

Story 1683 (1993 Tape 5)

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A Laz's<sup>1</sup> Dangerous Forgetfulness

Once a very secret mission was assigned to four men who were soldiers of four different countries. One was English, one was Dutch, one was French, and the fourth was Turkish. The Turk was a Laz named Temel.<sup>2</sup> They were given a secret code with which to communicate, and they were told never to reveal any part of that code under any circumstances.

These four agents were dropped into the enemy territory by parachute. Unfortunately, they were discovered shortly after they had landed, and they were soon captured.

Enemy officers were determined to obtain from the four agents the code which they had been given. They tortured

<sup>1</sup>The Laz people constitute an ethnic minority who live principally in extreme northeastern Turkey in Rize and Trabzon provinces. They are allegedly stupid or inept, but this is just a stereotype; they are no different from others. There are endless comic anecdotes told about this stereotype.

<sup>2</sup>Temel is the most popular male name among the Lazes. Although other Turks are also called Temel, the name when used in folktales automatically signals Laz.

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the Englishman in order to force him to reveal the code, and after he had endured great pain for a while, he shouted out their secret code. After that, the officers tortured the Dutchman and the Frenchman, and it was not long before both of them also revealed their code. Wanting to be sure that they received every single part of the code, they then began to torture Temel. But Temel refused to tell them anything, and he became known as Remarkable Temel. Every day they continued torturing Remarkable Temel, and they used harsher and harsher forms of torture on him, but they were still unable to extract the secret code from him.

After several days had passed, the commander of the enemy forces said to himself, "I had better go to the prison cell of that Turkish agent to see what his condition

After so much hard torture, he may have died by now." He went very quietly to Temel's cell and looked inside. He surprised at what he saw and heard.

The commander saw the prisoner walking back and forth striking his head first against one wall and then against another wall. As the prisoner did so, he kept saying, "Come on, Remarkable Temel! Remember, remember, remember the secret code! If you don't, these enemies will torture you to death!"