

Story 1689 (1993 Tape 5)

Narrator: Umit Uzman

Location: Trabzon, Trabzon Province (at bakery which served as a front for call-girl appointments)

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Collected by Jo Ann Conrad

The Laz,<sup>1</sup> the Kurd,<sup>2</sup> and the Beautiful Woman

There were once a Laz and a Kurd who were among the members of a group of people taking an ocean cruise. After had been sailing for a couple of days, a bad storm arose at sea. It grew worse and worse until the high waves finally caused the ship to sink. There were only three of the passengers on the ship who managed to survive that shipwreck: the Laz, the Kurd, and a beautiful woman.

The three of them swam to a very small island that was near the spot where their ship had sunk. It was so

<sup>1</sup>The Laz people constitute a large ethnic minority living principally in Rize and Trabzon provinces in extreme northeastern Turkey. They are usually stereotyped as being stupid or inept, though in fact they are no different from other people. When the raconteur is himself Laz, he will often represent the Laz characters as being very clever instead of stupid. Here the Laz protagonist is shown outwitting his rival. There are many ATON tales from the Black Sea coast which feature this counter-stereotype image of the Laz.

<sup>2</sup>Kurds are a largely nomadic people who live in greatest numbers in Iran, Iraq, and Turkey. They constitute the largest ethnic minority in Turkey. Because they are rustic and often unfamiliar with sedentary life, the Kurds are also often stereotyped as being stupid.

Story

small that there was nothing on that island except a tree on one side of it. Temel<sup>3</sup> said to the Kurd, "Climb into the top of that tree and keep watch for a passing ship that might rescue us. Don't at any time go near the woman. We must leave her unmolested on the other side of the island.

But the Kurd objected to this idea. "No!" he said. "You should be the first one to climb to the top of the tree and keep watch for a ship."

The Laz answered, "Very well." He then began climbing toward the top of the tree to keep watch. As soon as he reached the top, however, he started shouting at the woman on the other side of the island: "Hey, what are you doing? Who is there with you? Who is that person with you?"

When the Kurd heard this, he became utterly confused. He thought, "Allah! Allah! I am here; the Laz is in the tree, and the woman is on the other side of the island. What is going on? Who can be there with her?"

Temel continued his shouting: "Who are you? What are you doing to that woman? Leave her alone!"

The Kurd was so curious that he could not stand this

<sup>3</sup>Temel is a very popular male name among Lazes, especially in folktales. It is so popular, in fact, that for audiences Temel is almost a synonym for Laz, as it seems to be here.

Story 1689

situation any longer. He called up to the Laz, "Come down, Temel! I shall climb up there and watch for ships.

The Laz climbed back down, and the Kurd began to ascend the tree slowly. As the Laz had planned, he went immediately to the woman as the Kurd was climbing upward. When the Kurd reached the top of the tree and looked across the island, he said to himself, "Allah! Allah! The Laz was right! There is a man there with that woman!"