How a Laz Named an Important Medicine

There once was a large conference in a European country that was assembled to discuss a newly developed medicine of worldwide importance. One of the reasons for calling the conference was to find a suitable name for the new medicine.

A great many people had registered for this conference, and there was a long line of people waiting to enter the building where the conference was to be held. Among these people there was a Laz. After he had waited in line for some time, the Laz became disgusted with the delay and decided to cancel his registration. In a loud voice, he shouted to the attendant at the door, "Peni silin!" (which means "Erase my name!"). But few of the people there knew any Turkish, and they thought that he was offering a name for the new medicine. The conference later decided to accept what they thought was the Laz's recommendation for a name for the new medicine. And that was the way that penicillin was named.

1 Silmek means to erase, and silin is the imperative form. Peni is the Laz pronunciation for Beni; ben means I, and beni is the objective form, me. Thus Peni silin! means Erase me! or Erase my name!