

Story 1949 (1997 Tape 1)

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Keloğlan¹ and the Sheep in the River

One day Keloğlan wished to take the family donkey to the marketplace and sell it. After his mother had approved of this, Keloğlan took the donkey and started to the market. He was very pleased to be entrusted with this important undertaking

Along the way he met two neighbors. They asked him, "What is going on, Keloğlan? Where are you going?"

"I am going to the marketplace to sell this donkey."

¹The word keloğlan means bald boy. The loss of hair referred to comes not from aging but from ringworm infestation of the scalp. Ringworm is encouraged by uncleanness, and it is more common in remote rural areas where bathing facilities are minimal. In a large family the youngest children, often unattended, are prey to this disease. In folktales the keloğlan is a sympathetic figure: intelligent, courageous, and often lucky; thus despite his handicap, he is usually successful. By selective extension, the word often has an altered connotation. Keloğlan may simply refer to the youngest child in a family, all the way from the royal household down to that of the most lowly peasant. As such, he retains all the qualities of the bald boy except his baldness. Like everyone else, the keloğlan must have a name, but we almost never learn what it is. The word keloğlan is simply capitalized and serves as his name: Keloğlan.

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"Would you like to sell that donkey for a very high price?" they asked.

"Of course I want to get as much money as I can for it," answered Kelođlan.

"If that is the case, then you should cut off the ears and the tail of your donkey. In that condition it will bring the highest price."

Because Kelođlan was very naive, he believed what his cruel neighbors told him. Borrowing a knife from one of the men, he cut off the ears and tail of the donkey. After that, he proceeded to the marketplace, where nobody would buy his mutilated donkey for any price. As soon as he discovered this, Kelođlan made up his mind to take vengeance against the two men who had deceived him. On his way home he stopped at the house where these two men lived. Entering their barn very quietly, he took their cow and tied in its place the mutilated donkey.

His mother was amazed to see Kelođlan return with a cow. "What is this, my son?"

Kelođlan answered, "Mother, in the marketplace there were so many cows that the merchants there were pleased to trade one of them for a donkey." Because cows were

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usually worth much more than donkeys, his mother was very pleased with the exchange he had made.

On the other hand, the two neighbors who had their cow were greatly displeased. They were shocked to find the earless and tailless donkey standing in the barn in place of their cow. They did not have to be told who it was that had taken their cow, and so they immediately began to search for Keloğlan.

After Keloğlan had returned home, he prepared to go to work in one of the family's fields. Before going, however, he took from a cage a pair of baby foxes which he had captured a few days earlier. He tied one of these to a post in front of his house and put the other in a sack to take with him to the field. As he was leaving, he said "Mother, today I feel like eating pilav² with some ---- in it. Please cook some pilav with meat in it, but don't bother to cook anything else."

His two treacherous neighbors found Keloğlan plowing in his field. Very angry, they ran to him shouting,

²A staple of Turkish diet, pilav or pilaf is a rice dish which often contains flecks of meat and pine nuts. Sometimes currants are added.

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"Where is our cow? What have you done with it? Why did you steal our cow and leave your ugly donkey in our barn?"

Kelođlan, remaining very calm, said, "Stop shouting and screaming! We can come to some agreement about this matter." But the two men continued shouting that they wanted their cow, not an agreement. Kelođlan then said, "The cow is in my yard. Let us go to my house and there have dinner together. Then you may take your cow and leave." The two men were so furious, however, that they heard nothing of what Kelođlan had said. They kept demanding their cow back right then. But Kelođlan again invited them to dinner at his home, and this time the two men quieted down and accepted Kelođlan's invitation

Kelođlan then took the baby fox from its bag and pretended to be talking to it. He said, "Fox, go to my home and tell my mother to cook rice pilav with meat in it. Tell her also that I shall bring two guests home for dinner." After that he freed the baby fox, which fled immediately.

The two men were astonished by Kelođlan's behavior. They thought that he must be totally mad. How could he ask a fox to carry a message to his mother? How could a fox find its way to his home?

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After he had worked a little longer, Keloğlan said, "Let us now go to my home. The fox must have arrived there some time ago, and by now my mother has probably cooked the pilav." As they approached Keloğlan's house, the two treacherous neighbors were surprised to see the baby fox tied outside the house door.

When they entered the house, these two men were again surprised to discover that Keloğlan's mother had indeed cooked pilav containing meat. They concluded from this that the fox must be an unusually clever animal, and they decided that they wanted to have it. They said, "Keloğlan, you may keep the cow if you will give us your clever fox.

But Keloğlan acted reluctant about making this exchange. He said, "No, I cannot give you that young fox, for he is really a great help to me. He does everything I assign him to do." After that the two men offered to give Keloğlan some money as well as the cow for the fox. Acting as if he were doing them a great favor, Keloğlan said to the men, "Very well. If you want that fox so badly, I shall let you have it." So Keloğlan received both the cow and some money for the baby fox.

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The two men took the fox and started home with it. Along the way they spoke to the fox, saying, "Run along ahead of us and tell our wives that we want them to cook beans for dinner today." They then released the fox, which ran off toward the mountains.

When the men arrived home, they found that their wives had not cooked any beans for dinner. They asked the women, "Didn't the fox come here and tell you that we wanted you to prepare beans for dinner?"

The women answered, "What fox are you talking about? We have not seen any fox today."

Of course the two men became aware at once that they had been cheated again by Keloğlan. They still did not realize that Keloğlan had used two baby foxes to accomplish this trick. Those two men made a compact with each other to punish Keloğlan. That night passed very slowly for them. They kept wishing and wishing for morning to arrive. Shortly after sunrise they went to Keloğlan's field, where they found him already at work. They grabbed him and put him in a large bag which they had brought along. Keloğlan begged for mercy, but the men were so angry that they did not listen to his pleas.

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They left the field, taking turns carrying Keloğlan on their shoulders. After awhile they were tired by this heavy load, and so they decided to stop, buy some food to eat, and then rest for awhile. They left Keloğlan in the bag a short distance from the side of the road

While the two treacherous neighbors were eating and resting, a flock of sheep came along that road. Keloğlan could hear their bells ringing as they walked along, and he knew that there had to be a shepherd tending them. Keloğlan started shouting, "I do not want to do so! I do not want to do so! I do not want to marry the padishah's daughter!"

Hearing this voice coming from the bag, the shepherd went closer to it and said, "O Allah, Allah! What is going on here?"

When Keloğlan realized that the shepherd was now even closer to the bag, he started shouting much more loudly, "I do not want to! I do not want to marry the padishah's daughter!"

The shepherd asked, "O Allah, can what I am hearing really be true?"

Keloğlan then said, "They are going to force me to

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marry the padishah's daughter. That is why they have me tied in this bag.

shepherd said with enthusiasm, "I should like very much to marry the padishah's daughter."

"Well, if that is the case," said Keloğlan, "let me get out of this bag, and then you can get into it."

shepherd eagerly agreed to this. He gave all of his sheep to Keloğlan and then climbed into the bag. Keloğlan tied the bag shut and led his flock away.

Shortly after that the two treacherous neighbors awakened. They said, "Oh, we have rested long enough. We should now finish our task." They recovered their bag and took turns carrying it to the high bank of a river. Thinking that Keloğlan was still in that bag, they threw it into the river. On their way home, however, they were suddenly astonished to see Keloğlan leading a large flock of sheep. One of the men said, "We threw you into the river just a short while ago. How did you manage to get out of that bag and come here?"

second man asked, "Where did you get that fine flock of sheep?"

that river into which you threw me is full of

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sheep. I grabbed as many as I could and pulled them onto bank, but I saw many larger sheep which I, being alone, could not catch

When the two treacherous neighbors heard Keloğlan's account, they could not wait to get some of those sheep themselves. They rushed to the riverbank, where they both jumped into the water. Unfortunately for them, neither knew how to swim, and so they both drowned.

Keloğlan then led his sheep home. With their cow, their sheep, and some hard work, Keloğlan and his mother lived very comfortably after that

Those two evil men thought themselves very clever. They thought that because Keloğlan was just a naive boy, they could abuse him and outwit him. But in the end, Keloğlan overcame the evil of his two treacherous neighbors