

Story 928 (1977 Tape 22)

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The Ungrateful Keloğlan¹ and Brother Fox

Once there was and once there was not a fox who used to steal grapes at night from the small vineyard of Keloğlan. Keloğlan had not been able to catch the thief, but one night he cut his finger and poured salt into the wound in order to keep awake. He was able to stay awake this time, and so in the middle of the night he caught the fox at his vineyard.

The fox pleaded for his life: "Please, Keloğlan, do not kill me. Let us become close friends, like brothers, and I shall help you."

Keloğlan wondered how a fox could be his friend or brother, but he said "All right," anyway

Time passed until one day the fox caught two partridges. Holding the partridges in his teeth, he took them to Keloğlan and said, "Brother, get up! I have brought you two partridges.

¹The word keloğlan means literally bald boy. The baldness is not caused by aging but by ringworm infestation of the scalp. Children improperly cared for often catch ringworm, for the disease seems to flourish where uncleanness exists. Usually the youngest child of a large family is subject to ringworm infection--so much so that any youngest child may in folktales be called Keloğlan, whether he has ringworm or not, and so may any hapless, homeless waif.

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Clean them and eat them!" Keloğlan arose from where he was sleeping and did as the fox had directed

Time again passed along until one day the fox, walking along the bank of a stream, came upon the daughters of the padişah washing their dirty clothes.² They were all only half dressed, having put their outer garments in a bundle. Inside that bundle of clothing they had placed their rings and other jewelry. The fox very quietly crept closer and closer to the bundle until he could grab it. Holding the bundle in his mouth tightly with his teeth, the fox fled. When they saw him running away, the daughters of the padişah began shouting, "Help! Help! A thieving fox has stolen our clothes and jewelry!" But nobody was able to catch the thief.

Going to Keloğlan's house, the fox called, "Wake up wake up, Brother! Look here at the jewels I have brought for you!"

Keloğlan looked and then asked, "Where did you get these jewels?"

The fox replied, "Do not ask such a question. That is none of your business."

After another day or two had passed, the fox said to

²It never seems to strike peasant narrators as anomalous that the daughters of rulers should be washing clothes, carrying water, or doing other household chores. They place such princesses in their own humble, village surroundings and situation.

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Keloğlan, "Brother, get up, get up! Go and take a good bath, for I intend to get a daughter of the padişah as a bride you."

Keloğlan answered, "Brother Fox, are you crazy? Think now of who I am and where I am, and then think of who the daughter of the padişah is and where she is How can you say such a thing?"

The fox said, "Boy, don't interfere with my work! If I say that I will do that, then I will do that Go and scrub yourself well. I swear to you that I shall get the daughter of the padişah for you

When the fox left Keloğlan, he went straight to the palace of the padişah and knocked on the door, tak, tak, tak!

Those inside asked, "Who is it?"

The fox replied, "Open the door! It is I, Brother Fox⁴²⁻⁴⁹ the servant of Şakşakı Bey.³ Şakşakı Bey sends you his greetings and requests that you lend him a set of scales on which he can weigh some gold

Within the house, there was confusion. They said, "Allah, Allah! can there be such a thing--weighing gold?" But to the fox they said, "All right, you may borrow the scales," and

³This name is mildly humorous. Şaksak is onomatopoeia, in Turkish, for the sound of clapping hands. The word bey means lord or at least Sir. The juxtaposition of the two words is ironic. In "Puss in Boots" and its variants the cat usually gives a high-sounding name to the impoverished boy whom it serves.

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they handed him the scales.

The fox took the scales and returned home with them. There he stuck a couple of gold pieces to the bottom of cannister. He wanted to give the impression that his master had simply overlooked those two gold coins while weighing gold. Then after a couple of hours, he returned the scales to the palace.

When the padişah's wife found the two gold pieces at the bottom of the scale, she went at once to her husband and said, "My padişah, they returned the scales, but when they did, there were two pieces of gold left in the bottom of the scale cannister. They apparently forgot them or did not bother to examine the cannister.

The padişah said, "Oh, Allah! He must be richer than I am!"

The fox allowed fifteen days to pass, and then he went to the palace again and requested to borrow the scales once more in order to weigh the gold of Şakşakı Bey. When he returned the scales, he pulled the same trick that he had earlier: deliberately leaving two pieces of gold in the scale.

Five or ten days later the fox said to Keloğlan, "Brother, the time has come for me to go to the palace and say that I want the daughter of the padişah for you.

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Keloğlan was very confused. He said, "Oh, Brother Fox, how will you be able to do that? How can you want a padişah's daughter for me as wife? I am only a poor keloğlan! To what will the padişah's daughter come? I don't even have one decent room!"

The fox replied, "Keloğlan, mind your own business. If I said that I would do it, then I can do it!"

Then Brother Fox went to the padişah's palace. In those days there were gold and silver chairs for guests to sit upon. If one chose to sit on the silver throne, the host understood from that that he had come to ask for his daughter as wife to someone.⁴ Upon being shown into the ruler's presence, the fox went at once and sat in the silver chair. He said, "My dear Padişah, I chose this chair because I wish to ask for the hand of one of your daughters for Şakşakı Bey. He wants to marry one of your daughters."

The padişah went to his wife's room and consulted with her about this marriage. He said, "Wife, what do you think

⁴To some degree in real life and to a greater degree in folktales, Turks have employed symbolic language. The arrangement of flowers in a vase or food on a tray may often carry a secret message. In her letters from Constantinople Lady Mary Wortley Montagu commented upon this practice in the early 18th century. Signaling something by the chair one chooses to sit in occurs several times in ATON tales. Usually the visible distinction among the chairs is simply a matter of color.

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about this? Şakşakı Bey sent his assistant to say that he wishes to marry our daughter."

The wife of the padişah said, "Yes." (There was the same kind of thinking in the old days that there is now. If bridegroom is rich enough, then the other things don't seem to be important. Nobody seems to care about the bridegroom's character or his family line. The wife of the padişah said, "We should say, 'Yes.' It seems that he is a very wealthy man

The padişah returned from his wife's room and said to fox, "Yes, we shall accept this offer. His parents may to ask for our daughter as a wife for their son

The fox said, "But, Your Majesty, his land is a great distance away, and his parents are both very old. Surely wedding feast can be held without them."

"Now?" the padişah asked.

"Yes, yes, now! Let us go shopping together for the things that will be needed."⁵

The padişah, his wife, and Brother Fox went together to the various stores to do the shopping necessary to prepare for the wedding. Among other places, they went to a jewelry shop,

⁵Again, the narrator senses nothing incongruous in the ruler's going shopping for ingredients for a wedding feast and for numerous necessities for a wedding celebration!

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but after they had made numerous selections, the jeweler asked for money for these purchases. The fox shamed him by saying, "How could you demand payment now, right in the presence of the padişah? You will get your money later. Do not worry about that!"

The fox used the same strategy in all the stores where they shopped, and he managed not to pay a single lira during their whole purchasing trip. Brother Fox had a tailor a magnificent suit, and when it was finished, he took it home. There he found Keloğlan sleeping, as usual. He said, "Hey, Keloğlan, wake up, wake up! The bride is coming!" Confused, Keloğlan arose, took a bath, and put on his new suit.

The fox had given the bridal procession exact directions for the route they were to follow to reach the bridegroom's home: "Take this road and then turn onto that road, and after that keep going straight ahead. Do not turn off that road anywhere, and at the end of it you will come to our mansion. It is very large."

Before the final events of the wedding festivities arrived, when the bride would be taken to the groom's home the fox had acquired a real mansion for Keloğlan. The mansion which he got had belonged to a family of seven-headed giants. 46-47 The fox had gone there an hour earlier that day with Keloğlan, and the giants had been pleased to see them coming, for they

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expected to use them for their dinner that day. The fox knew what they were thinking, and he said to them, "O Brother Giants are thinking of eating us, but can you see in the distance that great crowd moving this way? They are the padişah's soldiers, and they are coming to cut off your heads. I think that you should hide immediately!

Badly frightened, the giants asked the fox, "Where can we hide?"

Brother Fox showed them a dry well and said, "Hurry! Hurry! Get in there and hide. When the padişah's soldiers have passed here, I shall tell you, and then you can come out again."

The seven-headed giants descended to the very bottom of that dry well. The fox and Keloğlan tumbled into the well all of the large rocks that they could find. Then they sealed the mouth of the well with an especially large rock. It was in this way that the seven-headed giants were killed. The fox then said to Keloğlan, "Go to the roof of this mansion and

for the bride there. (In older times it was a custom the bridegroom to do this--to await the bride on the roof of the house. Keloğlan did as the fox had directed and waited on the roof for the coming of the bride. After the procession had arrived with the bride, the wedding was complete, and Keloğlan and the padişah's daughter were married.

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After some time had passed, the fox said to himself, "I think that I shall test this Keloğlan. I wonder if he realizes how much I have done for him? Does he appreciate the things that I have arranged for him? I can find out by pretending to die."

As you know, Keloğlan was Şakşakı Bey now. He grew richer all the time. Only a few days before, thousands of sheep had arrived to pasture on his land. The fox had said to all of the shepherds in the area, "You are supposed to take your flocks to such-and-such a place. If you fail to comply with this order, the padişah will have your heads cut off!" Everyone passing by asked, "Look at all those sheep! To whom do they all belong? They must belong to some very rich man!"

When people asked such questions, the fox would tell them, "All these sheep and cows and horses belong to Şakşakı Bey!"

And when the people heard this, they would say, "Allah Allah! This man must be even richer than our padişah! He is probably the richest person in the entire country!"

Now let us return to the fox who wished to test Keloğlan's friendship and loyalty. One day when Keloğlan went hunting, the fox pretended to be dead. Keloğlan's wife began to cry, for her brother-in-law had died. When Keloğlan returned home, he saw that his wife was greatly upset, and he asked, "Why

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are you crying?"

"Brother Fox has died," she said.

ingate to "Well, don't cry, you stupid woman. He was, after all only a dirty fox. Throw his body in the trash and don't shed your tears in vain for a worthless fox."

The fox heard very clearly everything that Keloğlan had said. He arose at once and said to Keloğlan, "Shame on you did a great many things for you. It was I who made you a bey. It was I who arranged to have the padişah's daughter become your wife. You were just a keloğlan, and you had nothing. What a pity. But now you are ready to throw my body into the trash. Ha!"

Frightened and ashamed, Keloğlan began to plead: "Please, Brother Fox, forgive me. I have made a great mistake. I didn't know that you weren't really dead."

The fox did forgive him, and the days began to pass again just as they had before. After some time the fox really did die. This time Keloğlan had a beautiful funeral procession prepared, for he was afraid that the fox might come to life again.