

Story 2195 (1966 Tape 5)

Narrator: Nebiye Birkan, in
50s, housewife

Location: Kaza town of Taş-
köprü, Kastamonu
Province

Date: 1966

Keloğlan¹ Turns the Shoes

day Keloğlan's master was entertaining several guests at his home. In those days it was customary to take off one's shoes when entering a house. These shoes were left on the doorstep or porch and were pointed inward toward the house. It was also customary for some member of the household to turn the shoes around, so that it would be easier for the departing guest to slip them on again. Shortly after the arrival of the guests, the owner of the house said, "Keloğlan, go out and turn the shoes of our guests."

¹The word keloğlan means bald boy. The loss of hair referred to is not of the variety brought about by age. It is instead the result of ringworm infestation of the scalp. This condition is encouraged by uncleanliness. Until recently few rural Turks had modern bathing facilities, and in larger families the children might not be bathed as often as required for good health. The very small children, still unable to fend for themselves, were seemingly the most vulnerable to this physical condition. The keloğlan is--perhaps out of compassion--a sympathetic and lucky figure in Turkish folktales. Whatever a bald child's given name may be, we seldom hear it because he is usually identified by the quasiname Keloğlan.

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Keloğlan did not understand that order. He went out and began to turn the guests' shoes inside out. This was sometimes very strenuous work. It was relatively easy to turn soft shoes inside out, but it was extremely difficult to do that to the hard-covered shoes. He used his two hands and his teeth to grapple with those hard shoes. In this struggle he bruised his hands and cut his mouth, which started bleeding.

When Keloğlan did not return quickly from his chore, his master went to the door and asked, "What have you been doing all this time, Keloğlan?"

"Well, I am turning the shoes, as you directed, but so far I have been able to finish only those which are soft-covered