

Story 2071 (Transcribed from his field tape by Ahmet Ali Arslan and used later in his unpublished dissertation.)

Narrator: Tavis Şimşek,  
40, housewife

Location: Zinzal village,  
Çıldır kaza,  
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ince

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Clever Boy Reveals His Aunt's Adultery

Once there was and once there wasn't a boy who lived with his uncle and aunt. His aunt had a lover

One day the uncle arose and prepared to go to his fields to work. As he was leaving, he said to his wife, "Cook some lunch for me and bring it to where I am working."

"Where are you going to be? How shall I go in order to find you?"

The uncle said, "I shall drop behind me kernels of barley wherever I go. Just follow the trail of barley to find me."

The uncle hitched up the oxen and started for his fields, taking Keloğlan<sup>1</sup> along with him. But before

<sup>1</sup>The 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 uncleanliness, and it is most common in remote rural areas where bathing facilities are minimal. In a large family the younger children, often unattended, are prey to this disease. In folktales the keloğlan is a sympathetic figure: intelligent,

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they reached the fields, Keloğlan said, "Oh, I forgot my stick! I must return to the house and get it." When he arrived there, his aunt was baking pastries and cooking meat. Keloğlan observed secretly what she was doing. When the food was all prepared, she put the pastry under one arm and the meat under the other and started out to take these things to her lover. But Keloğlan stepped out of hiding and said, "Aunt, I shall take them to my uncle."

Surprised, the woman said, "No, I shall take them to him." They then followed the trail of barley together and reached the right field. The food was unusually good, and the farmer and his nephew enjoyed it very much.

When the two had finished their work for the day, they returned home. There they unharnessed the oxen, fed and watered them, and then put them in the stable for night. They had dinner at the usual time, but soon after dinner the uncle went to bed, for he was very tired from 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 a waif or 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 of 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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the hard work he had been doing. Keloğlan also went to bed but he only pretended to be sleeping.

Around midnight the woman's lover came and called to her very softly through the chimney. When she opened the door for him, he said, "I am starving to death today! You were supposed to bring pastry and meat to me. Why didn't you bring them?"

She answered, "When I was ready to take that food to you, Keloğlan was here, and so I had to take it to my husband."

"In that case, give me some small thing to eat now, but bring me a larger meal tomorrow

"Where will you be working tomorrow?" she asked.

"You will be able to find me easily, for I shall be working behind my red ox."

On the following day the uncle and nephew arose early. After eating breakfast, they hitched up their team of oxen and again went to work in their fields. As the morning passed, the woman baked and cooked, just as she had done the day before. At noon she set out to deliver that food to her lover.

At the same time Keloğlan said to his uncle, "Dear

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uncle, let me cover one of our oxen with your red shawl."

"Why, son, why?"

"Well, everybody has a red ox. Let us pretend for a brief time that we do, too." The man was amused by this, he handed the boy the shawl and permitted him to drape it over one ox.

As the woman was searching for her lover, she saw ahead a red ox. It was not the ox of her lover, however, the ox of her husband covered by his red shawl. By the time she discovered her mistake, she was so close to her husband and Keloğlan that they had both seen her. Again the uncle and his nephew enjoyed a far better lunch than they had expected to have.

At the end of the day the two workers returned home. Following their usual practice, they fed and watered the oxen and then put them into the stable for the night.

Again the husband retired almost immediately after dinner, and again Keloğlan also went to bed but only pretended to be asleep. When the lover came later that night, he said to the woman, "You have deceived me for two days in a row. Again today you failed to bring me any food. What happened?"

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"I tried to bring the food, but I could not find the right way. I saw what seemed to be a red ox, but when I to it, I discovered that it was one of my husband's oxen over which Keloğlan had thrown a red shawl."

The lover said, "There is a holy place near here, tomb of a saint. Let us go there and pray to have a curse put upon your husband and his nephew. May they both die! Then I can have you for myself."

"Is that so?"

"Yes," he answered. "Let us go there tomorrow morning after your husband and Keloğlan have gone to work."

Of course Keloğlan had heard all of their conversation, and he decided immediately what he would do to them. He and his uncle arose early and went to their fields. But when they got there, Keloğlan said, "Uncle, I forgot to bring the bread and çöreks<sup>2</sup> that my aunt set aside for us. I shall run back and get them."

However, he went instead to the holy place and entered the tomb. When he saw his aunt and her lover

<sup>2</sup>A çörek is a round, slightly sweetened bun. Occasionally it may have a fruit topping.

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approaching, he said in a loud voice, "Come no closer to my tomb or death will strike you!"

Frightened, the woman said, "All right! I shall not come any closer."

Then Kelođlan again spoke with a loud voice from within the tomb. "Leave here the food that you are carrying, and then go home. There you have a black cow. If you kill that cow and feed the meat to your husband and your nephew, they will both die."

"Very well," she answered. "I shall return home and kill that cow at once

When they got back home, the lover slaughtered the cow, skinned it, and cut it up into pieces. Then the woman cooked a large piece of that meat

As soon as the husband saw the large quantity of meat being served, he asked, "What is this, my wife?"

"I went to the saint's tomb to pray today. While I was there, the saint spoke to me. He told me to have the black cow slaughtered so that you would have plenty of meat to eat.

The husband and the nephew ate and ate and ate until they could eat no more. As they were preparing to retire,

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Keloğlan said, "Uncle, I am so full that I feel as if I may burst. I feel as if I might die."

"So do I," answered the man. "Wife, what kind of meat was that? What has happened to us?"

"I did exactly what the saint directed me to do. You will be all right after awhile."

The husband lay down in a stupor, and Keloğlan pretended to be in the same condition. When the lover returned and looked at the two bodies, he assumed that they were dead. He covered them with a piece of matting. He said, "Let us place a rock on the head of each of them so they will never move again." They did this at once

The lover then said, "Woman, now make us some fine pastries."

"All right," answered the woman. "You rest while I am doing that." She made some dough and set it aside. She lighted a fire in the stove and placed upon it a pan containing some oil. She then left the kitchen to get some other ingredients for the pastry.

As soon as she had gone, Keloğlan arose quickly, went to the kitchen, and poured the pan of hot oil down the throat of the lover, who lay sleeping on the floor.

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The boiling oil killed him at once. Keloğlan then went back to bed and pretended to be asleep.

When the woman returned and saw that there was no longer any oil in the pan, she said, "Alas, man! How could you drink all that hot oil? But never mind that. Let me go quickly and get some more oil." After getting more oil, she finished making the pastries. But when she called out, "The pastries are ready! Come and eat them!" there was no response from the lover, and it was only then that she discovered that he was dead. Although the lover did not respond to her call, Keloğlan did. "Keloğlan, what are you doing here?"

"I came because you called me to eat pastries."

"But I thought that you were dead," she said

"Why should I die?" As the woman was carrying out the body of her dead lover, Keloğlan called, "Uncle uncle!"

"What is it, son?"

"Come here where we can eat some fresh pastries."

When the uncle came, the two of them sat down and slowly ate all of the pastries. While they were doing so, Keloğlan told his uncle what had been going on. "Because



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my aunt has had a lover, she has treated you very badly  
She cooked food for him every day, but I sometimes  
prevented her from delivering it to him. Her lover had  
a red ox, and she tried to locate him by finding his red  
ox in the fields. That was why I covered our ox with your  
red shawl--so that she would bring the food to us instead  
of to her lover. She and her lover went to the tomb of the  
saint, a holy place, which is on the edge of our village  
They wanted to pray there that a curse be placed upon  
both of us. But I went there first and hid inside the  
tomb. When they approached, I spoke in a loud voice and  
pretended that I was the dead saint speaking. I said,  
'Slaughter your black cow and feed some of its meat to  
your husband and his nephew. It will be poison to them,  
and it will kill them.' I killed her lover a few minutes  
ago, and she is now taking his dead body somewhere. You  
may wish to kill her too. I do not know."

They ate and drank, and after several years passed  
into the earth. We still stand upon the earth.