

Story 1924 (1995 Tape 4)

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“I Have the Key!”

Temel¹ once took a pleasure trip along the Black Sea with some friends. They did not travel in one of the large steamships that go back and forth daily between Istanbul and Trabzon but on a much smaller ship, a taka.² Temel had a good voice, and so he sang as they sailed along, and as he did so, he accompanied himself on a kemence.³ All of his friends enjoyed his performance. Laz⁴ people are especially fond of songs, folk dances, and instrumental music.

¹Temel (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 stupid people, the name Temel may, by extension, be applied to any stupid person, whether or not he happens to be Laz.

²A taka is a small, single-masted ship used for fishing and for transportation over short distances. Takas are made at several Black Sea ports.

³A very small violin with three wire strings. It is held not between the chin and shoulder but against the knee.

⁴The 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

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After awhile a storm sprang up suddenly on the Black Sea.⁵ As the storm grew worse, the ship began to roll. In one of the ship's sharp lurches, Temel's suitcase slid off the deck into the sea. His friends shouted, "Hey, Temel! Your suitcase has gone! It fell into the sea!"

But Temel was so engrossed in his singing and playing that he never missed a beat of the music. He just changed the words in two of the lines to "That's all right—I have the key! That's all right—I have the key!"

inept. This stereotype (like most others) is unjustifiable, for Lazes are, of course, much like other people.

⁵Residents along its coast claim that the Black Sea is prone to squalls and sudden storms that seem to blow up out of nowhere.