

Story 1778 (1994 Tape 3)

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Two Confused Laz¹ Horsemen²

Temel and İdris were once traveling together on horseback. After riding quite a distance the first day they decided, as darkness was approaching, to stop at an inn for the night. They were very tired by that time. They rode up to the inn and put their horses in the inn stable. Before they left their horses, however, Temel asked, "İdris, in the morning how are we going to know which of these horses belongs to which of us?"

"Oh-h-h, that can be taken care of easily enough,

¹The word Laz referred originally to an ethnic minority living primarily in Trabzon and Rize provinces, along the extreme eastern part of the Turkish Black Sea coast. More recently the word has come to be applied to any resident of the entire Turkish Black Sea coast. In the Turkish oral tradition Laz people are stereotyped as being stupid or inept. This stereotype (like most others) is unjustifiable, for Lazes are, of course, much like other people.

²This version of the tale was tape recorded on September 19, 1994. Two months earlier the same narrator had told a slightly different version of this tale at a social gathering where there was no opportunity to tape it

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answered İdris. "I shall cut off part of my horse's tail. Then we shall be able to know which horse is mine." So he cut the horse's tail. Then the two of them went into the inn and went to bed.

But the innkeeper's son had overheard their conversation in the stable. After Temel and İdris had entered inn, this boy cut the same length off the other horse's tail, too.

The next morning Temel and İdris left the inn after breakfast and went to the stable. There they discovered that both of their horses had had their tails shortened exactly the same amount. Unable to tell which horse belonged to which man, Temel took one horse, İdris took the other, and the two rode away on another day of travel. At the end of that day they again stopped at an inn. When

put their horses in the stable, İdris asked, "How shall we know in the morning which horse is yours and which is mine?"

Temel answered, "That will be easy. I shall cut off a piece of the mane of my horse, and then in the morning we shall know that it is mine." But another guest of the inn observed all this, and after Temel and İdris had

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entered the inn, he cut out a similar piece from the mane of İdris's horse

On the following morning the two Lazes were again confused about the horse that each should ride. There was nothing to do, however, except for each to take one of the horses and proceed with their journey. When they pulled up at an inn that evening, they expressed the same concern as they had had before about identifying their respective horses the next day. This time Temel took a more drastic step to solve their problem. He cut off the left ear of his horse to mark it very clearly as his

But during the night someone cut off the left ear of the other horse, and so in the morning they could not tell the animals apart. Temel was both angry and upset when he discovered what had happened. He said, "My friend, İdris, we cannot continue mutilating these horses, for if we do, we may end up killing them. I have a better solution for our problem. From now on, why don't we have you ride the black horse and me ride the white one?"