

Story 1163 (1988 Dictated)

Narrator: Hâlil İbrahim Delikan,
postmaster

Location: Trabzon, capital city
of Trabzon Province

Date: October 1988

The Brave Pistol-Wielding Laz ^{all}

^{all} There was once a Laz fisherman who spent the day catching hamsis.² After catching several hundred hamsis, he returned home and pulled his boat up on the shore. Putting all of his hamsis in a large cloth bag, he hoisted his catch to his back and started walking toward the town marketplace.

As he walked along carrying his heavy load of fish, several hamsis slid through a hole in the bottom of his bag and fell to the ground. When the Laz heard them strike the ground, he concluded that he was being pursued by hamsis who wanted to take vengeance against him for having killed so many of their kin. Whirling around suddenly, he pulled out his pistol and shouted, "All right! If you want to fight me, then come ahead. I will fight you--but just one at a time!"

¹The Laz people constitute one of the larger ethnic minorities in Turkey. Their exact origins are not definitely known. The largest concentrations of Lazes are in extreme northeastern Turkey along the Black Sea coast. Reputed stupid, they are made fun of in numerous folk anecdotes about fools. The frequent success of Lazes who move to İstanbul belies the folk image.

²The hamsi is an anchovy, cherished by most Turks as gourmet fare, but liked especially by residents of the Black Sea coast, particularly the Laz people. It is said that the Lazes have more than a hundred different recipes for preparing hamsi dishes.