

Story 911 (1964 Tape
erased on
field trip
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Location: Taşköprü, a kaza town
in Kastamonu Province

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The Crow Who Demanded the Bride

Once there was and once there was not a lame crow who could not run. Whenever it alighted, however, it would always get a thorn stuck in its foot. One day it got in its foot an unusually large thorn, so large that it could not pull it out. After trying in vain for some time to pull out the thorn, the crow finally decided to go to a neighbor woman for help. He went to her house and said, "Aunt Habibe,¹ I have a thorn in my foot. Will you remove it for me?"

"Of course I will," she said. She removed the thorn from the foot of the crow, and the bird flew off, p-r-r-r-t,²

The crow felt greatly relieved as it flew away, and it was glad to be rid of the thorn. A little later, however the crow thought of the thorn again and remembered that it was his thorn. He then decided that he wanted that thorn back. Going to Aunt Habibe, he said, "Give me back my thorn."

But it happened that Aunt Habibe had made bread that day,

¹Aunt is a polite and respectful term applied to an older woman. Habibe means lover, beloved, or friend, but it is apparently a female name here.

²Onomatopoeia for the flutter of bird wings. It is used consistently for that sound in Turkish folktales.

*8/1 change!
Footnote?
Propable?*

*Animal speak
understand
human language*

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and she had used the thorn as fuel to heat her oven. When the crow returned and asked for his thorn, she said, "But you left it here, and I burned it up heating my oven to make bread today."

"That is very bad. Now you must give me in its place either the oven or the bread."

"All right," she said, "I'll give you some bread," and she gave him a warm fresh loaf of bread.

The loaf of bread was large, and the crow was small. He could not easily carry it around with him. He decided to leave it temporarily with another neighbor lady, Aunt Zehra, from whom he would recover it later. "Let me leave this loaf of bread with you for a while. I shall return for it later."

"Very well," the woman said

One day passed, two days passed, and finally three days passed, and the crow did not return for his bread. The bread was beginning to get dry. On the fourth day Aunt Zehra had to attend a wedding in another village, and she decided to take the bread with her and eat it on the way. She did this. While she was at the wedding, the crow suddenly remembered his loaf of bread, and when she got home from the wedding, the crow was waiting there for his bread. "Aunt Zehra, I have come for my loaf of bread."

"But I waited for you to come and get it for four days

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I thought that you did not want it, and so we ate it on the way to a wedding I attended today.

"That is very bad!" said the crow. "Since you cannot give me back my bread, you must now arrange to give me the bride."

"How can we do that?" she asked

"But you must do it!" he said, stamping his foot angrily on the ground.

When he continued to insist upon this, there was nothing for them to do but give him the bride. She was much heavier than the loaf of bread, but he carried her away as far as he could. When he was too tired to fly farther, he left the bride with a third old aunt, saying, "Keep my bride here for me overnight, and tomorrow I shall return for her

On the following day he did return for the bride, but by then he had changed into a handsome young man. He and the girl were then married, and she became truly his bride.³

³This story is sometimes told of a keloğlan, a bald boy, instead of a crow. Keloğlans become bald through ringworm infestation, a disease that spreads as a result of human uncleanliness. In large families of poor people, the youngest children may be unattended, thus dirty, thus vulnerable to ringworm. A keloğlan (literally bald boy) may be any son, but in folktales he is almost invariably the youngest son. This is so traditional that any youngest son may be called Keloğlan, even though he has all his hair and has suffered no ringworm infection!

Bald people in Turkey--whether bald because of age or because of ringworm--are thought to be stubborn. The keloğlan featured in some variants of this story wins a bride through stubbornness. When he leaves something in storage and it is

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lost, he demands something much more valuable to replace it. This usually progresses from chicken to ram to ox. Thus the culminating demand, the demand for the bride, is somewhat less absurd than the demand for a bride to replace a loaf of bread. It is also a bit more realistic than the present tale in that the trickster is a human being and not a bird. While an ox cannot be worth as much as a bride, it more nearly approaches that value than does a loaf of bread!