

Story 864 (1964 Tape  
erased on  
field trip  
after contents  
transcribed)

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Taşköprü kaza,  
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Fate Favors <sup>Bro</sup> Youngest and Punishes Older Brothers

There was once a family in a village that had three sons. When the parents of these three young men died, the sons decided upon a way of dividing the family livestock among themselves. The eldest said, "Let us each choose one of our father's three barns. When the herds are being brought home from pasture tonight, we shall leave all the doors of these barns open. Then each of us will receive the sheep and goats and cows that go to his barn.

After the others had agreed to this proposal, the oldest brother chose a large new barn as his own. The middle brother chose a similar barn. When it was the turn of the youngest brother to choose a barn, there was nothing left but an old shed. When the flocks came back from pasture, the healthier and stronger animals, which led the way, went to the large and attractive barns of the older brothers. Only a few of the poorer animals went to Keloğlan's<sup>1</sup> shed. Keloğlan was upset

<sup>1</sup>Keloğlan means bald boy. <sup>133-138</sup> The baldness is not the type caused by aging but by ringworm infection of the scalp. Anyone could contract this disease, but since it is fostered by uncleanliness, it often attacks children of large and impoverished families which cannot provide adequate care. Older

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about this, but there was nothing that he could do about it.

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A short while after this, Keloğlan took a journey to another village. It was night when he started home, and he decided to look for a place to sleep. Not far from the road was a deserted grain mill, and he decided to spend the night there. He climbed into a grain bin and fell asleep.

Much later in the night he was awakened by voices. That old mill was a meeting place for a group of jinns, who came there after midnight to eat and drink and talk. Keloğlan was frightened at first, and he lay very quietly in the bin listening to their conversation.

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One of them said, "There is a padişah in such-and-such a land who has a blind son. They have searched in many places for a cure for this boy's blindness but have not been able to find one. There is a stunted poplar tree on the edge of the next village from here whose leaves have medicinal qualities. If the boy's eyes were rubbed with a leaf from that tree, he would be able to see."

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children may attend to their own needs, but the youngest children, unable to do so, are prone to all illnesses fostered by neglect. Ringworm is so commonly perceived as a disease of youngest children in Turkey that the word keloğlan has become in folktales a synonym for youngest son, whether or not a given youngest son's baldness resulted from ringworm.

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Another jinn said, "I have discovered that there is a great hoard of gold <sup>buried treasure</sup> in the small hill that rises from the long valley between the rivers. No one has ever heard of this buried treasure there."

When the first light of morning appeared, another of the jinns said, "It is time for us to leave."<sup>2</sup>

When they had gone from the mill, Keloğlan climbed out of the grain bin and went to the stunted poplar tree on the edge of the next village. Taking a bunch of leaves from that tree, he set out for such-and-such a land. Going to the royal palace, he was admitted to the presence of the padişah "Your Majesty," he said, "I have brought a cure for the blindness of your son.

padişah said, "Many people have brought cures for his blindness, but none of them has cured him. But you are welcome, young man, and if you do cure my son's blindness, I shall reward you richly."

Going to the prince's room, Keloğlan rubbed his eyes with the leaves of the poplar tree saying, "Bismillah!"<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Jinns, like certain other supernatural beings, are often creatures of the night. Like ghosts and vampires, they must return to wherever they came from when dawn breaks or the cock crows announcing the coming of the day.

<sup>3</sup>I begin with the name of God. This is a short form for Bismillahirrahmanirrahim--I begin with the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful.

*When Suleyman returns*

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Almost immediately the prince began to see, and before the day had ended, he could see as well as anyone else.

padişah said to Keloğlan, "You may ask from me whatever you wish

"What shall I wish from you?" said Keloğlan. "I shall wish for forty mules and forty laborers."

This wish was granted, and Keloğlan departed at once from that land with his forty mules and forty men. Returning to his own country, he traveled along the long valley between the rivers until he came to a small hill. There he had his laborers start digging in search of the buried gold. After digging at various places for forty days, they at last found a number of large earthenware jars filled with red gold coins<sup>4</sup> Keloğlan had these all loaded on his mules and then returned to his home

When he arrived there, his older brothers shouted, "Where have you been all this time, Bald Brother? What are you carrying on those mules?"

"Red wheat," he answered. But when Keloğlan had the mules unloaded, his brothers saw that it was not red wheat but red gold.

<sup>4</sup>Gold is never red except in the peasant imagination. Peasants rarely saw any gold, and so their thoughts may have been colored by the copper coins that they did see.

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"How did you get all of this gold?" they asked him

"I slept in a deserted mill near such-and-such a village. Jinns came there at night and told each other their secrets. They know where all the treasures are buried in the earth, and one of them described the location of this treasure. If you will go and hide in that mill, you may hear them talking of such things.

The two older brothers slept at the deserted mill several nights without seeing or hearing any jinns. On the seventh night, however, the jinns assembled there again. As soon as they entered the mill, one of the jinns said, "Someone must have overheard us talking here the last time we met, for the treasure I described to you has been dug up and taken away.

"Let us search the mill this time before we discuss our secrets," said another jinn.

When they searched through the mill, they found the two older brothers hiding in the grain bin. The jinns captured them and held their heads against the turning millstones for a long time before releasing them.

When these two older brothers reached home, they beat Kelođlan, but they were never able to find a treasure like his. He became a wealthy ađa,<sup>5</sup> and they remained farmers, as their father had been.

<sup>5</sup>An ađa is a rural landowner, usually wealthy, often powerful.