

Story 1903 (1995 Tape 4)

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Two Lazes¹ on a Train Trip

Some time ago the railroad was the only means of transportation for traveling long distances overland. During that period Temel² and Dursun took a train trip to Istanbul. During their journey the conductor shouted the name of every station as the train was approaching it. Every time the train stopped, one or more passengers would arise and get off the train.

After this had been going on for awhile, Dursun asked, “Temel, when are we going to get off this train?”

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. İdris and Hızır are also popular Laz names.

Story 1903

Temel answered, "Don't be in any hurry to get off. We shall not get off until the conductor calls our names."