

Story 889 (1964 Tape 2)

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Location: Vezirköprü kaza, Samsun Province; Tale taped at Ünye, kaza of Ordu Province

Date: August 1964

Identifying a Camel

In a village along the Black Sea coast, not far from here, a camel once got into a man's vegetable garden. It ate vegetables from morning until night, and then it lay down in the garden and slept there. The next morning the owner of the garden was surprised to see this strange creature sitting among his vegetables. All of the neighbors came to look at this strange animal, and all of them wondered what it was. They decided to call an old sea captain who lived in the area to come and identify it for them. They thought that perhaps somewhere on his many voyages he had seen a creature like this. Never having seen or heard of any land creature like this one, they thought it must have come up on shore from the sea.

The old captain came, stared at the creature and walked around it, but he did not recognize it. While all of this excitement about it was going on, the camel just lay there quietly chewing its cud. People asked the captain, "What is it? What kind of a creature is it?"

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"Just a minute I am studying it!" the captain replied. He walked around it several more times, and at he noticed that its lip was split. He thought and thought, and then he asked himself, "What member of the animal kingdom has a split lip?" Then he remembered that the rabbit had a split lip, and so he concluded that this strange creature was related to the rabbit

People asked him again, "Have you discovered what it is yet?"

"Yes," said the captain. "This is the grandfather of grandfather of the grandfather of the rabbit. It is exactly 600 years old."

Everyone said, "By God, this is the grandfather of the grandfather of the grandfather of the rabbit!" He is too old to run away. Let us, therefore, catch him, kill him, and divide his meat among all of us." All of a sudden they rushed upon the camel, thinking that it had no legs.

The camel alarmed by this attack, lurched forward, lurched backward, and then stood up. As he did so, he had of the men dangling from his neck. Everyone was afraid of the camel and started running away. The man dangling from neck looked down, and the distance to the ground seemed to him as far away as it would be if he were on top of a minaret. He started shouting, "Oh, friends, I have boarded

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a huge thing, and I am going toward the Day of Judgment!"¹

¹ This is a nükte, an anecdote whose effect depends upon a final play on words. The last sentence is expressed in Turkish in a short-lined couplet:

Bindim alâmete,
Gidiyom Gıyamete.

Gıyamete is the dialect pronunciation of Kıyamete (doomsday), and Gidiyom is the dialect contraction for Gidiyorum (I am going).