

Story 1693 (1993 Tape 5)

Narrator: Sabit Uzun

Location: Trabzon, Trabzon
Province (at bakery
which was a front
for arrangements of
call-girl appoint-
ments)

Date: June 1993

Collected by Jo Ann Conrad

The Laz,¹ the Louse, and the İstanbul Man

A Laz once went to İstanbul. There by chance he entered into a conversation with a well-to-do and refined resident of that city. After a while the İstanbulu² saw an insect on the collar of the Laz and asked, "What is that insect?"

Wishing to seem intelligent, the Laz answered at once, "That is a louse

"But a louse is black, and this creature is white," the İstanbulu said.

The Laz said, "O-o-o-h, this is a very old louse, and so its hair is white."

¹The Laz people constitute a large ethnic minority living principally in Rize and Trabzon provinces in extreme northeastern Turkey. They are stereotyped as being stupid or inept, though in fact they are no different from other people.

²In Turkish, people are indicated as coming from a given town or city by the suffixes -lu, -lü, -li, depending upon the preceding back or front vowel. Thus an İzmirli is a resident of İzmir and an İstanbulu is a resident of İstanbul.

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"But this insect seems to be jumping around. Lice do not jump. They crawl."

"O-o-o-h, this louse is crippled," answered the Laz. "That is why it twitches when it walks and seems to be jumping."

Still not believing that it was a louse, the Istanbullu objected, "But lice usually move around in pairs

"O-o-o-h, but this one is a bachelor," said the Laz