

Story 1935 (1995 Tape 4)

Narrator: Güler Soytaş, 45,
attorney

Location: Antalya, capital of
Antalya Province

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Demography Kills a Laz¹

Temel² and his wife had had a very happy marriage which had produced four children. When his wife became pregnant for the fifth time, however, Temel murdered her.

Temel was arrested and put in jail to await trial. When the trial date arrived, he was taken to court. There the judge asked him, “Temel, why did you murder your wife? How could you commit such a terrible act?”

Temel answered, “I murdered her because she was carrying a child which was not mine, Your Honor.”

“How did you know that?” asked the judge.

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.

²Temel (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.

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“Oh, Your Honor, it was written in all the newspapers.”

Confused by this response, the judge asked, “What was written in all the newspapers?”

Temel answered, “In all the newspapers it was announced that every fifth child was going to be Chinese!”