

Story 1960 (1992 Tape 4)

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

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A Lost Laz¹ Ear

Temel² was once working at a tractor factory in the Netherlands. One day when he was on the assembly line at that factory, a part of a tractor was thrown upward from the assembly line. As it fell back down, it struck Temel on the head, cutting off one of his ears.

A factory ambulance immediately rushed Temel to the emergency room of a nearby hospital. There doctors stopped the bleeding and gave Temel a mild anaesthetic to prepare him for the surgery needed to sew his ear back in place. Because they did not have

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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the severed ear, the doctors called the factory and requested that the ear be found and delivered at once to the hospital.

In a short while the ear was found and brought to the emergency room. As the doctors were discussing the required operation, the sound of their voices awakened Temel. Looking at the ear in the doctor's hand, Temel said, "That is not my ear!"

The doctors were surprised and confused by this remark. Telephoning the factory again, they asked, "Has any other ear been found anywhere along your assembly line?" When the doctors were told that no other ear had been found, they felt sure that the ear they had was Temel's ear. Returning to the operating room, they sewed the ear back on Temel's head. After Temel had regained consciousness, they asked him, "Temel, whatever made you think that this ear we have sewn onto your head was not really your ear?"

Temel answered, "Before the accident occurred, there was a pencil behind my ear, but there was no pencil behind the ear that you sewed onto my head."