

Story 1904 (1995 Tape 4)

Narrator: Unidentified woman,
housewife

Location: Antalya, capital of
Antalya Province

Date: August 15, 1995

A Laz¹ Travels by Air

After Temel² had been in Istanbul for awhile, he decided to go home, and so he bought an air ticket for Trabzon. He boarded the plane early and immediately went and sat in the pilot's seat. When the pilot arrived, he told Temel that he would have to take some other seat, but Temel refused to move. He said, "I was here first, and this is the seat I want." When the stewardess tried to persuade him to move, he remained seated and said the same thing to her.

One of the passengers sitting near the front of the plane observed this difficult situation. Going to the pilot and the stewardess,

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. İdris and Hızır are also popular Laz names.

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who were then talking with each other, the passenger said, "Let me handle this problem. I shall make that man move to another seat." Going to Temel, the passenger whispered something in his ear. Temel arose at once and took the seat that had been assigned to him.

The pilot and the stewardess were amazed. The stewardess went to the helpful passenger and asked him quietly, "What did you say to persuade that man to leave the pilot's seat?"

"I told him that that seat would not go to Trabzon. I said, 'Only the seat that has the same number as your boarding pass does will go to Trabzon.'"³

³In some variants of this anecdote the helpful passenger is himself a Laz or someone who can speak the Laz dialect convincingly.