Story 1849 (1981 Tape 1  

Narrator: Niyazi Özden  

Location: Melekli village,  
Iğdır kaza,  
Kars Province  

Several years after this tale was taped, Iğdır became capital city of new province of the same name.  

Date: May 30, 1981  

Catching an Alkarısı  

Forty or fifty years ago horses were the most common means of transportation in my home area. We had several very good breeds of horses. But in those days there were also creatures known as Alkarısı who often made horses unusable. These Alkarısı were small creatures somewhat like dwarfs. There may have been other names for them, but the villagers in my area always called them Alkarısı.  

These Alkarısı would come to a stable and ride the horses there all day and all night right there within the stable where no one could see them. As a result of this continuous running, the horses often ...  

1See ATON 843, which is a similar tale (about Alkarısı’ damaging horses) that was taped near Tercan, a kaza center in northeastern Erzincan Province. In general, however, the Alkarısı is more often feared in Turkey as a killer of newborn babies and sometimes their mothers, too. In this function the Alkarısı is sometimes identified with the very ancient malevolent figure of Lilith. For a useful brief commentary on the Alkarısı myth see Türk Ansiklopedisi, Vol. II, p. 12.
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became so exhausted that their owners were not able to use them for
the purpose of transportation. If anyone happened to enter the stable
while the Alkārsis were there, the Alkārsis would disappear, but
usually by that time they had already tired the horses.

The people in my village once decided to try to capture one of
these Alkārsis. They thought and thought about how they might be
able to do this. They finally decided to put tar on the back of one of
their horses so that an Alkārī would be stuck to the horse she
mounted. This plan was only partly successful, but one farmer did
catch an Alkārī that way.

It is said that Alkārsis are powerless against steel. If you stick
a needle into an Alkārī, she becomes helpless. She cannot remove the
needle herself, and so she can be kept right there and made a slave.
They stuck a needle into the dwarf creature they had captured with tar
and made her a maidservant in their household. She remained with
them long enough so that she learned their language. One day,
however, when she was alone with the children of that family, she was
enabled to escape. She begged and begged one of the children to pull
the needle from her flesh. Feeling sorry for the Alkārī and not
knowing what might happen, the child pulled out the needle. The
Alkārī then immediately disappeared. —This story is often told in my
region.
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[Ahmet Uysal: “The Alkarsı also bothers women still recovering from childbirth. I don’t know if that is believed also in your area. They can be very dangerous. In order to keep the Alkarsı away from the lohusa, people often keep the light on in the woman’s room. They also attach red ribbons to the lohusa, for the Alkarsı is said to be afraid of that color.”]

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2The word used in some sections of Turkey for a woman who has just given birth to a child.

3This is ironic in one sense in that the Alkarsı is often thought to be red herself.