

Story 798 (1974 Tape 14)

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A Special Diet for a Laz¹

There was a Laz once who became ill. After his illness had continued for some time, he went to Istanbul, where he had a relative. He said to his relative, "Do you know a doctor here in this city? If you do, please take me to see him."

*physician
(thought)*

"I do know one. I do. Let us go right away."

They went to the doctor's office, and the sick Laz waited for his turn to see the doctor. When his turn came the doctor asked him, "What is wrong with you?"

"Well, I am sick this way. My stomach aches, and when I strike my back, I can feel it in my head."

"All right. Let me examine you."

The doctor examined the Laz, and after he had finished, he said, "Here is some medicine for you. Take some after

¹ The ethnic minority of Laz people live primarily in extreme northeastern Turkey, along the Black Sea coast. Occasionally Lazes are pictured in folktales as being very shrewd, but more often they are the butts of ethnic humor which makes them appear stupid, or, at best, stolidly ingenuous. Most ethnic humor, wherever found, is not kind.

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each meal. And here also is a diet which I want you to follow. Eat only the foods listed on this piece of paper."

After he left the doctor's office, the Laz said to his relative, "Help me get a ship bound for Trabzon.² I shall follow my diet after I get there." While he was at sea, he didn't eat a thing. He would start his diet in Trabzon. When they arrived in that city, he took out his diet list, but the wind blew it out of his hands, and it disappeared.

The Laz then went home quickly and telephoned his relative in Istanbul, telling him how the wind had taken his diet list away. His relative said, "Wait, and I'll go and ask the doctor what was on that list." He went to the doctor's office. When he finally got to see the doctor, the doctor asked him what he wanted. He answered, "A few days ago you examined my cousin from Trabzon and gave him a diet to follow. But he lost the diet list. What was he supposed to eat?"

The doctor grew ^{very} angry and said, "With so many patients how could I remember your relative? Get out!"

Lazes, however, are very stubborn people. The Laz

² Trabzon (ancient Trebizond) is a major Turkish seaport on the Black Sea.

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returned to the doctor's office after a short while and waited his turn again. When he finally got the doctor's attention, he said, "Doctor, my cousin may be dying way out there in Trabzon! Tell me--what should he eat?"

Annoyed at seeing him again, the doctor threw him out again. But he was soon back for the third time, saying, "What was my cousin supposed to eat?"

"Tell him he can eat my hind end!" said the doctor in disgust

"All right, Doctor. Thank you. But should he come here to do that, or will you go there?"