

Story 938 (1977 Tape 25)

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kaza of Göle,
Province of Kars

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Tale collected by
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The Poor Boy Who Became Padişah

Once there was and once there was not a man who had a wife and a horse, neither of whom was able to become pregnant. One day this man decided to visit a certain hoca¹ in order to seek a cure for this problem. On the way to visit the hoca, he met a very old man who was really Hızır,² but nobody knew that at the time. The old man asked him, "Where are you going?"

The man said to Hızır, "Neither my wife nor my horse can conceive an offspring. I am on my way to consult with a certain hoca in an effort to find some solution to this problem."

Hızır gave the man an apple and said to him, "Take this apple. Give the flesh of the apple to your wife to eat,

¹ A hoca is a Moslem priest.

² Hızır is a granter of wishes and a last-minute rescuer from disaster. Here he is a granter of wishes. rural Turks he is also a water deity and a fertility god.

infertility

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Sterility for*

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give the peelings to your horse. Both of them will then become pregnant." And then Hızır disappeared.

The man took the apple home right away instead of continuing his trip to the home of the hoca. He peeled the apple, gave the flesh of the fruit to his wife, and the peelings he gave to his mare. After due time, his wife bore a baby boy, and his horse bore a colt at about the same time.³ The man named⁴ his son Şah İsmail,⁵ and he named colt Kamer Tay.⁶

Şah İsmail's father died while the boy was still very small, but the child continued to grow, and when he was old enough, he was enrolled in school. Every day after school was over he had a practice of visiting his horse, Kamer

*İsmail
Kamer*

³ Despite the fact that human females and female horses have gestation periods of different lengths, they often have pregnancies of precisely the same duration in this type of tale in Turkey.

⁴ In almost all variants of this tale the giver of the magic apple (whether Hızır or a dervish) reserves the right to name the two offspring, and he then returns a year (or several years) later to do just that.

⁵ The great figure named Şah İsmail was the Shi'ite champion of Persia (ruling from 1502 to 1524) who founded the Safavid Dynasty. Whether Shi'ite or simply of Persian residence, Turks sometimes name children after him. There may be no real similarity between the namesake and the historical figure.

⁶ A very common name for horses in Turkish folktales. The spelling is sometimes Kamber Tay.

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One day, however, when he went to the stable to visit Kamer Tay, he found the horse looking sad and crying.⁷ He asked, "Why are you crying?"

"Your mother has married another man, and now the two of them wish to kill you. She has poisoned some sherbet⁸ she has made, and she intends to serve this sherbet to you."

Şah İsmail said, "Oh, my Kamer Tay, do not worry and do be sad. I shall not drink any of the sherbet."

Kamer Tay said, "Oh, yes! She will play some trick on to compel you to drink it!"

Şah İsmail said again, "Do not worry! Do not worry! cannot force me to drink that sherbet!"

But this is what his mother tried to do. When he reached home, she said to him, "Oh, my Son, there was a Mevlüt⁹ service chanted at the home of a neighbor today, and they sent us some of the sherbet. Drink some of it

⁷ Not only do sensitive and intelligent Turkish horses sometimes weep, but so do similar horses in the Persian and Greek traditions.

⁸ In the Middle East sherbet is not the frozen confection it is in the United States. It is, instead, a cold fruit drink.

⁹ Mevlüt is a religious cantata written at Bursa in 1409 by Süleyman Çelebi. It celebrates the birth and life of Mohammed. It is performed most often as a requiem, both at the time of a death and at various intervals later--sometimes 40 days later, sometimes a year later, sometimes at any later date that pleases the wishes of the survivors.

*Ismael with
man with*

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But the boy did not accept his mother's invitation. He said, "Oh, no, Mother, I cannot drink any of it because I am too full."

The following day when Şah İsmail returned from school, he saw that Kamer Tay was again sad, that he was again crying. The horse said to him, "She will try to kill you. I do not trust her!"

time the mother could not persuade Şah İsmail either to drink or to eat anything. She suddenly realized that it must be Kamer Tay who was warning the boy not to drink or eat what she offered him. To her new husband she said, "I am now quite certain that it is Kamer Tay who is warning Şah İsmail not to eat or drink anything that I serve him. We must kill that horse!"

The next day the mother said to her son, "Oh, dear Şah İsmail, I am very ill. The doctor has told me that I must eat the liver of Kamer Tay if I wish to be cured

Şah İsmail said, "All right, Mother, if you say so. You must get well. It really does not matter that I shall have no horse. But please allow me to do one thing first. I should like to ride my horse again for the last time After that, you may kill him." The mother accepted his wish without suspecting anything.

Şah İsmail did ride his horse, as he said he would, but in doing so, he rode far, far away from his own country

They traveled and they traveled. One day Kamer Tay said, "Şah İsmail, pluck the two hairs that grow from my forehead Whenever you are in difficulty, rub those two hairs together, and I shall immediately come to your assistance

Not long after that, the boy came to a very large garden where he was hired as an assistant to the gardener One day after he had been working there for some time, the chief gardener said to him, "Oh, Brother, today is a bayram¹⁰ I should like to go to the festival. You watch over the garden today."

Şah İsmail said, "All right." But as soon as the gardener had left, he rubbed together the two hairs to summon Kamer Tay. He mounted the horse as soon as it arrived, and then he rode back and forth across the garden pillaging everything within its borders. After dismissing the horse, he proceeded to tie together his own hands and feet so that it would appear that someone else had devastated the garden.

When the gardener returned from the festival, he asked, "What is the trouble, my boy? What happened?"

İsmail answered, "Oh, Gardener, a man came along the road, entered the garden, and did all this damage."

¹⁰ A bayram is a Moslem religious holiday period. Some bayrams are brief; some last for several days.

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/Then the gardener went home. When he did so, his daughter saw Şah İsmail, and Şah İsmail also saw the girl. He later sent her a watermelon from the garden. The padişah had three daughters. Şah İsmail also sent them a watermelon.⁷¹¹

The padişah of the land had three daughters. When they came of age, he said, "I shall now have my daughters married. They will each throw money at men who pass before the palace, and each will marry the man on whom her money lands.

/The daughters of the padişah threw the money, but none of it hit any man.⁷¹² Everyone came and left. Only a keloğlan¹³ remained, and so the money landed on him. When the padişah observed this, he became very angry and said,

¹¹ Here and elsewhere the narrator reveals repeatedly that she is a very inept storyteller. She omits important information and episodes and neglects key information. Worse yet, she injects trivial nonsense that has nothing whatever to do with the tale, as she does here in the bracketed material. The pillaging of the garden is another example.

¹² It is obvious from what follows (as well as from other variants of this type) that the two older sisters struck desirable males with their money and were subsequently married to them. It is only the youngest daughter's money that first strikes no one and then strikes a seemingly undesirable male.

¹³ A keloğlan, literally, is a boy made bald by ringworm infestation of the scalp. Often a youngest child of a poor family, the keloğlan is usually a rather scruffy fellow. By extension, any scruffy youngster may be called a keloğlan, even though he may be neither bald nor diseased.

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"Throw the money again!" But again the money landed on the head of the keloğlan.¹⁴

Some time after this the padişah became blind. Doctors said that the only thing that would restore his sight was some lion's milk. When Keloğlan heard this, he rubbed the magic hairs together again, and Kamer Tay appeared. The horse carried him to a cave in which lived a mother lion and her cubs. The mother lion's foot had been injured. After Keloğlan had treated her foot and relieved her pain, this lioness said to him, "You may ask of me whatever you wish."

Keloğlan said, "I should like to have some of your milk.

The lioness answered, "I wish that I could give you some milk, but all my milk is now inside the bodies of my cubs. The good milk is in the right side of their bodies, and the bad milk is in the left side."¹⁵ You will have to kill one of the cubs in order to get any of my milk, but you must do this someplace where I cannot see you doing it, for if I should see you killing one of my cubs, I should be unable to restrain myself from killing you."

¹⁴ The narrator omits the fact that after the money has struck Şah İsmail (here the keloğlan) three times, even the padişah is convinced that the boy is her kismet and has his daughter married to him.

¹⁵ The right side/left side and good milk/bad milk references provide another example of the narrator's incompetence. They serve no apparent purpose.

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Şah İsmail killed one of the lion cubs, well out of sight of the mother. Taking both the good and the bad milk, he returned to the palace. There he was met by his two brothers-in-law, who asked him, "What did you get?"

"I got some lion's milk."

They asked, "How will you give the milk to the padişah?"

"I have a kind of hose through which I shall give him the milk. I shall use that."¹⁶

Going to the patient, Şah İsmail said to the padişah, "Look at the tip of your nose."¹⁷ The padişah looked at the tip of his nose, and Şah İsmail gave him the milk. Almost immediately the blind man began to see again.

After that, the padişah went to war. Keloğlan again rubbed the hairs together, and he became a very handsome man on a horse.¹⁸ He killed all the enemies and became a padişah.¹⁹

¹⁶ Totally inconsequential.

¹⁷ The blind padişah can hardly look at the tip of his nose.

¹⁸ The point here is not that the boy becomes a very handsome man on a horse. The point is that with the aid of his magic horse the boy wins a stunning victory on behalf of the padişah. In her confusion the narrator seems to have forgotten that the protagonist is Şah İsmail!

¹⁹ The point is not that he killed many enemies and became a padişah. The point is that his merit makes him the favorite son-in-law of the padişah and therefore his heir. He does not become just a padişah somewhere. Rather, he becomes the successor of the padişah who is his father-in-law.