

Story 1900 (1995 Tape 4)

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The Laz<sup>1</sup> and the Empty Automobile

One day a Laz was walking along one of the streets of Trabzon. After a short while he noticed an empty automobile rolling along that street. It was moving right along, but there was no driver behind the wheel. Temel<sup>2</sup> became quite alarmed, for he feared that the empty vehicle might crash into another automobile or run over a pedestrian. Jumping into the automobile, he steered it over to the gutter. Then he applied the brakes and stopped the vehicle.

As he climbed out of the automobile, Temel felt very pleased with himself. In fact, he began to consider himself quite a hero. Had he

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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. İdris and Hızır are also popular Laz names.

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not prevented the loss of human lives? But he did not continue thinking that way very long, for coming around from the back of the automobile was the angry owner, who had been pushing his stalled vehicle toward a gasoline station.