

Story 1908 (1995 Tape 4)

Narrator: Unidentified  
housewife

Location: Antalya, capi-  
tal of Antalya  
Province

Date: August 15, 1995

Continuing Bad Luck of a Laz<sup>1</sup> Parachutist

When Temel<sup>2</sup> was in the military service,<sup>3</sup> he required to make a parachute jump. He was instructed about what to do after he had jumped from the airplane. "First you should pull the right-hand rip cord, and that should open the regular parachute. If that parachute should fail to open, then you should at once pull left-hand rip cord in order to open the emergency parachute."

<sup>1</sup>The word Laz referred originally to an ethnic minority living principally 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 inspt. This stereotype (like most others) is unjustifiable, for Lazes are, of course, much like other people.

<sup>2</sup>Temel (like Dursun) is a name given to so many Laz males that it automatically signals Laz to most Turkish audiences. Because Lazes are stereotyped as being numskulls, the name Temel may, by extension, be applied to any supposedly stupid person, whether or not he happens to be Laz.

<sup>3</sup>All Turkish males in good health are required to complete a period of military service.

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Temel understood exactly what he was supposed to do. He pulled the right-hand rip cord, but the regular parachute did not open. Then he pulled the left-hand rip cord, but the emergency parachute did not open either. By this time Temel was quite discouraged. He had been told that there would be a military truck waiting to pick up him and the other parachutists. As he was falling swiftly toward the earth, he said to himself, "With my kind of luck, I should not be a bit surprised if that truck arrives late today!"