

Story 1169 (1989 Tape 12)

Narrator: Şükrü Velioğlu, teaching assistant at Ankara College

Location: Taped in Ankara but narrator originally came from Trabzon Province

Date: December 17, 1989

Laz¹ On and Off Location

One day while Temel² was in İstanbul, he became involved in a fight. It was a very violent fight, and it ended with Temel's killing his opponent. Temel escaped from the city without being caught, and after traveling for many days, he reached his home village in Rize Province. Although he tried to hide on a small mountain near this village, it was only a short time before he was captured by gendarmes³ and taken back to the site of his crime, İstanbul.

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, Hızır, and Dursun are the most commonly used names for Laz characters in Turkish folktales.

³There are no police forces per se in rural Turkey. Law and order are maintained by army units that have been turned over to the Ministry of Interior for that purpose. They are called gendarmes. They are, therefore, "police-soldiers" in a sense.

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trial
side
When his trial began, the judge said to him, "Temel, tell us about that murder that you committed."

"Yes, I shall tell you about it, Sir Judge.⁴ Gendarmes arrested me on a small mountain near my home village in Rize Province. They took me to the city of Rize and put me aboard a ship. We sailed from Rize to Trabzon, where we disembarked. There we walked about the city for some time. We made various purchases at shops along our route, and after a while we stopped at a restaurant and ate."

At that point the judge interrupted him and said, "Forget about Trabzon and the things that you did there. Tell us instead about the murder."

"I am telling it to you, Sir Judge. Aren't you listening to me? We soon boarded the ship again--the gendarmes and I--and after sailing for some time, we arrived at the port of Giresun. There we disembarked and climbed up along the shore to the citadel of that city. Near the citadel we bought from a vendor some hazelnuts and began to eat them."

"Temel," said the judge, now annoyed, "stop talking about ships and ports, and shopping and meals, and citadels and hazelnuts, and tell us about the murder in which you were involved!"

⁴The narrator says, "Hâkim Bey," literally, "Lord Judge" or "Distinguished Judge."

"That is what I am trying to do, Sir Judge. Aren't you listening to me? We weighed anchor at Giresun, and we then proceeded first to Ordu and then to Samsun. Our trip was progressing quite well."

By now the judge had become very irritated with his long-winded account and by his refusal to discuss the murder for which he was being tried. "Look at me, Temel!" he ordered. "I am warning you for the last time to forget about Rize, Trabzon, Giresun, Ordu, Samsun, Sinop, and Zonguldak.⁵ Travel directly to Istanbul and tell us about the murder you committed!"

"But, Sir Judge, if I go directly to Istanbul, might I not be hanged there?"

⁵All of these cities are major seaports stretching across almost the full length of the Turkish Black Sea coast.