

Story 1463 (1969 Tape 4)

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Location: Kelkit, kaza town of  
Gümüşhane Province

Date: September 1969

Keloğlan,<sup>1</sup> the Padishah's Daughter, and the Magic Ring

Once in the old days there were a woman and her son who were very poor people. In order to have enough money to buy bread for themselves, they cut wood and sold it to anyone who would buy it. One day after he had sold the wood he had cut, Keloğlan heard someone shouting about something he was trying to sell. The man shouted, "You will regret it if you buy it, you will also regret it if you do not buy it!" As the man yelled this message, he was showing a closed box.

The boy thought, "I am already poor, and so I might as buy that box with my 100 paras."<sup>2</sup> He therefore bought the closed box without knowing what was in it and took it home.

<sup>1</sup>The word keloğlan means bald boy, but the baldness is not that caused by aging. It is caused by ringworm infestation of the scalp. This disease often strikes the younger and perhaps improperly tended younger children of large peasant families. It is encouraged by uncleanliness. 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. Disguisers hide their hair by covering it either with a sheep-skin turned inside out or with the cleaned lining of a sheep's stomach.

<sup>2</sup>The para was formerly the smallest monetary unit. There were 40 paras to the kuruş and 100 kuruş to the Turkish lira. By mid-20th century, devaluation of Turkish money had eliminated from use the para, and by the 1970s the kuruş also fell out of circulation. When the lira fell to the value of 1/10 of a U.S. cent (and much lower in the late 1980s), the kuruş became utterly meaningless.

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When he reached his home, his mother asked, "Keloğlan, why didn't you bring home any food? I was so hungry all day that I thought I might

Keloğlan answered, "Mother, I bought this box today instead of food." They tried and tried to open that box that evening, but they were unable to do so. Finally they put it aside and forgot it, and the next day they returned to their usual way of living

One day while Keloğlan's mother was cleaning the house she accidentally dropped the box. When it struck the floor the box burst open, and a snake crawled out of it. The woman was frightened and she had Keloğlan called at once. He came as quickly as he could. When the snake saw the boy, she began to speak: "Oh, human being, if you will take me to my father, he will give you a great reward."

"How can I take you there when I do not even know your father? I do not even know where he lives.

"I shall show you the way," said the snake.

They left the house to find the snake's father. They went little; they went far. They went six months and an autumn. Only Allah knows how far they really went, but when they looked back, it seemed to them that they had gone no farther than the

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length of a grain of barley.<sup>3</sup> After a while they reached a place where there were no longer any more human beings, a place where there were only snakes. A group of snakes charged toward Keloğlan to attack him, but when they saw the snake accompanying him, they fell back and began to salute them. Keloğlan asked, "What has happened? Why are they now greeting us with such respect?"

"They are my father's soldiers. My father lives in a palace, and I shall now lead you to him." As they were going there, the snake said, "Keloğlan, when my father asks you, 'What do you want as your reward?' you should answer, 'Oh, my padishah, I should like to have the ring which is kept under a stone. Don't agree to accept anything else.'"

"All right," said Keloğlan.

When they reached the palace and were admitted into the presence of the padishah of snakes, Keloğlan was asked, "Son you may have whatever you want. What would you like?"

"My padishah, there is only one thing that I would like, and that is the ring which is kept under a stone." They gave him that ring, and Keloğlan left the palace and started home. As he walked along, he thought, "Oh, what a foolish thing I have done! They would have given me a great amount of gold or

<sup>3</sup>A formulaic set of images used frequently in Turkish folktales to indicate a long journey without having to go through the repetitive details of travel day after day.

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silver, but I did not ask for either. Instead, I got only this cheap ring for six months of travel." As he was saying this, however, he rubbed his mouth with his hand, and when he did so, his tongue touched the ring, and suddenly two black giants appeared

"Tell us, master, whether we should burn the world or destroy it in some other way?"

"Neither burn nor otherwise destroy the world. Instead, take me to my mother's side."

Within five minutes the giants had taken the boy to his mother. There he said, "Mother, you are to go to the padishah and ask for the hand of his daughter as my bride."

mother answered, "Oh, my Keloğlan, have you gone out of your mind? Do you really think that the padishah would give you his daughter?"

Very sure of himself, Keloğlan said, "Never mind that, Mother. You just go and ask for the padishah's daughter."

poor woman walked to the palace in fear. In the old days every large house had a table just outside its main door, and there were chairs placed around the table. If a görücü<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>There may be a problem with terminology here. One who goes as a matchmaker to ask for the hand of a girl is usually called a dünürücü or a çöpçatan. A görücü is usually a woman who locates or inspects a potential bride to determine whether her looks and manners are suitable for the prospective groom.

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came to ask about the possible engagement of a marriageable daughter in that house, she would sit in a chair at that table. Then the girl's parents knew exactly why the visitor had come. One day when the padishah was gazing out of his window, he saw an old woman come and sit before the table. He immediately sent some female servants out to bring the old woman into his presence. Although he knew what she had come for, he asked Keloğlan's mother, "What do you want?"

"My padishah, I have come with the will of Allah and the approval of the Prophet to ask for your daughter in marriage to my son."<sup>5</sup>

"Very well, mother," said the padishah. "If it is really the will of Allah, then it will occur. I have one condition, however, for giving my daughter to your son. He must first build a great palace southeast of mine, and that palace should be such a very, very tall building that it will prevent the sun from striking my palace for one and a half hours after dawn."

Keloğlan's mother is really acting as a dünürcü, not as a görücü (based on görmek--to see or to visit).

<sup>5</sup>An appreciable percentage of Turkish marriages are not brought about by love but by parental arrangement. A matchmaker is sent to the family of the girl, and much of the dialogue between the two parties is carried on through formulaic expressions. The opening remark of the matchmaker is this: "I have come with the will of Allah and the approval of the Prophet to ask for the hand of your daughter in marriage to X, the son of Y." The claim of being backed by Allah's will is a condition devoutly to be wished, and it is apparently uttered in the optative subjunctive mode.

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"All right, my padishah. I shall tell that condition to my son."

When she returned home, she explained the padishah's condition to Keloğlan. Then she said, "When we cannot even find enough bread to feed ourselves, how can you think of marrying the padishah's daughter or building a palace?"

Keloğlan said nothing, but when night came and everyone else had gone to bed, he licked the ring and brought to his presence the two black giants. He said to them, "Build a palace for me southeast of the padishah's palace and three times the height of his palace. My own quarters should be on the very top floor."

When Keloğlan's mother awoke next morning, she did not know where she was. She could not recognize anything, and when she looked out the window, she saw that she was up close to the sky. Keloğlan went to her room and said, "Mother, go again today to the padishah and ask for his daughter as my bride."

When the old woman went to the padishah again, he said, "Mother, my first condition was fulfilled perfectly by your son, but I have a second condition to be met before I shall give him my daughter. I want him to build a covered bridge between one of the central floors of my palace and the floor at the same level in his palace, and that bridge should be made

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entirely of gold and silver. We shall need this bridge so that when my daughter passes from one palace to the other, she will not be exposed to the sunlight."

The old woman went home and said to Keloğlan, "Oh, my son, the padishah has another condition to be met, and this time he is demanding something impossible. He wants to have a bridge of gold and silver built to connect a floor of his palace with a floor of your palace. You could not have even a wooden bridge built across such a distance."

Keloğlan answered, "Please, Mother, do not worry about this. Let us eat our dinner instead of worrying." Later, when darkness arrived and everyone else had gone to bed, Keloğlan licked the magic ring and brought forth the two giants. He explained to them the padishah's wish and told them to have the bridge built at once.

When the padishah awakened in the morning and saw the gold and silver bridge between the palaces, he realized that there was no way in which he could get rid of Keloğlan. He therefore gave Keloğlan his daughter. After all of the needed preparations had been made, there was a lengthy wedding celebration, and when it was finished, the two were married.

After Keloğlan and the padishah's daughter had been married for some time, the padishah's wife one day said to her husband,

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"Let us go and visit our daughter. They have come here to see us, but we have never returned their visit. It is our turn to go to them now."

"All right," said the padishah, "but what shall we take them as a gift? They are so very rich that they do not need any of our money." Then a few minutes later he told his wife of an idea he had just gotten. "We can take our black servant with us, and after we have eaten dinner there, we can say, 'Take this servant as a gift from us. He has served us very well for many years, but now he will be your servant.' It will be a very good present for them."

They went to visit their daughter and their son-in-law, and they took their black servant with them. They ate; they drank; they talked. Then, just as they were getting ready to leave, they said, "Accept this servant as a gift from us. He served us well for many years, but now he will serve you. Then they left."

Before the padishah's daughter had been married to Keloğlan she and the black servant had been lovers. Neither the padishah nor his wife knew anything about that, of course. One day when Keloğlan had gone hunting, accompanied by his dog and his cat, the black servant said to the padishah's daughter, "This Keloğlan was formerly a very poor man, but then suddenly



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he became very rich. He did this by secret means. He has a very great secret. You should learn his secret and in that way discover the source of all his wealth."

"All right. I shall learn his secret," she answered. Later that day when Keloğlan had returned from hunting, she said to him, "Oh, my husband, now that we have been married for some time, you should keep no secrets from me. You should tell your wife all of your secrets including your means of acquiring such great wealth." In this way she persuaded him to tell her his secret.

"My secret is in a ring that I keep in my wallet," he told her

That night when Keloğlan had fallen asleep, his wife quietly took the ring from Keloğlan's wallet and gave it to the black servant. The servant placed the ring on his finger and licked it. The two black giants appeared and asked, "What is your wish?"

The servant said, "Take Keloğlan and his mother back to their former home. Then take this palace, Keloğlan's wife, and me and move us to the middle of some sea." The black giants immediately did exactly what the black servant had ordered.

When Keloğlan woke up in the morning, he found himself

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back in the shabby house where he had lived previously. He soon discovered that his magic ring was missing. He went then to the palace of the padishah, who supposed that he was still very rich. After he had reported that the padishah's daughter had run off with the black servant, the padishah said, "Don't worry, son. My youngest daughter is even more beautiful than your former wife was, and I shall have you married to her."

"No, my padishah, that is not the kind of thing I want to request of you now. I have come to ask that you take care of my mother until I return." When the padishah agreed to do this, Keloğlan left his mother at the palace and set out on a journey, with his dog and his cat, to find his wife and the black servant

Keloğlan had had a sister much older than himself who had long before left home after she had married a Zümrüdü bird.<sup>6</sup> One day when Keloğlan was resting on the side of a mountain, a giant bird approached him and said, "Selamünaleyküm."

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

<sup>6</sup>Zümrüdü means emerald green, the color that the giant anka bird is often said to be. The Middle East has various giant birds in its mythologies: the Phoenix, the Simurgh, the anka, and the roc (rukh) described by Sindbad in the Arabian Nights. They occur frequently in Turkish tales, sometimes hostile creatures but more often benevolent toward human beings.

<sup>7</sup>Selamünaleyküm/Aleykümselam--traditional exchange of greetings between Moslems 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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They talked together for a while, and as they did so, learned more and more about each other. They finally realized that they were relatives, for the bird was the anka which had married Keloğlan's sister. Keloğlan told the anka bird everything that had happened--just as I have been telling it to you

After he had heard Keloğlan's story, the anka bird said, "Very recently there appeared in the middle of the Red Sea a palace which had never been seen there before. In fact, it has been there for only three or four days."

(Now let us simplify this story a little so that it does not become too long.) The Zümrüdü Anka carried Keloğlan, along with his dog and his cat, to a place on the Red Sea shore opposite the palace. There the dog said, "Oh, cat friend, this man took care of us for years when he had to carry wood on his back from the forest in order to do so. Now it is our turn to him. I shall swim and carry you on my back the short distance to the palace, and there we shall find some way of recovering Keloğlan's ring for him."

"All right! Let us do that," said the cat.

After they had reached the palace in the middle of the Red Sea, the dog hid in the garden outside and the cat entered the building through an open window. When the padishah's

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daughter saw the cat, she was very pleased, for the palace being overrun with rats. The cat started at once to catch kill rats, and both the padishah's daughter and the black servant were very pleased by this.

One day while the cat was catching and killing rats, one of them asked it, "What is your intention? Are you trying to extinguish our roots completely?"

The cat answered, "I shall kill every one of you unless you will discover and then tell me where the black servant keeps a magic ring."

"If you will promise not to eat anymore of us, I shall you where that ring is," said the rat. After the cat had promised not to eat any more rats, the rat said, "That ring is kept under the tongue of the black servant, who is sleeping at this time.

"How can we get that ring?" asked the cat.

The rat answered, "I shall put my tail in his nose and cause him to sneeze. When he sneezes, the ring will fall from his mouth, and you can seize it."

They did exactly as the rat had suggested and they got the magic ring. The cat then rushed to the dog and said, "I have ring. Let us take it to Keloğlan at once." He climbed on dog's back again, and they started back to the shore.

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While the dog was swimming toward the shore, the dog said, "Hey, brother cat, give the ring to me or I shall drop you here in the sea. I want to be the one who delivers the ring to Keloğlan

The cat answered, "But, brother dog, your mouth is open much of the time, and you may drop the ring into the sea

"No, I would not do any such thing," said the dog. "Give me the ring!

The helpless cat gave the ring to the dog, and at first the dog kept it clamped tightly in its mouth. But as they got closer to the shore and saw Keloğlan waiting for them, the dog barked, "Hav Hav!" and dropped the ring into the

Keloğlan became quite angry at this and began to shout at the dog. But the cat said, "Don't do that, Keloğlan. We shall find your ring for you. You just wait for us here on the shore

When the ring had fallen into the sea, it had been swallowed by a fish. The cat, which had special powers, knew this. It also knew exactly what that particular fish looked like. The cat and the dog therefore began following all the fish before they found the one which had swallowed the ring. When the cat saw that fish, it grabbed the fish in its mouth and ran with it to Keloğlan. They cut open the fish and took out the magic ring.

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After Keloğlan had the ring safely back on his finger, he licked it and called up the two black giants. When these giants asked him for his orders, Keloğlan said, "Put that palace containing the girl and the black servant back in its former place. Then take me to my mother." Within a second the giants had accomplished both of the things they had been told to do.

Back home, Keloğlan went to the padishah and reported to him everything that had happened. The padishah went to see his daughter, and he found her sleeping with the black servant, the two hugging each other so tightly that not even water could have passed between them. He drew his sword and killed both of them right where they lay in bed.

Later the padishah gave his youngest daughter in marriage to Keloğlan. They ate and drank and had all of their wishes fulfilled, and that is where our story ends