

Story 1174 (1989 Tape 12)

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Location: Taped at Ankara, but narrator is originally from Trabzon Province

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[story] all

From Handing to Handling

Temel was seriously ill, and it seemed that he might not recover. While he was in this condition, he was visited by his friend Hızır.¹ Hızır said, "Temel, may your illness be cured as soon as possible!² How are you now? Has your condition improved any?"

"Hızır, I am very sick, and it seems likely that I shall die. There is apparently no way in which my disease can be controlled."

"If that is the case, then your situation is indeed desperate. If you are going to pass into the other world, would

¹Although the word Laz is not used, this anecdote would be recognized as a Laz tale from the names of the characters. Temel, Hızır, and Dursun are the most commonly used names for Laz characters in Turkish tales. The Laz people constitute one of the larger ethnic minorities in Turkey. Their exact origins are not definitely known. The largest concentrations of Lazes are in extreme northeastern Turkey along the Black Sea coast. Reputedly stupid, they are made fun of in numerous folk anecdotes about fools. The frequent success of Lazes who move to İstanbul belies the folk image.

²The standard remark made to any sick person in Turkey is Geçmiş olsun!--literally, May it pass quickly.

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you be willing to take this letter with you and hand it to my father there?"

"Yes, of course. But it may be so crowded there that I shall not easily find your father. If I do not find him, is it all right if I handle things with your mother?"³

³This anecdote is of the type known as a nükte, one which ends with a play on words. The word play here is sexually suggestive. Actually the literal translation of the Turkish might be clearer than the one we have used. When Turkish people take someone or something somewhere, they often use the word put-- as in, "I put it to the Post office." Thus, in the last line Temel is saying, "Is it all right if I put it to your mother?"