

Story 1963 (1992 Tape 4)

Narrator: Leyla Özdemir, 25

Location: Kırklareli, capital of Kırklareli Province (a Black Sea or Laz province)

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A Laz¹ Evaluates His Wife

Once Temel² and his wife, Fadime, were touring Europe. When they reached Paris, they began at once to visit some of the historical and touristic sites. That evening they went to a casino to have cocktails and dinner. They were having a good time until Temel had had too many drinks. Under the influence of alcohol, Temel began to flirt with a beautiful French girl. His wife was upset by Temel's behavior and complained about it. At first Temel ignored his wife's complaints, but when her remarks grew louder and louder, Temel

¹The word Laz referred originally to an ethnic minority living primarily in Trabzon and Rize provinces, along the extreme eastern part of the Turkish Black Sea coast. More recently the word has come to be applied to any resident of the entire Turkish Black Sea coast. In the Turkish oral tradition Laz people are stereotyped as being stupid or inept. This stereotype (like most others) is unjustifiable, for Lazes are, of course, much like other people.

²In tales about the stereotyped Laz as dummer or fool, the male characters usually have one or another of five or six very common Laz names. Temel is the name used most often, with Dursun in second place. Thus if either of these names occurs in a folktale, the audience knows at once that it is a Laz tale.

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became angry at her. He said, "I do not care about your complaints, for you are not worth five paras."³

After such an insult, Temel's wife was not going to remain silent. She said, "You claim that I am not worth even five paras, but let me see you prove it."

"Very well," answered Temel.

When they left the casino, Temel hailed a taxi to take them back to their hotel. He asked the driver, "How much will you charge to take me to the Boulevard de Rue [sic]?"

The taxi driver said, "Monsieur, I shall charge you ten francs."

Then Temel asked, "How much more will you charge me if my wife also rides in your taxi?"

Surprised, the driver looked at Temel and said, "My charge will still be just ten francs, whether you ride by yourself or bring your wife with you."

Temel then grinned mischievously and said to his wife, "Fadime, did you not hear with your own ears that the man placed no value on you?"

³This is a way of saying that she is worth absolutely nothing. The para was worth 1/40 of a kuruş, and the kuruş was worth 1/100 of a Turkish lira. As late as the early 1960s there were still 10-, 25-, and 50-kuruş coins, but the para had disappeared from circulation. Now (1997) that it takes 174,000 Turkish liras to equal one U.S. dollar, even the kuruş is worthless, except as a collector's item.