

Story 1939 (1995 Tape 1)

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Location: Antalya, capital of
Antalya Province

Date: August 13, 1995

A Laz¹ Classroom Lobby

Once when Temel² was a schoolteacher, he had some difficulties with one of his students. They were unable to get along well with each other. Other students began to talk about this. They said, “Teacher Temel picks on little Dursun,” and “Teacher Temel always singles out little Dursun.”

Temel wanted to demonstrate that he was treating little Dursun fairly, and so he announced that the next class examination would be open to the public. On the day of the examination little Dursun’s parents and many of their Laz friends crowded into the classroom to witness the examination.

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.

²Temel (like Dursun) is a name given to so many Laz males that it automatically signals Laz to most Turkish audiences. Because Lazes are stereotyped as being stupid people, the name Temel may, by extension, be applied to any stupid person, whether or not he happens to be Laz.

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When it was little Dursun's turn to be examined, Temel said to him, "Dursun, how much is seven times seven?"

"Forty-nine," answered little Dursun.

Immediately all of the Lazes started shouting, "Give him another chance! Give him another chance!"