

Story #603 (1968, Tape #2

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^{#603} The ^{#603} (Laz), the ^{#603} (Jew), and the (Fish Heads)

A Laz and a Jew were once traveling together on a train. Their journey was a long and tiresome one, and so they easily became acquainted and talked for some time

After a while they grew hungry and went to the dining car of the train. Now, the Jew, who was a rather penurious man, was reluctant to spend money on food. He decided that instead of eating, he would be satisfied by just the smell and sight of food. The Laz ordered three fishes for his meal, and after a short while the waiter brought his meal to him.

The Laz began to eat his fish. He separated the heads from the bodies of the fish, and he pushed the heads to one side of his plate. The Jew watched him eating, and his mouth watered at the sight of the food. Finally, when he could not stand it any longer, he asked the Laz, "Why don't you eat the heads of the fishes?"

¹This is an odd variant of the tale. Usually the protagonist is a type known for shrewdness, such as a Kayseri man. The other person is of a type known for slowness or stupidity, such as a Laz or a Kurd. Here the types do not support the plot, for they are the reverse of what they should be. Furthermore, the climax usually involves an exact statement of how much more the protagonist got for his fish heads than he had paid for the whole fishes.

"I didn't eat them because I was saving them for you. They are excellent brain food. Fish heads have phosphorus in them, and will make you smarter if you eat them."

"Well, then, why don't you let me have one of them?" said the Jew.

"I shall let you have one for fifty kurus,"² said the Laz.

"All right, here are my fifty kurus." The Jew took one of the heads and ate it, but he did not feel a bit smarter. "I don't feel any effect from it," he said. "I don't feel at all changed."

"Of course not. You just ate one head. You'll have to eat another to feel the effect."

Thereupon, the Jew paid another fifty kurus for a second fish head, but still he felt no effect after that one either. The Laz told him to eat another, and this he did, but he continued to feel just exactly the same. Suddenly he realized that he had been duped, and he said to the Laz, "Oh you have tricked me! You have lied and cheated me!"

"Perhaps, my friend," said the Laz. "But notice that those fish heads are beginning to take effect. Your mind is working much better now, and that is the result of your having eaten those fish heads."

²A kurus is a hundredth part of a lira. Until the late 1970s the kurus was a meaningful monetary unit, but with devaluation of the lira to the rate of about 200 to the U.S. dollar, the kurus became meaninglessly small.