

Story 1938 (1995 Tape 4)

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A Laz¹ and His Lost Benefactor

There was a Laz named Temel² who owned a pastry shop. He had worked diligently for years to make that shop one of the best of its kind, and after several years it actually did become the most famous pastry shop in Turkey. In fact, it was so very successful that it made Temel a millionaire.

One day Temel said to his spouse, “Wife, we cannot take all of this money into the next world. I believe that we should change our life. I have been talking with some of my friends about this, and they have given me some good advice. They suggested that we sell our business and move to California, where we could buy a very

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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comfortable home. We would also have enough money to send our children to a university to get good educations. Why should we continue to work so hard until we die?"

Temel's wife agreed with this idea. They sold their pastry shop for a very high price, and they then converted their money into American dollars. They bought air tickets for Los Angeles for themselves and their children, and a month later they departed for America. Their flight was comfortable and without incident until they were over Nevada, where one of the engines of their plane developed some mechanical problem. They made an emergency landing at Las Vegas for repairs to the engine, and the passengers were told that it would not resume its flight to Los Angeles until the next morning. The airline clerk in the terminal said to the passengers of that flight, "Your room and food at an excellent hotel here will all be paid for by our airline, but if you have any gambling debts, they will be your own responsibility."

When Temel and his family were taken to their hotel room, Temel said to his wife, "Allah forbid that we should ever gamble!" But after they had eaten dinner and watched television for awhile, Temel became bored. Finally he decided to go down to the casino and watch the gambling. After watching for awhile, he could not resist gambling a little himself. He bought \$500 worth of chips and began playing

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roulette. Unfortunately he was not lucky at roulette, and before long he had lost all of his chips as well as a small amount of cash he still had had in his pocket.

Temel decided to go to the rest room at the casino before returning to tell his wife of his gambling loss. In the rest room, however, he discovered that one needed a quarter to enter a toilet stall. Reaching into his pocket, he could not find even a quarter. Seeing Temel's predicament, a well-dressed man handed him a quarter. Thanking that gentleman, Temel added, "I shall send the money back to you. Please give me your card so that I shall know where to mail it."

The gentleman laughed and said, "Don't bother to pay back such a small amount," but he finally placed his professional card in Temel's outstretched hand.

Temel returned to the toilet stall, but he found that the previous user had left the door open, and so he did not need the quarter there. After leaving the rest room, he returned immediately to the casino, where he inserted the quarter into a slot machine. To his amazement, a small heap of quarters poured from the slot machine to the counter before him. Exchanging all of those quarters for another supply of chips, Temel started playing roulette again. This time his luck was much better, and before the evening was over, he had won more than half a million dollars.

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On the following day Temel and his family proceeded to Los Angeles. There they bought a mansion in a fashionable section of the city and settled down very comfortably. Servants did all of their housework and tended their garden and lawns, and so they enjoyed a life of great ease for awhile. But Temel and his wife had worked so hard all of their lives in Turkey that they soon grew very restless in their new idle life style. They finally decided that in order to have something to do, they would start a pastry shop in Los Angeles. Their pastries were as well received in America as they had been in Turkey, and it was not long before his baked goods became famous. As a result, wealthy Temel grew even wealthier.

After ten years Temel decided to hold a Tenth Anniversary Celebration. All of his friends and all of his employees and their families were invited to this celebration. Following a fine banquet, Temel was asked by one of his best friends to tell the guests his success story. Temel proceeded to tell the story of his life, step by step, including his extremely lucky experiences during the stopover at Las Vegas. He ended his account by saying, "Happy as I am here, I am sad about just one thing, and that is my inability to locate the man who made it possible for me to win a fortune at Las Vegas."

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At that point one of his employees arose and said, "Excuse me, Boss. but you just told that that man had given you his card, which his address was printed

Temel answered, "Oh, that not the man am trying locate The man I am searching for the one who left open the door of the toilet stall.