

Story 2036 (1997 Tape 2)

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Location: Yeşilova village,  
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A Laz<sup>1</sup> Cheats a Barber

One day Temel<sup>2</sup> entered a barbershop with a small boy. Temel sat down in the barber's chair and got a haircut and shave. He then said to the barber, "I have a few small errands to do, but I shall be back in a few minutes. Cut the boy's hair, and I shall return for him."

The barber proceeded to cut the boy's hair. When he had finished, he said to the child, "You sit over there and wait for your father. He will come here to pick you up and to pay me for my work done on the two of you."

<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 Turkey's 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. Atypically, a few Black Sea tales present a counter image of the Laz, showing him to be unusually clever--sometimes even clever enough to outwit the Kayseri man, traditionally the sharpest of all Turkish sharpers.

<sup>2</sup>Temel is the most popular of male names for Lazes in folktales. Other names given often to the Laz stereotype are Dursun, İdris, and Hızır. As soon as a character is designated as having the name Temel, the Turkish audience knows that the narrator is going to tell a Laz anecdote.

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The boy looked at the barber and said, "He is not my father. I do not know who he is. I was playing outside when he came along and asked me if I would like to get a free haircut here at your shop. I said, 'Yes.' That is why I came here with him. I don't know whether or not he will return to pay you for your work, but I do know that he will not come to pick me up, for I am in no way related to him."