

Story 1982 (1969 Tape 3)

Narrator: Müslim Yarar

Location: Alçlık village, Bayburt kaza, Gümüşhane Province. (Since this tale was taped, Bayburt became the capital city of a new province of that same name.)

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❖ | The Prophetic Dream and the Lion Boy

Once there was and once there was not<sup>1</sup> a lion boy. The padishah of that time had a dream in which he saw a shepherd who would soon have a son. That son would grow up and become so strong that he would capture the padishah's palace and place another ruler on the throne. The padishah was worried by what he had seen in that dream, and he began thinking of some way in which he could protect himself from that boy.

Some time after that, the padishah went to the home of the shepherd he had dreamed about. There he asked the shepherd, "How many children do you have?"

"I have only one child, a newly born baby boy."

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<sup>1</sup>This is the first line of a very popular tekerleme, a formulaic nonsense jingle used as an opening device for many Turkish folktales.

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“I shall give you a great amount of gold for that boy,” said the padishah.

“No, I cannot let anyone have my son,” answered the shepherd.

But a short while later the padishah again visited the shepherd’s small house, and this time he spoke to the shepherd’s wife. He asked again if he could have the new baby, and he promised to pay a large amount of gold for it. The woman said to the shepherd, “We are very poor. Let us sell this child to the padishah for the gold that he offers. We can escape this poverty and we can have other children.” After discussing this matter for awhile with his wife, the shepherd reluctantly agreed to sell the child.

The padishah had the child weighed, and then he gave to the parents its weight in gold. After taking the baby to the palace, the ruler called his vizier and ordered him to take the child to the forest and there kill him. When it became dark that evening, the vizier and an attendant took the child to the forest, but they were unable to kill such an innocent baby. Instead, they killed a wild animal and dipped a piece of the baby’s clothing in the blood of that animal. Then, leaving the baby under a bush, they returned to the palace and reported to the padishah that they had carried out his command. As evidence of this, they gave him the bloody garment of the child.

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In the meantime, a lioness found the baby beneath the bush. Picking it up carefully, she took it to the cave in which she lived, and there she nursed and reared the boy along with her several lion cubs.

After the baby had grown into a strong boy, he one day went to a nearby village, where he killed a farmer and carried off some food from his house. Taking what he had stolen back to the cave, he fed it to his lion mother and his lion brothers and sisters. A few days later he attacked and killed a shepherd. This time he returned to the cave with two sheep.

After several incidents of this kind had occurred, the people of that area went to the palace and complained about the matter. "May our padishah live long!" they said. Then they explained their problem. "There is a lionlike boy in the forest who kills both people and their flocks. We no longer dare walk about our village for fear of him. You are the law of the land, and we have come to ask for your help against this lionlike boy."

The padishah said, "I shall put an end to your difficulty." He then sent troops through that whole area to capture the offender. Within a short time they found Lion Boy and took him to the palace. The padishah immediately ordered his executioners to kill the boy, but one of the older viziers spoke up, saying, "My padishah, this strong boy could be of great service to us. Please do not kill him."

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Thinking about this for a moment, the padishah said, "You may be right about that. Let us keep him here in the palace and feed him well."

By this time the padishah had a son of his own, and the two boys soon became good friends. The padishah had earlier given his son thirty-nine keys, each for a different room in the palace. But he had not given the prince a key to the fortieth room. The two boys were curious about what was in that fortieth room, and in order to satisfy their curiosity, the prince one day stole a key to that room. When they opened the door, they found in that room a very beautiful girl.

While the two boys were still in the fortieth room, the padishah appeared there. Speaking to the prince, he said, "My son, what have you done? I fell in love with this girl long ago, but I could not marry her, for she had been placed under a spell of some kind. That is the reason I did not give you a key to this room. I have sent troops in search of the sorcerer who enchanted her, but they have never been able to find that evil person."

But the prince had also fallen in love with the enchanted girl, and he told this to Lion Boy. His friend said, "I shall do whatever is necessary to make this girl your wife."

But of course neither of them said anything about this to the padishah. Instead, Lion Boy said to the ruler, "My padishah, you do

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not need soldiers to seek the sorcerer. If you will give us permission to do so, your son and I can find that sorcerer and destroy his spell.”

After this permission had been granted, the two boys walked a great distance before they came to a house. In that house they found only a lame giant. “Who owns this house?” they asked.

“My seven brothers and I own it,” answered the lame giant. “My brothers are not here now, for they are off somewhere fighting a war.”

Lion Boy said, “If you will take good care of my friend here, I shall go and assist your brothers in their battles.”

When he arrived at the battlefield, he observed a large army of men fighting with the seven giants. He thought, “If I shout greetings to the larger force, they will think that I am a coward and siding with them. On the other hand, if I greet the smaller group, they may think that I am just showing off. So let me announce my arrival halfway between the two forces.” After he had done this, he joined the seven giants in combat, as he had promised their lame brother he would do. The battle continued all the rest of that day, but near sunset the larger army was defeated and left the battlefield.

After they had returned to the giants’ home, Lion Boy and the prince explained why they were there. They told the giants about the beautiful enchanted girl in the fortieth room of the padishah’s palace.

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The giants said, "That girl is our sister, and she was enchanted by a sorcerer hired by our enemies." Then turning to the Lion Boy, they said, "Go to such and such a place, kill that sorcerer, and disenchant all those people he has turned to stone or locked in a spell."

The sorcerer lived in a bewitched area, and no one who went there ever returned. When Lion Boy arrived there, he saw statues which had once been men, and he heard loud screams from others who were apparently afflicted in some other way. But Lion Boy continued until he found the sorcerer. He observed what the sorcerer did to enchant people, and then he used that knowledge to enchant the sorcerer himself. Leaving that evil person standing helpless as a stone, Lion Boy then proceeded to use the same knowledge to release from their enchantment all of the sorcerer's victims, including the sister of the giants.

When Lion Boy returned to the giants, they sent him to accomplish other difficult and dangerous tasks, all of which he managed to complete successfully. They then said to him, "We have one last task we wish you to complete. If you can accomplish it, then we shall give the prince permission to marry our sister." They then asked him to bring to them the daughter of the padishah of their own land.

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Lion Boy went to the palace of that padishah. When he arrived at the gate, he overwhelmed the guards and entered. He then went to the room of the princess, but at the door he was attacked by a large, hissing snake. Drawing his sword, he killed this snake and entered the room to complete the release of the princess. When the padishah went to his daughter's room that morning, he was amazed by what he saw. The huge snake lay dead at the door. Within the room, the goblet of liquid had been drunk,<sup>2</sup> and the girl's rope collar had been cut. The girl had been freed. When the padishah asked who had done this, every one of the servants claimed to be the hero, but the ruler did not believe them. Going to the home of the giants, he asked if they had rescued his daughter. They answered, "No, none of us has killed your enemy, but we know who the hero was. He was Lion Boy."

One of the padishah's viziers went to Lion Boy and said, "We now know that it was you who saved us from our worst enemy. The padishah has ordered that his daughter be given to you."

Lion Boy then took the princess and delivered her to the giants. They said, "You have completed your final task perfectly. Your friend now has our permission to marry our sister."

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<sup>2</sup>The reference here is not clear. What was the liquid? Why was it surprising that it had been drunk?

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Lion Boy and the prince returned to the palace from which they had started. They were not welcomed there as much as they had expected to be. After the girl in the fortieth room had been disenchanted, she showed very little interest in the padishah, and that ruler suspected that she might be more interested in his son. The padishah ordered a goose dinner for the returning young men, but he had poisoned the food in order to kill his son. However, Lion Boy had talked with the servants and had discovered this treachery. He warned the prince, "Do not eat any of the goose meat. Your father has had it poisoned in order to kill you. He wants to marry the girl in the fortieth room himself."

To the disappointment of the padishah, neither of the boys ate any of the goose meat. The ruler then devised another plan to kill his son. Just inside the door of the boy's room, he had a deep hole dug and then carefully covered with a thin carpet. But Lion Boy, walking ahead of the prince, sensed the trap that the padishah had had made, and he guided the prince past it safely.

When the two young men went to the fortieth room, the prince said to his companion, "We both deserve this girl, but how can we both have her? Should we divide her into two pieces?"

Lion Boy answered, "No, no—that is not possible. I am accepting her as my sister, but the girl is to be your wife."



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After that there was a wedding celebration for the prince and the disenchanted girl that lasted for forty days and forty nights. The padishah was deposed because of his treachery toward both his son and **Lion Boy, and the prince soon became the new ruler of that land.**