

Story #488 (Tape #12, 1970)

Narrator: Güner Epli, 14

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The <sup>magic goat</sup> Three Sons and Their Three Magic Gifts

Once there was and once there was not--well, in that time there was a man and his three sons who owned a goat. The man was a tailor, and the three sons took turns taking the goat out to graze. One day when it was the eldest son's turn to take the goat to pasture, he took the goat to some of the best grazing places. At the end of the day, as they were on the way home, the boy said to the goat, "Did you have enough to eat?"

*Animal speaks human language*  
"Yes, I had wonderful grazing today. It was so good that I cannot eat another thing," said the goat.

The eldest son brought the goat home and put him in the pen. When father returned, he asked, "Son, did you let the goat graze well?"

"Yes, I did."

But the father did not believe the son. He went to the goat and asked it, "Did my eldest son feed you well?"

That goat was a very <sup>ingratitude</sup> ungrateful animal, and it said, "No, he did not feed me well."

When the father heard this, he was very angry. He went to the house and struck his eldest son on the back with a stick and drove him

No one knew where the boy went after that.

The next day it was the turn of the middle son to take the goat to pasture. He took the goat to a beautiful green pasture and let it feed fully. On the way home he asked the goat if it had had enough to eat.

"Yes, I had plenty to eat--so much that I cannot eat any more."

But when they got home, the father would not believe that his middle son had fed the goat well, and so he went to the goat pen and asked the goat, "Did you have enough to eat?"

"No, I did not have enough to eat."

The father was also very angry with the middle son. He beat him too and threw him out of the house too.

On the third day it was the turn of the youngest son to take the goat to graze. He took the goat to a good pasture in the same way that his brothers had, and, like his brothers, he asked the goat on the way home if it had had enough to eat.

"Yes, I had plenty to eat."

When he arrived home with the goat, his father would not believe that he had fed the goat properly. Again he went to the goat pen and asked the goat, "Did my son feed you well today?"

"No, he did not," said the goat.

Again, he beat and drove away the son who had not fed the goat properly. After a short while, however, the man realized what a serious mistake he had made in dismissing his three sons. He took a stick and this time beat the goat on the back and drove it away. After this the man was left completely alone, and he led a miserable life.

After he had left home, the eldest son had become an apprentice to a carpenter. The middle son had apprenticed himself to a machinist. The youngest had become apprentice to a tradesman.

After several years, the eldest son thought that by now his father must have realized his mistake, and he felt that he should go to visit his father. Since his master was very fond of this eldest son, he gave him a gift as he set out, and he instructed him how to use it: "This is a token of friendship between you and me. Whenever you are hungry, say 'Open, my table! Open, my table!' This magic table will open, and the dishes that you want will come from it."<sup>1</sup>

The young man then set out on his journey home. After a while he became hungry. When he said, "Open, my table! Open, my table!" the top of the table was covered with all kinds of foods. After he had eaten his fill, the young man put the table on his shoulder and proceeded along his way. At night he came to an inn.<sup>3-6</sup> It was meal time at the inn, and everyone who was there was eating. They invited the young man to join them at the meal.

"No, I cannot eat your food. I should invite you to eat from mine." He then said, "Open, my table! Open, my table!" and with the food that appeared on the top of the table, he gave a banquet to all the people who were there.

<sup>1</sup>It is unusual that magic gifts are given by ordinary mortals. Usually they are the gifts of saints, supernatural beings, or animals. When an apprentice had worked long for a master, in older times, he would usually give him a gift when he departed, though not, of course, a magic gift. Here the realistic element of the peasants' lives crosses over into the fantasy world of fairy tales.



After the banquet was over, the young man put the table away and went to bed. The <sup>46</sup>innkeeper, however, had seen what the young man had done with his table. He said to his wife, "We have a table that looks exactly like his table. Let us take his table and leave ours in its place."

When the young man arose the next morning, he loaded their table on his back and went to his father's house. There his father welcomed him.

The young man said, "Father, invite all the residents of this neighborhood to your home, and I shall give them all a feast."

"How can you do that, son?"

"My master gave me a table which you will see perform when the guests arrive."

When all the guests had arrived, the young man said to his table, "Open, my table! Open, my table!" but there was no change in the table. Nothing appeared on top of it. Right then the young man suddenly realized that the innkeeper had exchanged his table for another. The guests returned to their homes without having eaten anything.

After a while, the second son also wanted to visit his father. His master gave him a donkey which would drop gold. When one said, "Put out gold! Put out gold!" it would splash out gold from its mouth in every direction.<sup>2</sup>

*Donkey -  
gold defecating*

<sup>2</sup>This is the traditional gold-defecating donkey of folktales, but the young girl narrator has cleaned up the story at this point.

This young man stopped at the same inn where his brother had stayed. There he distributed gold to everyone. The innkeeper watched this young man. When he took his donkey to the stable and then went to bed, the innkeeper exchanged the donkey with one of his own. The next morning the young man started again on his journey home. When he reached home, he was welcomed by his father: "O, my son, you have travelled such a great distance! But did you come home bringing nothing but a donkey?"

"O, father, I brought only a donkey," said the son, "but do you know what a talent this donkey has? Invite everyone to your home, and we shall make all of your guests rich!"

Many people were invited to their home, but the donkey could not produce any gold. Then the young man realized that the innkeeper had taken his donkey and left another in its place.

Now it was the turn of the youngest son to come home to visit his father. The elder brothers discovered where he was, however, and before he started for home, they wrote him a letter, saying, "The innkeeper took our belongings, and he may attempt to take yours too. Stay awake and teach him a good lesson!"

When the youngest son was about to leave his job to visit his father, his master said to him, "I shall give you a stick and a bag<sup>3</sup> as tokens of our friendship. If anyone tries to harm you in any way, you will say, "Come out, stick! Come out, stick!" and it will beat everyone there to death."

The youngest son stopped at the same inn where his two older

<sup>3</sup> Although this is not explicitly stated, it is clear from the context that the stick given to the young man is to be carried in the bag given to him at the same time.

brothers had stayed. When he went to bed for the night, the innkeeper was very curious to know what it was that he had brought along with him. He was so excited that he could not go to sleep. The young man had stuck the stick in his belt. When the innkeeper thought that the young man was asleep, he went quietly to where the young man was lying and tried to pull the stick from his belt. But right then the young man said, "Come out, my stick! Come out, my stick!" and the stick came out and gave the innkeeper a good beating. (I think that it was a magic stick.) It kept beating the innkeeper until finally he shouted, "Enough!" He then went and brought the table and the donkey [which had belonged to the two elder brothers].

Taking these things with him, the youngest son returned to his father's home where he gave everyone a great feast. They became very wealthy, for the table produced this and that<sup>4</sup> kind of food, and the donkey produced a great amount of gold.

<sup>4</sup> The expression used here was böyle böyle, usually translated such and such or so and so.