

Story 1315 (1988 Tape 8)

Narrator: Hikmet Aksoy,  
managing editor of  
Kuzey Haber, a Trab-  
zon newspaper

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of Trabzon Province

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The Laz<sup>1</sup> and the Fairer Choice for Azrail<sup>2</sup>

Temel was very ill. As his condition grew worse, he believed that he was on his deathbed. One day he called his wife, Fatima, to him and said to her, "I want you to wear your best clothes, put on all of your jewelry, and adorn your face with makeup. Then I want you to come here and sit beside my bed."

Fatima did as her husband had directed. When she went sit beside him, she asked Temel, "Well, here I am. How do you like my looks?"

Temel answered, "It makes little difference whether or

<sup>1</sup>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.

<sup>2</sup>Azrail is the Moslem angel of death. At the command of Allah, it is Azrail who comes at the end of a person's life and takes that person's soul.

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not I think you attractive. What is important is that Azrail think you very attractive when he comes here. If he likes your appearance well enough, then perhaps he will take you away with him instead of me!"