

Story 1973 (1992 Tape 4)

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

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A Laz¹ Doctor's Empathy with His Patients

Temel² had been attending medical school for some time. He had passed all of the examinations and begun his internship. He had completed residency in several sections of the medical school hospital, and now he was in the final required section, Maternity and Delivery. He had only a quarter of a year to complete before graduation, and he was much happier in that last section than he had been in the earlier ones. He smiled more often now than he had previously.

His friends noticed how much happier he looked now, but they did not know how to account for the change in his disposition. One of

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.

²In 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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them finally said to him, "Well, now, Temel, why do you seem so much happier working in Maternity and Delivery than you did in the other sections of the hospital? What is it in the Maternity and Delivery section that has made you so relaxed lately?"

Remaining silent for a moment, Temel said, "Listen, my friend, I would not tell this to anyone else, but you and I have been classmates here for several years, and so I know that you will be able to understand what I am going to tell you. As you will recall, while I was doing residency in the Cardiac Section, I myself almost had a heart attack. Then after I transferred to the Cancer Section, I seemed to be developing symptoms of cancer. Still later when I was working in the gastrointestinal Section, I suspected that I had the beginning of stomach ulcers. All of these suspicions and fears that I experienced concerning my health turned out to be completely baseless. There was nothing wrong with me physically. My troubles were all in my mind. I just imagined that I had those different symptoms."

Temel's friend said, "Yes, I can understand how that could happen. But why are you so much happier now?"

Temel answered, "Well, I may become a father in the future, but I have no fears whatsoever of becoming pregnant."