

Story 1167 (1989 Tape 12)

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Location: Taped at Ankara,
but narrator was
originally from
Trabzon Province

Date: December 17, 1989

A Lost Laz¹ Ear

Temel² was once hired to work on a large construction project. One day the wooden scaffold on which he was working collapsed, and Temel was thrown to the ground. He was cut and bruised in several places, but his worst injury was the loss of an ear. It had been torn off as he fell among the beams and planks and other rubble of the scaffold.

When Temel discovered his loss, he called out to his fellow workers, "Friends, my ear has been torn off! Come and help me search for it." After searching for a short while, one of friends found Temel's ear and took it to him. Temel examined the ear and then said, "This is not my ear."

Several of his friends argued with him about this. "Temel,"

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.

²Temel, Dursun, and Hızır are the most common names of stereotyped Laz characters in Turkish anecdotes.

they said, "how can this fail to be your ear? No one else here has lost an ear, and so this must be yours."

"No, no! It is not mine," insisted Temel.

"What makes you think that it is not yours?" they demanded.

"Well, my ear had a pencil behind it, and there is no pencil behind this one!"