her, pass the tests she has set for her suitors, and get her from there to here, then you will see that you will be known as the most famous and outstanding hero in this world.”

Bey Böyrek was astonished with this information and said, “Is that so, my vizier father?”

Bey Böyrek rushed into the stable. The words of the vizier were driven into his mind like nails. He put the saddle on his horse and prepared Bengiboz for a journey to Egypt. Then he ran into the treasure room, where he filled his saddlebag with gold coins. Following that, Bey Böyrek put on his war costume and his battle weapons. When everything was ready, Bey Böyrek took his horse to the mounting stone, where he said, “Bismillah¹⁵, ya Allah!” and mounting his horse he rode off from the city.

¹⁵ Bismillah (In the name of Allah) is the first part of the expression with which the Koran opens, Bismillahirrahmanirrahim (In the name of Allah, the Compassionate and Merciful). The full expression is used at the beginning of prayer services. Bismillah is usually uttered at the beginning of any undertaking in order to gain divine approval (or good luck) for that venture.

Story 2077

He rode little, and he rode far. He passed over hills. God knows how far he went¹⁶. In a day he arrived at a crossroads of three roads. There Bengiboz stopped and refused to go any farther. Even if one had killed it, the horse would not have moved a step farther. No matter how hard Bey Böyrek tried to make it move, there was no way of making Bengiboz go farther. Upon having such difficulty, Bey Böyrek thought, “ Why did my Bengiboz not create any problem until here, but now he does? My God, help me. Give me an opportunity and let my Bengiboz go farther.”

Let us see what happens. As Bey Böyrek was praying to God, he had an inspiration, and his heart began beating wildly. He sang these words there. Let us hear what he sang:

I have departed from my country, arrived at the crossroads of
three roads,
Arrived at the crossroads of three roads.
My brother horse, the choice is yours today.
My traveling companion, the choice is yours.
You are my hope, my wings and my arms;
You are my hope, my wings and my arms;
My brother horse, the choice is yours today.
My brother horse the choice is yours today¹⁷.

Bey Böyrek was not finished with his song yet, so he sang more:

¹⁶ This expression is used to indicate the passage of time and distance in the story. This kind of expression is frequent in storytelling.

¹⁷ This song here is sung to the accompaniment of a saz, the stringed instrument used by folk singers and asiks.

It should be also pointed out that the Turkish version of the song or the poetic parts of this kind of story has rhyming lines that are provided either by matching words or by suffixes added to the last words of each line. The songs are sung in stanzaic form with repeated extra lines, and each song has a certain syllabic measurement. Translation of the songs provides just the meaning of those songs; it cannot produce the beauty.

Story 2077

Amaan¹⁸,

God, the powerful one, wrote such an inscription of fate for me,

Such an inscription of fate for me;

My mother should not look at the roads for finding me;

My mother should not look at the roads for finding me.

God willing, I shall get the daughter of Ak Kavak,

Get the daughter of Ak Kavak.

My brother horse, the choice is yours today.

My traveling companion, the choice is yours.

Since his worries had not gone away, he sang more:

Bey Böyrek asks for help from holy men who are ready,

Holy men who are ready.

Please come and help me with this matter, ey, Hızır¹⁹.

Please come and help me with this matter, ey, Hızır.

Kel Vizier who comes from bad stock put me on this road.

My brother horse, the choice is yours today.

My traveling companion, the choice is yours.

His song was over with those words. As soon as he was done, a voice was heard from the invisible world saying, "Hey, you, Bey Böyrek! Listen carefully." It seemed as if Bengiboz, the horse, were talking, that God had given it the ability of speaking. The voice continued: "My son, Bey Böyrek! Before you set off, you had not got

¹⁸ Amaan is an expression of despair. It is also uttered by a singer or a narrator to gain some time to remember or to make up the lines of a song.

¹⁹ Hızır: once a water deity and fertility god-- and still both those figures to most farmers in southern Turkey-- Hızır is more widely known now as a granter of wishes, a last-minute rescuer from disaster, and a special messenger and agent of God. In these latter three functions he appears fairly frequently in Turkish folktales. Not mentioned by name in the Koran, a chapter of that work was later named after him. He is assumed to be the person instructing Moses in Chapter XVIII of the Koran, where he is referred to by God simply as "our servant."

Story 2077

permission either of your father or of your mother. Without getting permission from them, you set off. It is important to kiss the hands of your father and your mother in farewell before departing from home. Because a kind of smoke has covered its sight, Bengiboz, of course, does not move any farther. God's order has to be met. Now, you should go back to your home, kiss the hands of your father and your mother, get their permission to leave home, and then you may go on your journey. You do not know for how many days your mother and father have been crying about losing you. Oh, my son! Father and mother and children are all one. They are all one. It is not easy for anyone to lose the only one, only one son. Now, my child, go back and kiss the hands of your father and your mother, and then come back here."

Bey Böyrek understood his mistake and said, "My dear Bengiboz brother!" as thanks to the horse. He then kissed the eyelids of his horse²⁰, and said, "Let us go back. From now on, I will follow your orders as my guide. I will follow whatever you say and whatever way you lead me. I promise." Bey Böyrek turned the horse's head toward home and rode back. Passing a resting place in a very short time, which was the distance of a day, finally they returned home.

Bey Böyrek ordered the servants to inform his parents about his return. With tears in her eyes and pulling her hair, Bey Böyrek's mother rushed and hugged him, and she asked, "Where have you been, my son? Why do you hurt us? Why are you putting us in such a difficult situation, my child?"

Bey Böyrek's father was also informed about his return. The shah came down to Bey Böyrek, hugged him with tears, and then he said, "My child, please do not let this happen again. When going somewhere, let us know about it. I am the shah of a country, my dear child. When you have a request, just tell it to me. I will honor your request immediately, my son."

As he talked to his son, the shah looked at Bey Böyrek's face, which was getting pale. Having seen that, the shah asked, "My son! Is there something wrong with you? Whatever it is, tell us. What makes you worry, my son? Do we not deserve to know about your concerns?"

²⁰ In Turkish tradition in order to express appreciation for something good, it is common to say "I kiss both of your eyelids." This is also true for the parents to kiss both eyelids of their children when they are parting.

Story 2077

Upon hearing all the questions, Bey Böyrek

Took his saz out, put it on his breast,
And tried to make his words make sense,
Let us hear what he said
To his mother and father²¹.

What should we say, and to what should our beys among the audience listen? Let him say; let him say. Let Bey Böyrek sing for his father and mother, and let us listen to what he sings:

Ooy, ooy, well.
My dear mother, my soul father, give me permission; I shall go.
I sucked your milk more than I needed; Mother, give me permission; I shall go.
I sucked your milk more than I needed; Mother, give me permission; I shall go.
I shall go and find my beloved one.

Upon hearing the song and the request, Bey Böyrek's mother and father cried, and asked, "Alas! Where are you going, Son? What can we do for you? How could we live without you?"

Weeping, Bey Böyrek sang again. His parents, too, were crying. But Bey Böyrek kept asking their permission in tears:

My dear, eey, eey, eey.
My heart is there and it will not come back.

²¹ With these lines the narrator informs his audience that Bey Böyrek is going to sing. The narrator is not simply saying that the hero will sing, but he makes up a quatrain in which he introduces the fact that his hero will sing. Such introduction of an action in storytelling is the style of aşık performance in Turkey.

Story 2077

The passion of love is like a fire in my heart that cannot be put out.

Eey, eey, I am burnt; I am burnt.

It is not easy for one to give up the beloved one.

Father, give me permission; I shall go.

It is not possible to give up one's beloved and stay.

Father, give me permission; I shall go.

I shall go and find my beloved one.

Bey Böyrek sang once more, and he sang again the best one. Let us hear what he sang:

Amaan, eey,

My heart is a gift to the daughter of Ak Kavak,

With whom I have fallen in love.

I am burnt; I am burnt; eey, eey.

I have been leaning toward that way.

Father, give me permission; I shall go.

I have been leaning toward that way.

Father, give me permission; I shall go.

I shall go and find my beloved one.

Having heard Böyrek's song, the shah answered, "It is impossible, my son. How would I give you permission? What kind of a condition are you in? Who told you about this, and what? How can you leave me, while all these, the throne and crown, the government and kingdom, the goods and the lands, are waiting for you? How can you leave me here and go away?"

Bey Böyrek replied, "No, my dear father. Worldly wealth remains in this world. The passion of love has been burning my heart. Father, please give your permission. I cannot stay here."

Story 2077

The shah stood quiet for awhile and found no solution for changing his son's mind. He then said, "Well, my son. Let me kiss both of your eyelids." Böyrek's parents kissed both of his eyes, and Böyrek kissed their hands and then set off on his journey.

Poor Böyrek left his city in a few minutes, and then said to his horse, "My brother Bengiboz! For God's sake, take me wherever that Ak Kavak's country is." As we said before, Bengiboz had wings; it took one day for Bengiboz to reach Ak Kavak's country, which was actually the distance of three months' ride. Bengiboz flew exactly to the city of Ak Kavak.

There, while Bey Böyrek was looking around, he saw an old woman gathering little sticks as wood for a cooking fire. "I wish you good will, my grandmother," greeted Bey Böyrek.

The woman replied, "May your fate be a good one, my son."

Böyrek asked, "Would you take me into your home as a guest for a night?"

"My son, as you walk into the city, you will find inns, coffeehouses, and hotels by the marketplace, but I do not have a good place either for you or for your horse," the woman replied.

Bey Böyrek reached into his pocket and took out a handful of coins, and handed them to the woman. The woman asked, "What is this, my son?"

"That is your worldly goods. Just have them," answered Bey Böyrek, and continued, "I am a stranger here, and know no place."

The woman kept silent for a few minutes, examined the boy carefully, and then, "Is he mad or is he crazy?" She wondered about him. She, however, decided that "As long as he gives money, it does not matter whether he is crazy or not." Bey Böyrek gave her a little more money, which made her so extremely happy that she looked like a dog whose tail has stood up like the handle of a frying pan. She said, "I think I have a suitable place for both of you. Come with me; come." She led Bey Böyrek to her house.

The old woman was the wife of a gooseherd. In the evening, the gooseherd returned to his home and saw a prince in his house. Upon seeing him, he asked his wife, "Who is he?"

The wife replied, "He is either a prince or a shah. He might be a padishah or the son of a bey." Then she showed the gold coins Bey Böyrek had given, and said, "He gave me this much gold."

Story 2077

The gooseherd was surprised with the gift and so happy that he almost swallowed his tongue. Having got a little information about the stranger, he walked toward Böyrek, and, as it was a custom, stood in front of him, and said, "Welcome, my son, welcome! You have brought joy to our home." Then they sat down and held a conversation on this and that for awhile. At some point, the shepherd of goose asked, "Brave man, where are you from? Where did you come from? Who are you, and what are you doing here?"

Bey Böyrek did not answer that question, but reached into his pocket once again, took a handful of gold coins out of it, and then handed them to his host. Then he asked, "My gooseherd father! Is there a girl who is the daughter of Ak Kavak Bey in this city?"

Happy with having more gold coins but astonished by the question, the gooseherd said, "What are you talking about, my son?"

Bey Böyrek made it clear and demanded in answer, "What do you want me to say? Is there such a girl? And does she have a wrestler-warrior? The reason that brought me here is that I would like to compete with that wrestler-warrior and beat him, God willing, and then deserve to take the girl as my bride."

"Ho, ho, ho," laughed the gooseherd.

Bey Böyrek asked, "Why are you laughing at me, my shepherd father?"

The shepherd answered, "My bey, that girl does not have a wrestler-warrior; she is the wrestler." As Böyrek listened, the shepherd continued to provide more information. "She disguises herself as an Arab and goes to the wrestling field in disguise. She has killed many brave men with her sword, as they failed to pass the tests she sets for any challengers. First, she makes her challenger shoot a golden cup on a tree. Since the cup is filled with a magic spell, no one is able to shoot it. Then she orders her goose to be brought there. The goose, too, has a magic spell hung on its neck, so no man is able to shoot it, either. Actually, first she orders her servants to bring a goose as a target for herself. That goose does not have a magic spell or any other kind of protection, so she shoots that one very easily. However, when it is her challenger's turn to shoot at a goose, she makes her servants bring the goose which has a magic spell. I am her gooseherd. Listen to me now! You must do whatever I say. When it comes to wrestling, she wears a magic-spelled undershirt beneath her wrestling costume. Thus

Story 2077

she is protected, and no one is able to put her down on her back. But the magic shirt does not protect her breasts." The shepherd advised Bey Böyrek, "My son, listen carefully. Women are all sensitive about their breasts. So you have to look for an opportunity to catch her by her breasts, which will make you able to put her down on her back." When the shepherd's instructions were over, they went to their room to sleep.

The next morning, Bey Böyrek appeared at the court of Baba Umman²², where he challenged and asked for a wrestling match. There he claimed, "I will shoot both the cup and the goose, and then wrestle with your wrestler-warrior." Upon hearing Bey Böyrek's challenge, the daughter of Ak Kavak Bey, disguised in an Arab wrestling costume, came down to the field. [Note: Tape 14 ends here. "The Story of Bey Böyrek" continues on tape 15, side A.]

Having heard Bey Böyrek's challenge, the daughter of Ak Kavak Bey walked down to the wrestling field. There she first called up the gooseherd, "Gooseherd!"

"Yes, my master," replied the gooseherd.

"Bring the goose over here," she ordered.

The gooseherd brought a goose that had no magic spell on it. She stepped thirty feet back and held her bow and shot an arrow which hit the goose in its neck. Having hit her target successfully, she ordered the gooseherd once again, "Go ahead and bring another goose." The gooseherd brought the goose which had the magic spell on it. Even though he did not want to, he had to bring that goose because he had been ordered to do so.

It was Bey Böyrek's turn. Bey Böyrek went not only thirty feet back, but he went fifty feet back from his target. There he first recited the passage of "Ism-i Azam" from the Koran and then said, "Bismillah, ya Allah!" Following his short prayer, Bey Böyrek held his bow and shot an arrow which hit the neck of the magic-spelled goose. The arrow hit the goose so hard that the body of the goose was left dead on the ground and the neck was moved seven feet away from it.

Thanks to God, my friends. Is it not right to say this now? The Arab got upset about this. This time she made her servants put the golden cup as their target. When the

²² This name is used here as an expression for the battlefield.

Story 2077

target was ready, she screamed at the boy, "Let us see if you can shoot this one as well." Once again, Bey Böyrek recited the prayer of "İsm-i Azam" and then shot an arrow which hit the golden cup.

Upon seeing Bey Böyrek's achievement, she had fallen in love with him; she felt love toward him deep inside her heart. She began thinking, "Oh, my God! I wish he would put me down on my back and overcome me. I would be so happy to go with him." Then she threatened Bey Böyrek, "Let us see, brave man. I was going to forgive you, but since you did not bow your head before me, I am going to put you down on your back and then behead you. Do you know how I will kill you? No, you do not, but I will make up my mind on that."

"Hey, you!" called Bey Böyrek. "Do not boast so much about yourself. Whatever God provided to you, He provided as much to everyone. Come on, come on, and put your wrestling costume on." Upon hearing Bey Böyrek's response and having the passion of love fallen in her heart, Turuncu Hanım got confused for awhile and did not know what to do. She was thinking that since she was in the disguise of an Arab wrestler-warrior and had covered her face, no one could know who she was. After awhile she called to Bey Böyrek, "Brave man!"

"Yes, sir!" Bey Böyrek replied.

"Do you know how to sing and play?" she asked.

"Ho, ho, ho!" laughed Böyrek, and then, "That is my profession. I am a master of singing and playing," he answered her. "Hey, Arab! Are you going to sing?" he asked.

"Well. You will listen to what I sing," she responded, and began singing:

Hey, you, boy, where did you come from?
 You have become crazy with your love.
 You have put your head on this matter,
 But I shall kill you, boy.
 I shall kill you, boy.
 I shall kill you, you beggar.
 Now, in a moment, I shall kill you,
 So you would know more about me.

Story 2077

“Is that so, my dear, my Arab?” Böyrek challenged her, and, “Let me sing to you now,” he continued. Let us hear what Böyrek sang to her:

I came here, and shall not go back.
I do not understand what you said.
I am not inferior to you.
Go ahead; here is the field.
This is the field.
Go ahead; here is the field.
This is the field.

Let us hear what the Arab thinks about these words of Böyrek:

I shall drop tears from my eyes;
This field should not be seen because of the dead bodies.
I have a castle made out of stone.
I shall kill in a moment;
I shall kill you, you boy.
You shall find out about me afterwards.

Let us hear how Böyrek replied:

Know me. I am the son of a shah.
With your love my heart has burnt down.
First of all, I am faithful to God.
Go ahead, my dear; here is the field;
This is the field.
Here is the field;
This is the field.

Hey, my friends! Let us hear how the Arab continued. The Arab is going to be shown up:

Story 2077

My name is Turuncu.
My fame is well known in all places.
I have killed so many brave men.
I shall kill you, boy, you boy, you child,
So you would learn more about me.

Upon these words, they exchanged the signs. But let us hear what Bey Böyrek said to her in his last stanza:

I am known as Bey Böyrek in my land.
I wear a belt made out of silk threads.
My name is in the mouths of the people all the time.
Go ahead, my dear, my beloved. Here is the field.
This is the field.

Following the exchange of songs and challenging each other, the girl said, "Brave man! You shot the cup, and killed the goose. I will let them be yours. You look like someone of noble origin. Before I break your bones, just give up wrestling with me. Otherwise, I will hold you and break your neck, but it will make me sorry about you. I will let you go. I will free you. Just return to the place where you come from. What do you say?"

These words made Bey Böyrek angry at her, and he replied crossly, "Hey, you, Arab! Do not act so spoiled. Let me see what you can do. I came here, and it is impossible for me to go back with an empty hand. I am going to behead you in this field, and then get Turuncu Hanım as my prize, and hug her."

Upon hearing these words, the Arab (Turuncu Hanım) felt love toward Bey Böyrek more than ever. It was because of this that everybody was thinking that the Arab was a wrestler-warrior of Turuncu Hanım, whereas the Arab and Turuncu Hanım were the same. She was both of them. Being refused by Böyrek, Turuncu Hanım ordered the gooseherd, "Bring my wrestling costume." The shepherd brought her wrestling costume there. She wore the magic shirt underneath the wrestling costume. When both

Story 2077

fighters, Turuncu Hanım and Bey Böyrek, were ready, they walked to the middle of the field. As they had been competing, the people of the city all gathered there and began to debate and bet with one another. Some of them were sorry for the Arab, Turuncu Hanım, and some were saying, "Well, let the Arab lose. We are tired of him. Whatever he does, we do not care. If he loses, we will be freed from him who has the blood of many brave men on his hands. He has tied up and then killed many brave men as well. It might be possible that this warrior will overcome the Arab, and so everybody will be freed from him."

Meanwhile, like two bulls or water buffaloes tangling up one another, the Arab and Bey Böyrek got tangled up with each other. They tangled up together like two rams or two lions tangling.

Let us see what the gooseherd is up to. As the two warriors were struggling, the shepherd began signaling Bey Böyrek with an interesting way of signaling: he began beating his left breast with his right hand, by which he meant for Bey Böyrek to hit her on the breast. The shepherd beat himself so very much that he got hurt, and his breast began bleeding. For a moment Bey Böyrek looked at the shepherd, who astonished him by almost killing himself with beating and jumping up and down. In order to satisfy the gooseherd, Bey Böyrek exclaimed, "Ya Allah!" Then he captured the Arab's belt with one hand and with another held the Arab's breast, and then put the Arab down face up like a sack filled with cotton. Having put the Arab down on his back, Bey Böyrek put his one knee on the Arab's body, and held his own sword up as if he intended to kill his enemy. However, he did not behead the girl, but put his sword slowly on her throat. Being defeated by Bey Böyrek and faced with death, the Arab said, "Brave man! If you are faithful to God, first cut my shirt's buttons on my breast. Thus, some wind may touch upon my breast, and then you may kill me." The boy granted her wish and began cutting the buttons of her shirt. But when he saw her breast, he lost consciousness. Excuse me, my dear ağas! It can be expressed only this way. It is a shame to say more about it. Is it not right?

So, upon seeing her breast, Bey Böyrek remained unconscious, and lay down by her. Being freed from danger, the girl climbed on his body, and said, "Open your eyes; now it is my turn, boy."

Story 2077

Is any more strength left in the boy's body? You girl! I wish that your home were ruined.

Her maids were also waiting there, but she could not call them to come there for her help. It did not help, no matter how hard she tried to wake Bey Böyrek up. Having found no solution for the situation, finally she got her saz and began singing. Let us hear what she said. It is Turuncu Hanım who is singing that the name Arab is forgotten. My friends! It is because of this that her trick did not work:

My dear, my beloved, my wealth of life,
 My dear, my beloved, my wealth of life,
 I shall sacrifice my life for your eyes. Wake up.
 I shall leave this place only for you.
 I shall sacrifice my life for your eyes. Wake up.
 I shall sacrifice my life for your eyes. Wake up.

Since Bey Böyrek did not wake up with her first stanza, she sang one more. Let her sing a better one:

The lovers would like to die in this way.
 The lovers would like to die in this way.
 They would shed their blood in the desert of love.
 Did sleeping take your life away from you?
 I shall sacrifice my life for your eyes. Wake up.
 Have you bought this sleep from somewhere?
 Have you bought this blind sleep from somewhere?
 I shall sacrifice my life for your eyes. Wake up²³.

This time, Bey Böyrek woke up and said, "My hazel-eyed, beloved one! I have come from distant India for you."

²³ Without singing, the last two lines were repeated as shown.

Story 2077

The girl said, "I've sworn an oath that whoever overcomes me in this field I will marry."

The two lovers kissed each other and then sat together. Having heard about these developments, the bey of Ak Kavak sent his servants with an order to the field: "Go and bring that boy to my court." The servants went to the field and led Bey Böyrek to the bey's court.

The bey of Ak Kavak kissed him on both eyes, and then asked, "Where are you from? Who is your father?"

Bey Böyrek answered him that he was the son of India's²⁴ shah, and had come to Ak Kavak's country for the daughter of the bey. Upon hearing this, the bey of Ak Kavak summoned his viziers and Turuncu Hanım as well. There he engaged Turuncu Hanım to Bey Böyrek.

Time passed, and it was getting closer to their wedding ceremony, but Turuncu Hanım became very sick. It was God's will to make her ill with an unknown illness that was not possible to cure by any doctors or specialists. So, she had to stay in that condition for seven years.

Let her stay there, and let me inform you of the events that took place in India. There, Bey Böyrek's father and mother became blind because of crying for their son. They had no strength left in their bodies and could not recognize anybody. Having come closer to his goals, Kel Vizier called his people to a meeting to discuss the situation. Following the discussion of a few hours, Kel Vizier convinced everybody, and by sitting on the throne and putting the crown on he became the new ruler.

Let us return to Turuncu Hanım's palace. When the seven years had passed without any cures, she recovered from her illness. Upon her recovery, Bey Böyrek and Turuncu Hanım asked permission of Ak Kavak Bey to leave. The bey of Ak Kavak gave them permission and also many wedding gifts to his daughter, and then bade them farewell.

²⁴ It seems that the narrator has forgotten the place from which Bey Böyrek came. At the beginning of the story, the narrator told us that Bey Böyrek's father was the shah of Yemen.

Story 2077

As they were riding toward Bey Böyrek's country, they encountered a caravan. This was a caravan of hocas²⁵. In order to ask some questions about the situation in his country, Bey Böyrek stopped the caravan. The hocas thought that he was a robber, so they feared that he might kill them and rob their goods. Fearful of Bey Böyrek, they could not even reply to his greeting. Bey Böyrek realized that the hocas were very much afraid of him. In order to make them calm down, Bey Böyrek took his saz and began singing.

Let us hear what Bey Böyrek said to the hocas, and what he asked for. What should I sing, and to what should my audience listen?

Where are you coming from? You, the leader of merchants,
Slow down; stay here and give me some news. Hey, you hocas,
Slow down; stay here and give me some news. Hey, you hocas.

Upon hearing the song, the leader of the hocas turned to his men and said, "Whoever provides answers to this man will be rewarded generously."

Among them there was a bald man named Benli Halil who used to be called Keloğlan²⁶ as well. He said, "I know how to play the saz and sing." Then he walked forward, saying, "I am willing to respond to him if you reward me."

"Certainly, my son. If you provide answers to his questions, your reward is right here," said the leader of the hocas.

"All right, then," said Keloğlan, and got a piece of stick as his instrument and held it on his breast.

Let us hear what he will say, and what kind of an answer he will give:

Amaan,

²⁵ The word hoca means both teacher and preacher in contemporary Turkish. However, the teachers of the religious schools were also serving as preachers in the mosques during the Ottoman Empire.

²⁶ This is the second keloğlan in this story; this one represents the clever young man.

Story 2077

The rich merchants do not stop on the way.
 What we sell is the goods of this world.
 The place we are coming from is Yemen.
 Tell me, brave man; tell me what worries you.
 The place we are coming from is Yemen.
 Tell me, brave man; tell me what worries you.

Bey Böyrek sang once more:

Amaan,
 You are coming from the land of Yemen,
 So you should take the worries away from my heart.
 Tell me something about the condition of my father and my
 mother;
 Give some news about them, hey, you hocas.

Keloğlan answered:

Amaan,
 Tell it, brave man; tell it, so you will learn.
 May God make your worries go away.
 What do they call you? What kind of a brave man are you?
 Tell it, brave man; tell it. Let me know what worries you.
 What do they call you? What kind of a brave man are you?
 Tell it, brave man; tell it. Let me know what worries you.

Bey Böyrek continued once more, and sang the best one:

The name of this foreign land is marble pole.
 Though one gets acquainted with it, his heart does not.
 My father is a shah, and my name is Bey Böyrek.
 Give me some news about my father, hey, you hocas.

Story 2077

My father is a shah, and my name is Bey Böyrek;
Give me some news about my father, hey, you hocas.

Keloğlan answered:

If you ask about your father, he was in bad condition;
He had lost his strength and was about dying.
He had also lost his sight.
We had heard these before our departure, my master.
He had also lost his sight.
We had heard these before our departure, my master.

Let us hear what else Böyrek asked about:

Tell it, hoca; tell it, whatever the words are in your mouth.
I am worried that I may not be able to see my father again.
The gift of this world and so sweet my mother is.
Give me some news about them, hey, you hocas.
The gift of this world and so sweet my mother is.
Give me some news about them, hey, you hocas.

Keloğlan answered:

Your mother has no strength to do anything any more;
She was only saying the words, "My son!"
They had given up all the wealth of this world;
We had seen them in this condition before our departure.
They had given up all the wealth of this world;
We had seen them in this condition before our departure.

Story 2077

Upon hearing the answers of Keloğlan, Bey Böyrek was saddened and said, “Ah, me, ah, me. My father and mother have fallen into a bad situation and health condition.” Then he continued singing. Let us hear what he said:

No one can take the wealth of a brave man away;
 One day he returns and gets his own back²⁷.
 The Creator does not let the rose die as soon as it blossoms.
 Give me some real news about them, hey, you hocas.
 The Creator does not let the rose die as soon as it blossoms.
 Give me some real news about them, hey, you hocas.

Keloğlan answered:

I have read “alif”²⁸ and “Amme”²⁹.
 I have journeyed through seas and oceans.
 One who lies is an unbeliever.
 That is all I know about your country.
 One who lies is an unbeliever.
 That is all I know about your country.

When the exchange of songs was over, Bey Böyrek thanked the hocas. “You provided me enough information. Now, we must leave you, and ride to my country.” Bey Böyrek and Turuncu Hanım bade farewell to the merchants, and mounted their horses. They rode on a good way. They were riding like two beautiful birds. They rode as streams in flood. They rode as wind over the hills. They rode like Hamza³⁰. And

²⁷ The narrator here supports the hero in his demands and says, “God willing.”

²⁸ This is the first letter in the Arabic alphabet.

²⁹ This is the name of a chapter in the Koran. By saying this, the person means that he knows how to read and write, that he has had some education.

³⁰ Hamza was the uncle of the prophet Mohammed; he was better known as a wrestler-warrior.

Story 2077

they rode while Hasan was at home, and Hüseyin³¹ was in his village, and the flood was running over one's shoulder, and the mud was as deep as up to one's knees³². As they rode, a huge cloud of dust was following. In this condition, they rode for so many days that finally they reached India³³.

Following a few days' rest at Murat Mountain near Bey Böyrek's home city, one day early in the morning they attacked the palace and killed all the guards at the gate and captured Kel Vizier alive. Then they ordered the soldiers to bring Bey Böyrek's father, mother, and sister to the palace. At his father's court, Bey Böyrek beheaded Kel Vizier and exiled his family, and sat on the throne as the new shah of his country.

Bey Böyrek's return was heard by all the people in the cities, towns, and villages of his country. They all came to the palace to congratulate Bey Böyrek.

Let him rule his country. We, too, congratulate him. May God keep our food always sweet. The cloth we wear shall be sable fur. May God grant a very long life to all of us.

The name of our master is Hıdır³⁴. This is the best I can do. My dear audience, forgive me for any mistakes I might have made.

Three apples have fallen down from heaven. For the sake of the Threes³⁵, I have got one of those apples and have given the other two to you. You should eat that

³¹ The names Hasan and Hüseyin are frequently used by Alevite sect members of the Islamic world; they were the sons of Caliph Ali who were murdered by other Islamic sect members.

³² These descriptions are told by the narrator as tongue-twisters; they actually do not mean much except to tell the audience they are in the world of narration.

³³ The narrator switched Bey Böyrek's home country from Yemen to India in the middle of the story and at the end he has her return India instead of Yemen.

³⁴ This word might be "Hızır" or "Hıdır". The minstrels and other narrators in Turkey mention the name of this holy person in different parts of a story. At the end of each story the name Hızır/Hıdır is mentioned as a rhyming word as well.

³⁵ In Islamic mysticism in Turkey, largely the product of the Bektaşî dervishes, there is a pyramidal hierarchy of saints and angels known as The Three Hundred, The Forty, The Seven, The Four, and The Three. At all times there is one person or being in the world who is aware of the primary quality of Allah, self-knowledge. This person is called Kutup, that is, "The Pole." The universe is likened to a mold or pattern, and its

Story 2077

apple, which will make your wishes come true. Remember, everything in this story resulted from an apple.

soul is humankind collectively. In terms of individual units, the Kutup is the pattern for the human being, and the Kutup is subject only to what comes from within. There are two persons near the Kutup, and, all together, they constitute The Three. The two persons near the Kutup are called the imamans, that is, persons to follow, to imitate, to agree with. The one on the right of the Kutup is called imam-i yemin, and the one left is called the imam-i yesar. Because the human heart is on the left side of the body, it is the imam-i yesar who replaces the Kutup when he dies. The imam-i yemin then becomes the imam-i yesar, and his place, in turn, is filled by the extreme left member of The Four, on the level just below the level of The Three. Everyone in the hierarchy moves up one position. The universe is ruled by these beings who have greater knowledge of things than ordinary mortals. For further information about this element of Islamic mysticism, see Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı, Alevi-Bektâşî Nefesleri, pp. 331 ff., and his Vilayetname Manaib-i Hünkar Hacı Bektâşî, p. 139; see also John Kingsley Birge, The Bektashi Order of dervishes, pp. 251, 266.