

Story 1808 (1989 Tape 2)

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Let Buyer Beware or Perhaps Later Regret

day Nasreddin Hoca¹ went to the marketplace and bought a donkey for one kuruş.² He did not like the donkey, however, and so he sold it to another man. That second buyer did not like the donkey either and was sorry that he had bought it. He went to Nasreddin Hoca and said "Please, Hoca, give me back my money, and I shall give you back your donkey."

the donkey is yours now. I shall not take it

¹Nasreddin Hoca is the most popular comic folk character in the Turkish oral tradition. He is sometimes wise, sometimes shrewd, and sometimes foolish, but he is always very human. In modern Turkey a hoca is a preacher and religious leader. In Ottoman times he was also a teacher, for in pre-Republican times education was the responsibility of the clergy.

²Not within the memory of any person living today has it been possible to purchase a donkey for one kuruş. The kuruş was worth 1/100 of a lira. When the lira was a gold coin, the kuruş had some real value. Devaluation of the lira understandably devalued the kuruş too. By the 1960s one could buy a loaf of bread for 60 kuruş, but the kuruş became extinct in the 1980s when the lira became almost worthless.--In the early 1990s the exchange rate was 35,000 Turkish lira to the U.S. dollar.

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back."

Since the second buyer could not persuade Hoca to take back the donkey, he decided to make it more valuable by teaching it to read and write. Naturally the donkey had to lie down to read and write. The owner placed food on the page the donkey was working on. The donkey enjoyed the way in which it was treated while it was learning to read and write.

But after the donkey had learned to read and write, its owner was still displeased with the purchase he had made from Hoca. He went to Nasreddin Hoca and said, "Oh, alas Oh, alas!"

"What is the matter now?" asked Hoca.

"My donkey learned to read and write, but while doing so, it forgot how to walk. This is your fault, for you were the one who sold me that donkey!"

Nasreddin Hoca asked, "Well, what can we do about that?" Then after a moment he said, "There is really nothing that you can do about your situation except to wish that you had not bought the donkey!"