

Story 1715 (1993 Tape 6)

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A Laz¹ Breaks Bad News Gently

A Laz from Trabzon named Temel² went to his native village during his vacation. When he returned to work, he brought the latest news from home to a friend who came from the same village. He said, "Last winter it snowed very hard in our area, and even the wild animals suffered. Many wolves invaded our village looking for food

"Did they do any harm?" the friend asked

"Well, they caught your speckled rooster and ate it," answered Temel.

¹The word Laz refers to residents of the Turkish Black Sea coast. Some of them in the easternmost provinces of Giresun, Trabzon, Rize, and Artvin belong to an ethnic minority known as the Lazi. Laz people are stereotyped as being stupid or inept, but in tales which they tell about themselves they are often pictured as clever.

²Temel is the most popular male name among the Laz--so popular, in fact, that the name Temel automatically signals Laz to people in the rest of Turkey.

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"But where was our dog, Blackhead,³ while this was happening?"

"Your donkey kicked Blackhead and killed it," said Temel.

"What was the donkey doing there? Why wasn't he at the mill?"

"Your donkey had just been used to carry your father's coffin from the mill."

"Oh-h-h! My father is dead?" asked the friend.

"Yes, his grief was so great that he did not survive very long after your mother's death."

"Oh-h-h! Then my mother is dead, too?"

"Yes," answered Temel. "They were not able to save her from the flames that consumed your house."

"So, is all of this your way of telling me that my home was destroyed?"

³Karabaş (Blackhead) and Akbaş (Whitehead) are the two descriptive names of Turkish sheepdogs.