

Story 1971 (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 Retort

Temel² had always dreamed of visiting Istanbul, and finally he had the opportunity to do so. On his first day in that large city he went shopping in the Beyoğlu district. After completing his purchases and walking around to see some of the famous sites, he went to a restaurant to have lunch.

There he chose a table facing Sakarya Street and sat down. A waiter came, and Temel gave him an order for the meal he wished. He waited and waited and waited for his meal to come. Feeling that he had been rudely ignored long enough, he called to a passing waiter.

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.

Story 1971

“Waiter, why hasn’t my food been brought after all this time? Other people’s meals have been brought, but mine has not.”

The waiter answered, “Sir, do you remember who took your order? Did your waiter perchance have gray hair?”

Temel was already angered at having to wait so long for his food, and this stupid question made him even angrier. He responded, “When he took my order, he had black hair, but I am sure that it must have turned gray by now!”