

Story 1215 (1990 Tape 8)

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The Snake's Severed Friendship with the Farmer

Once long ago there were a farmer and his wife who lived on a small piece of land. It was really just one large field. In one corner of that field a snake lived in a hole. The snake ate insects and rats and other small pests, and thus he kept the land clear of vermin that would be harmful to the farmer's crops. The snake ate all of these vermin. In that way the snake and the farmer each benefited from the presence of other. They were good friends.

After a while the farmer and his wife had a child, a son. Unfortunately, as the child was growing up, he became a very unruly boy. The more the boy grew, the more unruly and naughty he became. When he saw the snake in the field, he pulled on its tail and threw stones at its head. The snake went to the farmer and complained to him that his son was behaving so badly toward him. Despite repeated warnings from his father, however, the boy continued to abuse the snake in various ways.

Finally one day the boy grabbed the snake's tail and refused to release it. The snake struggled into his hole and braced himself against its walls so that the boy could not pull

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him out. But the boy kept pulling on its tail, and the snake continued to pull in the opposite direction. As a result of this pulling, the snake's tail was broken off. When this happened, the snake bit the child, killing him.

After that event, the snake remained in his hole most of the time, and for a long while the farmer did not see it at all. In the meantime, insects swarmed over the field, and rats damaged the farmer's crops. When the farmer realized what was happening, he went to the snake to ask for its help. Going to the mouth of the snake hole, he called, "O snake, come out!

us be friends again, just as we were in former times."

The snake answered, "No! As long as you remember the pain suffered by your son's death, and as long as I remember the pain I suffered at having my tail broken off, we can never be friends again."

This remark of the snake became established as a proverb in Turkey to describe all broken friendships that could not be repaired.