Once there was and once there was not, long ago in the old times, a padişah who had neither son nor daughter. He had been thinking and thinking a great deal about this problem. One day he and his vizier took a trip into the countryside to get some air, but even while on this brief journey, the padişah's thoughts were filled with the problem of his childlessness.

As the padişah was thinking very deeply, a dervish approached him from one side and said to him, "My padişah, good health to you. What is it that you are thinking about so deeply?"

The padişah answered, "Why shouldn't I be thinking deeply? Who but I should be thinking in this way? What should I think of myself? I am a padişah without any children. There is no one to whom I can leave my crown and my throne when I die."

The dervish said, "Oh, my padişah, do not think that way. God is gracious, and everything is possible."
dervish then gave an apple to the padişah and said, "Take
this apple home. Peel it with a golden knife and place it
upon a golden tray. Then give the apple to your wife to eat,
and give the peelings to your black mare to eat. A child
will be born to your wife in due time, and a colt will be
borne by your mare, but you must not name either. I shall
come and name them both."

When the padişah reached home, he looked for a golden
knife and a golden tray. After he had found them, he peeled
the apple with the golden knife and placed it upon the
golden tray. After his wife had eaten the apple itself,
the padişah gave the peelings to his black mare. Several
months later, his wife had a boy baby and his mare bore a
colt.

Remembering the dervish's instructions, the padişah
refrained from naming either his son or the colt. This was
easy at first, but as months and even years passed, the
necessity of naming the child became more and more urgent.
Finally, after the passage of seven years, the people of the
village decided to give the boy a name.

It is, of course, preposterous that a mere village
would have a padişah who, like an Ottoman sultan, would have
a vizier. However, narrators regularly place their stories
in a context familiar both to themselves and to their
audiences.
On the appointed day, all of the villagers gathered in a large open field. Everyone from the ages of seven to seventy² came to participate in the naming of the padişah's son. Just as they were about to begin selecting a name, they saw a dervish approaching them. The dervish said, "Let us hope for the best. Tell me why all of this large crowd of people is gathered here?"

They told him, "Our padişah had a son seven years ago but the child still has no name. We have gathered here to select a name for him."

The dervish then said, "I shall provide both the padişah's child and his colt with appropriate names. The boy's name will be Şah Yusuf, and the colt's name will be Benli." Having said this, the dervish suddenly disappeared. The people looked everywhere for him, but the dervish was nowhere to be found.

The boy continued to grow. When he was old enough, he was enrolled in school by his father. One day soon after boy had started attending school, the padişah said to his wife, "I intend to make a [pilgrimage to Mecca). To whom should I entrust you and our son while I am away from home?"

² Seven to seventy is a common expression which means virtually everyone.
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His wife said, "You once had a black vizier. You could entrust us to him, if that man is still alive. You can entrust both us and our home to him.

The padişah accordingly went to find the black vizier. When the black vizier saw the padişah coming, he asked, "What has happened? What are you looking for here?"

"Nothing has happened. I am going to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca. My wife has told me that I can entrust my family and my home to you during my absence."

"All right."

The padişah went to Mecca, and the black vizier came to his home to protect his family. Time passed uneventfully until one day when Şah Yusuf was talking with his horse, Benli. Every day on the way home from school, Şah Yusuf went first to the stable to see Benli. On this particular day, he found Benli weeping. The boy asked, "Benli, why are you weeping?"

Benli said, "Oh, Şah Yusuf, let my life be sacrificed for you! We were both born through the power of the same apple. Notice the relationship between your mother and the black vizier. It is a shameful thing!"

Magic horses and especially intelligent and sensitive horses that talk are known to several cultures including the Greek, the Persian, and the Turkish.
Every day when Şah Yusuf returned from school, he found Benli weeping. One day Benli said, "Please do not eat anything that your mother serves you!"  

Şah Yusuf heeded Benli's warning and refused to eat any of the food which his mother had prepared for him. After this went on for a while, his mother concluded that her son was being protected by advice from Benli. She consulted a witch woman to find out how to get rid of her son and protect herself.

The witch woman said to her, "The padişah will soon return. You should pretend to be very ill. When the padişah sees you in that condition, he will want to take you to a doctor. You should then say to him, 'I have already consulted the doctors, and they have told me that I can be cured only by eating the heart of Benli.'"

Soon messengers arrived announcing the approach of the padişah. When he arrived at his home, he found his wife

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4 The narrator has compressed the tale here and omitted the plotting that goes on between the mother and her lover to get rid of the possible informants against them. Often they use a strategy not mentioned here. After the son refuses to eat the poisoned food prepared by his mother, the lovers have the mother feign illness; they then send the son for a supposed cure, one so difficult to obtain that he will almost certainly be killed in the quest to get it. Whether the task be to fetch lion's milk, a dragon-guarded apple, or some other seemingly unobtainable object, the son achieves his objective, often through the aid or advice of his magic horse.
lying in bed sick and moaning as if she were in great pain. Worried about his wife, the padişah asked her, "What is the matter with you? What is the nature of your illness? I shall take you at once to see a doctor."

His wife answered quickly, "Oh, my dear husband, I have fallen into an almost incurable illness. I have consulted the doctors already, and they all agree that the only cure is to eat the heart of Benli."

Helpless to know what else to do, the padişah spoke to his son, saying, "Oh, my dear son, as you know, your mother is extremely ill. Her only cure is to eat the heart of Benli. I know how dear Benli is to you, but we must now kill him. Benli's heart is our only hope."

Şah Yusuf said, "Very well, Father. I know that. All I ask is that you allow me to take one last ride on Benli's back, and then I shall bring him to you."

When the padişah accepted this request, Şah Yusuf mounted Benli, and the two of them escaped like birds, taking with them goods which were light in weight and heavy in value. They traveled and traveled. They went little, they

5 This expression is as common in Turkish real life as it is in Turkish folktales.
went far, but they proceeded carefully. After a while they saw a palace and rode up to it. The people of that palace said to them, "There is a huge seven-headed giant in this country who has already stolen three of our padişah's daughters. This is the night when he is due to return, and he will probably take the fourth and youngest daughter tonight."

Şah Yusuf said, "I shall await the arrival of this giant in order to save the padişah's youngest daughter." He waited and waited, and after a while the terrible monster approached with flashings like lightning and a roaring like thunder to get the fourth daughter of the padişah. He looked like a black cloud as he approached, but Şah Yusuf fearlessly off one of his heads immediately. But the giant was still able to grab the girl and flee with her to the well in which he lived.

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6 This is just part of a formulaic statement to indicate extremely lengthy travel: "They went little, they went far. They went over hills and through dales. They traveled for six months and a summer, but when they looked back, they saw that they had gone no farther than the length of a grain of barley."

7 In Turkish folktales the word well does not always indicate a source of water. Just as often it will mean a deep, dry hole in the ground, and fairly often that hole will be an entrance to the underworld. It proves to be such an entrance in this tale.
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Leading all of the sons of the padişah and the sons of the vizier, Şah Yusuf pursued the giant to the edge of the well. Several of Şah Yusuf's companions tried to descend to the bottom of the well, but they were all unable to withstand the terrible heat in the well. But while the others failed, Şah Yusuf succeeded in reaching the bottom.

In the meantime the wounded giant wanted some water to drink, and he sent the oldest daughter of the padişah to the fountain to fetch some. When the girl went to the fountain, however, she saw Şah Yusuf, with his large and heavy sword, waiting there for the giant. Very frightened, the girl was unable to get near the fountain, and so she returned without any water. He then sent each of the other daughters in turn for water, and each in turn also failed. Finally, the giant had no choice but to go himself to the fountain for water. When he arrived at the fountain, he discovered a handsome young man waiting there. The giant asked, "What are you doing here? What do you want?"

Şah Yusuf answered, "I have come here to kill you," and that is exactly what he did without any further hesitation. He then took the four daughters of the padişah to the base of the well and had them pulled up on ropes to the well mouth. He sent up the oldest girl as the kismet of the son of the grand vizier, the next oldest as the kismet of the son of
another vizier, and the third oldest as the kismet of the son of the Minister of State. But before he sent up the youngest daughter as his own kismet, the girl warned him. She said, "Please do not send me up before you ascend to the well mouth. If you do send me up first, those men at the well mouth will play a trick upon you."

But Şah Yusuf did not believe what the girl said, and he prepared to send her to the surface of the earth. Helpless, the girl said, "If you will not believe what I have just told you, then at least listen to my next piece of advice very carefully. Near the giant's house there is a barn containing two wild horses. These horses are tended by a black man. Go to that black man and insist that he teach you how to manage those horses, for otherwise they may tear you to bits."

Şah Yusuf sent the youngest daughter to the surface and shouted up to those above that she was his kismet. But when his faithless companions saw the beauty of the fourth daughter of the padişah, they deserted Şah Yusuf inside the well refusing to pull him up to the surface. They then left the well mouth, taking the weeping youngest daughter with them.

After they had gone and there was no way for Şah Yusuf to ascend from the bottom of the well, he went to the barn and began beating the black groom there. This man cried out,
"Oh, brother, what are you doing? Why are you beating me in this way? What have I ever done to you?"

Şah Yusuf said to him, "I shall not beat you any more if you will promise to teach me how to manage the two wild horses in this barn." He then lived there for a month with the wild horses and the black groom. At the end of that time he had learned enough about those two horses so that he was able to ride them up to the surface of the earth. Once out of the well, he traveled to the palace of the same padişah, and there he took a job as apprentice to the gardener. The gardener accepted him not only as his apprentice but also as his son.

At the end of the day, Şah Yusuf asked the gardener, "Father, what is the wedding for which all the drums are beating?"

"Son," said the gardener, "the sons of the viziers and the sons of the Minister of State are to marry the three older daughters of the padişah tomorrow. You may go to the wedding if you wish, but I must work tomorrow. Have my horse ready to work in the morning.

The next morning after the gardener had gone to work, Şah Yusuf pulled upon the hair of the gray horse, Benli, and
that horse appeared at once. Mounting Benli, he rode to the palace with a great armful of roses to sell. He sold all these roses at the palace, receiving just three or five kurus from most of the buyers. But the youngest daughter of the padişah gave him a golden lira for the rose he sold to her. When Şah Yusuf returned home that night, he gave the golden lira to the gardener, saying, "Here, you take this, Father."

my Son, may God bless you for what you have done, said the gardener.

To find a husband for his youngest daughter, the padişah announced that all men would pass in front of the palace. "The person who will become my son-in-law," he said, "will be the man my daughter hits on the head with a mace as he passes by."

8 The narrator omitted earlier a standard motif of this type. When the hero and his magic horse part (for whatever reason), the horse gives the hero one or more of its hairs, saying, "When you need me, rub (or burn or pull) this (these) hair/hairs, and I shall come to your assistance immediately."

9 The Turkish expression three or five is equivalent to a few in English.

10 A kurus is 1/100 of a lira. It remained a functional coin into the late 1960s, but the continuous inflation and the devaluation of the Turkish lira to 1/700 of a U.S. dollar in the 1980s made the kurus quite meaningless.
Everyone passed before the palace, and the youngest daughter of the padişah hit Kešgšlan on the head with her mace. When the padişah learned of her choice, he was very sad—so sad, in fact, that he grew ill from thinking that a kešgšlan was to be his son-in-law.

Dr. Lokman came to examine the padişah and said, "Your cure is simple but difficult to obtain. You must have some lion's milk and a lion skin. If you do not get these things, you will die very soon.

Benli said to Kešgšlan Sah Yusuf, "There is a lioness resting under a certain willow tree near here. That lioness has a large splinter in its paw. If you can remove that splinter, the lioness will probably do anything for you that you might wish.

Following Benli's advice, Kešgšlan went to the lioness and carefully removed the splinter from its paw. Very

11 A kešgšlan (literally, bald boy) is a young person who has lost hair because of a scalp infestation by ringworm. Since this disease is commonest among young or youngest children (who may be neglected and not kept clean), the word kešgšlan can, by extension, refer to any scruffy young person, as it does here. The literal kešgšlan is a definite type in Turkish tales, with identifiable characteristics besides his baldness. The scruffy, no-account individual to whom the name Kešgšlan is merely assigned has no such characteristics.

12 A legendary doctor of ancient times, sometimes thought to be a contemporary of Plato. He is also thought by some in the Moslem world to be the father of medicine.
relieved, the female lion said, "Keloğlan, you may wish from me what you want."

Keloğlan answered, "My wish is only for your good health.

"No, no," said the lioness. "Tell me what you wish for yourself."

Keloğlan told the lioness, "I would like to have some lion's milk and a lion skin."

The lioness said, "Which is more important--my life or that of one of my children? Go to the seventh mountain beyond here, and there you will find in a cave my seven cubs. Kill one of them, but do not let me hear its voice cry out, for if I do, I shall inevitably kill you. After that, come to me for some milk."

Keloğlan went to the seventh mountain, found the cubs, and killed one of them. Taking the skin of this lion cub, he then got some lion's milk, and returned with both to the palace. When the padişah received the lion's milk and the lion's skin, he recovered quickly from his illness.

The youngest daughter of the padişah and Keloğlan were then married. The padişah exiled to the mountains the sons of the viziers and the son of the Minister of State, along with their wives. After some time had passed, Keloğlan succeeded the padişah on the throne.
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said. As a result, he promptly made arrangements to marry all three of them.

Some time after the wedding was over, he said to the oldest sister, "Now make me the huge rug you said you would make if you were to become my wife." The girl tried very hard to fulfill her boast, but she was unable to make such a big rug.

The padişah then said to the middle sister, "Now I want you to cook the meal you promised, one so large that it will feed all of my soldiers and still have enough food left to satisfy many other diners." The middle sister could not even begin to prepare such a large meal.

Finally the padişah said to the youngest sister, "I want you to bear me the kind of beautiful twin children you said you would if you became my wife.

"Very well," said the youngest sister, and it was not long before she became pregnant. This made her two older sisters very jealous. When the time came for the birth of the twin babies, these older sisters paid some money to a witch woman to steal the newborn children and kill them. This witch woman found two newborn puppies, and when the youngest sister's children were born, she substituted the puppies in the cradle for the human babies. When the youngest daughter saw these two puppies instead of her two beautiful
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babies, she cried and cried, but there was nothing that she could do about them. As a result, the padişah drove her out of the palace and into the mountains.

In the meantime, the witch woman was supposed to kill the two babies. But when the time came to do this, she was unable to kill such beautiful children. Instead, she placed them in a trunk, closed the trunk tightly, and set it adrift down a river. After it had floated down the river for some distance, the trunk was observed by a black giant. When he pulled the trunk ashore and opened it, he found inside two babies as healthy and as beautiful as they could possibly be. Not having any children himself, the black giant said, "God has given these children to me!" He took the children to his home, where his wife was as pleased with them as he was. They named the baby girl Mihriban and the baby boy Şah Ismail.¹

Time passed, and the children began to grow. More time passed, and they were twelve years old. One day the black giant's wife said to him, "Oh, my dear husband, we have a

¹ The namesake of this child was the ruler of Persia from 1502 to 1524. Champion of Shi'ite Islam and founder of the Safavid Dynasty, he was often at war with the Ottoman and Uzbek Turks, who were Sunnite Moslems. Children named simply İsmail are the namesakes of the Biblical İsmail (Ishmael), but anyone named Şah İsmail--there are many so named in Turkish folktales, considerably fewer in Turkish real life--is the namesake of the sixteenth-century Persian ruler.
problem. These children are human beings. Human children nourished on savage milk and we should remember that.

In the future, they may do damaging things to us or we may do damaging things to them. All our efforts can be wasted. Why don't you take these children to another city and leave them there?"

One day passed, two days passed, and then three days. Finally the black giant reached a decision about his wife's suggestion. He called the children to him and said, "Come here, my lovely and dear children. You are human beings. Do you really like us? No. Let me take you to another city leave you there among people of your own kind. I shall give you some money so that you will not go hungry. There can seek your real father and mother and perhaps find them

By chance the black giant left them in the very city where their real father was the padişah. While they were walking about aimlessly in that city, a miller saw them and asked them who they were and where they had come from. Şah Ismail told the miller their names. The miller then said, "Come along with me. I have no children of my own, but you can now be my children."

A common expression, especially among nonhuman beings in folktales. It is a warning against the basic savagery beneath the veneer of human civilization.
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Şah İsmail accepted this offer, saying, "All right, Father. We shall be your son and your daughter."

Meanwhile, at the palace the days were also passing. The evil wives of the padişah (the oldest sister and the middle sister) asked the witch woman, "Oh, grandmother, what did you do with the children of our sister? Did you really kill them? The padişah beats us every day, and he asks about his children." 3

The witch woman said, "I was incapable of killing them. I placed them in a trunk and set them adrift down a river.

The evil sisters said to the witch, "Find those children and kill them!"

By casting remil the witch woman discovered where Mihriban and Şah İsmail were living, and she went at once to their house. Since Şah İsmail had gone hunting, Mihriban was all alone in their house. The witch deceived Mihriban by

3 The narrator has omitted the part of the tale in which the padişah discovers that his youngest wife did bear two beautiful children and not two dogs.

4 Remil (or remel) is a form of geomancy practiced in the Turkish folk tradition. It is a method both of prophesying the immediate future and acquiring information, especially about the whereabouts of people, treasure, and lost or stolen objects. It utilizes dice of sheep knucklebones or other multifaceted small objects. Each facet or side has a number, word, or value attached to it. When several of these objects are cast simultaneously on the ground, the markings on the upward-turned facets are supposed to communicate something to the skillful practitioner.
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saying that she was Mihriban's aunt. The naive Mihriban believed this and opened the door to the witch. "Oh, my beautiful daughter," said the witch, "are you staying all by yourself in this big house? You need a companion here. Haven't you been bored? If your brother would just bring you Güllüzär Hanım's saçlı fıрак, you would never be bored again."

In a short while after that, the witch woman left the house. When Şah İsmail returned from hunting, he found his sister crying. He asked, "Sister, what is the matter with you?"

Mihriban answered, "Oh, dear Brother, I want Güllüzär Hanım's saçlı fıрак. Please get it for me."

Şah İsmail went to his giant father and mother's house. When his giant father heard that he was on his way to Güllüzär Hanım's palace, he said, "Oh, my Son, you should not do that! Don't go there, for Güllüzär Hanım's soldiers killed all seven of my brothers and all seven of your mother's brothers. Don't go, please, for whoever goes there never returns alive. To go there is to condemn yourself to death."

Hanım is not part of the name but is a title: Lady.

Unable to determine the meaning of this expression, we have used the Turkish in the text in hope that its meaning can be explained by some subsequent reader.