

Story 1956 (1992 Tape 4)

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

Date: May 1992

### A Laz<sup>1</sup> Record Breaker

Once when Temel<sup>2</sup> was employed on a construction job, he had a coworker who came from Kayseri. The Kayseri man criticized Temel in every way he could. One day he accused Temel of being lazy. He said, “You are the laziest man I have ever seen! I am sure you have broken the record for laziness!”

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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. Although some Lazes may resent the stereotype, others rise above it and, in a sense, stereotype the stereotype by telling some of the funniest Laz anecdotes. Still others counter the stereotype by telling tales in which the Laz is very clever. In this tale and many others the Laz outwits the traditionally shrewd and brilliant Turkish folk type, the person from Kayseri (central Turkey). Visitors to Turkey are sometimes warned, “He may not be able to read or write, but if he is from Kayseri, beware of him!”

<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, "I am very sorry! I didn't mean to break your record."