

Story #365 (Tape #1, 1972)

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How Seven Laz Descended a Cliff

Once there were some Laz people. They grew bored of living aimlessly, so seven of them formed a group and went to the mountains in search of a new country. After having traveled for several days, they found themselves on a high cliff in the mountains. The cliff was so situated that they had to climb down it in order to move forward or else they would have to turn back. There was no escape from it. Among them, there was a man known by the name of Wise Mehmet Agha.¹ Some of the men suggested climbing down by means of a ladder. Others suggested that felling a tree and using it for climbing purposes would be better.

Wise Mehmet Agha interrupted the debate and said, "Friends, listen I have an idea."

"What is it?" his friends asked.

"I am going to hold on to this rock."

"And then?"

"Then one of you will hold on to my feet, and another to his feet, and so on. Thus we can get down the cliff in no time."

The Laz people considered the proposal, and they unanimously said, "What our Wise Mehmet Agha says is very true."

¹The name of the protagonist is Akıllı Mehmet Ağa, or Wise Mehmet Agha. Inasmuch as the Laz people are among the minority groups that serve as the butts of many ethnic jokes and anecdotes, listeners to this tale know from the outset that Akıllı and Ağa are meant ironically. The Laz is thought to be stupid; and since he is usually pictured as poor, he would not be an aga, or land owner.

Story #365

The cliff was about the height of two minarets, and there were only seven in the group. When the last man suspended himself by holding on to the feet of the man above him, the distance between his feet and the bottom of the cliff was still great. He said, "I am the last man hanging down the rock now, and my feet do not touch the bottom of the cliff. I do not think we can do this."

By now, Wise Mehmet Agha's hands had become sore and tired holding the rock and bearing the weight of six other men. "And I do not think I can bear this strain any longer. Hold on, everybody. I need to spit on my hands. They are getting sore."

When he let go the rock ^{to} spit on his hands, the seven last people fell down the cliff, all on top of one another. They all died.