

Story 1975 (1992 Tape 4)

Narrator: Leyla Özdemir, 25

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Three Lazes¹ Mistake Guesses for Gold

Three close Laz friends were one day sailing for pleasure on the Black Sea. The wind arose and shook severely the sailboat in which they were riding. That same strong wind drove a wooden box into the side of their boat. The three friends looked at each other, wondering what might be in that box. Each guessed aloud what he thought might be in the box, and all three guessed that it might contain gold. As they pulled the box aboard their boat, they discussed how the gold should be divided. Temel² said, "Because I am the oldest I shall take half of the gold and the two of you will share the other half."

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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"That is not fair!" said the other two men. They argued for awhile about how the gold should be shared. Then the argument grew violent, and the three began to fight. Temel was very strong, and it wasn't long before the other two men fell into the sea and were drowned.

Policemen on shore had been watching the struggle in the boat, and when Temel managed to land the boat, they were waiting there to question him. "What happened out there, Temel?"

Temel answered, "Well, a box washed against our boat, and each of us made the guess that it probably contained gold. We began to argue about how that gold should be divided, and the argument became so intense that my two friends fell into the sea and drowned."

"What was actually in that box?"

"The contents of that box were very disappointing. When I opened it up and turned it over in the bottom of the boat, only guesses fell out, not gold."