

Story 1959 (1992 Tape 4)

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Location: Kırklareli, capital of Kırklareli Province (a Black Sea or Laz province)

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### A Laz<sup>1</sup> Belittles Chinese Science

One day when Temel<sup>2</sup> and Cemal were talking together, each was trying to impress the other with his great knowledge. They had just come out of their Chemistry class, where they had been memorizing the Periodic Chart of the Elements. Temel said, "I think that it will be impossible for China to construct an atomic bomb."

Trying to sound a little superior, Cemal asked, "Why not? What could ever give you such an idea?"

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<sup>1</sup>The 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.

<sup>2</sup>In 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.

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Temel answered quickly, “Because the Chinese have an alphabet different from that used for the Periodic Chart of Elements.”