

Story 2149 (1999 Tape 5)

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A Special Laz¹ Automobile

Laz people living in Trabzon built a new kind of automobile. When they wanted to test the speed of this new vehicle, they asked Temel² to drive it at top speed to Ankara, a distance of more than 350 kilometers. Temel completed that trip in just a little more than two hours. He telephoned his friends back in Trabzon and reported the record-breaking speed of the new car. His friends congratulated him and said that they were awaiting his return to Trabzon.

They waited much longer, however, than they expected. Four hours, six hours, and eight hours passed, and still Temel had not returned to Trabzon. The night

¹The word Laz originally referred to an ethnic minority which lived along the extreme eastern end of the Turkish Black Sea coast, primarily in Trabzon and Rize provinces. Now the term Laz refers to any resident of the whole Turkish Black Sea coast. Lazes are often stereotyped as being stupid or inept. There is no real basis for this stereotype, for Lazes are similar to other people.

²In Laz anecdotes most Laz males are named Temel, Dursun, Cemal, İdris, or Hızır. Temel is the most commonly used male name. When a story begins about a character named Temel, the Turkish audience knows at once that it is about to hear a Laz tale.

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passed, but in the morning there was still no sign of Temel. His friends had by then grown anxious about Temel's welfare. Had that swift new car been involved in an accident?

When he finally arrived in Trabzon around noontime, his friends were greatly relieved. They questioned him about his delayed return. "Temel, you drove to Ankara in just over two hours. Why did it take you more than 24 hours to drive back?"

Temel responded, "Friends, you do not understand the structure of this wonderful automobile. It has five speeds forward, and the fifth is extremely fast. But it has only one speed in reverse, and that is quite a slow speed."