

Story 1165 (1989 Tape 12)

Narrator: Şükrü Velioğlu, teaching assistant at Ankara College

Location: Taped at Ankara, but narrator is of Black Sea origin, Trabzon Province

Date: December 17, 1989

Laz¹ Overture to a Beauty

One day Temel² was wandering about in the Beyoğlu section of İstanbul, watching the pretty girls who walked along the streets. After a while he saw an especially beautiful woman coming along with a small son, whom she held by the hand. As she came closer to him, Temel asked her "Kokona,³ is this handsome boy⁴ yours?"

¹The 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.

²One of the most common male names among Laz people. It is so common that it has become a generic label (1) for any Laz male, and, by extension, (2) any comic Black Sea person.

³A woman who is carefully made up--or perhaps overly made up. It often has the connotation of a flirt or an approachable woman

⁴Instead of using oğlan, the most common Turkish word for boy, the narrator uses uşak, a term used mainly in northern Turkey.

"Yes, he is. Why do you ask that?"

"Kokona, if I supplied you with the material, would you make one like that for me?"