

Story 1091 1988 Tape 3)

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in 40s

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Keloğlan¹ as Dead Bridegroom

Keloğlan, the ringwormy boy, may have had a very unpleasant appearance, but he was a clever one. He fell in love with a girl in his district, but he was not able either to tell her about his love or to ask her family for her hand. After thinking about this for some time, he at last arrived at a very clever scheme to win the girl. He called his mother, "Mother Mother! Come here!"

"What is the matter with you, my son?" his mother asked.

Keloğlan said, "Mother, I am going to lie down here as if I were dead. You must begin to cry and say, 'Oh, my Keloğlan, my ringwormy boy, is dead! He was too young to die, and his wishes were not fulfilled!'" Then he lay down as if dead.

¹The word keloğlan means bald boy, but the baldness is not that caused by aging. It is caused by ringworm infestation of the scalp. This disease often strikes the younger and perhaps improperly tended younger children of large peasant families. It is encouraged by uncleanliness. In folktales the keloğlan is a definite personality type, a winner, and a sympathetic figure. In tales the keloğlan image is often used as a disguise. Disguisers conceal their hair by covering it either with a sheepskin turned inside out or with the cleaned lining of a sheep's stomach.

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His mother immediately began to lament. She cried and said, "Oh, my Keloğlan, my ringwormy boy, is dead! He was too young to die, and his wishes were not yet fulfilled!"

The neighbors soon heard the mother's lamenting, and they began to come to her house. Among them were the girl Keloğlan loved and her family. They all saw Keloğlan lying dead on the floor, and they all expressed their sympathy to his mother. The family of his loved one said, "If you had wanted to have Keloğlan married to our daughter, we should have given her to him." They thought to themselves, "Now that he is dead, there can be no harm in saying this."

But this was exactly what Keloğlan had been waiting for. His whole scheme had been carried out in order to have them utter that sentence. As soon as he heard them say it, he jumped up immediately and grabbed the girl. They therefore both had all of their wishes fulfilled.