

Story 1878 (1995 Tape 2)

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Erzurum Province

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The Qualified Chivalry of a Laz¹

There were once three men traveling in the same compartment of a railroad coach. One of them was a Frenchman, one was an Englishman, and the third was a Laz. At the first stop a beautiful woman boarded the train and entered the same compartment. After sitting down, she crossed her legs and took a cigarette from her purse. Immediately both the Frenchman and the Englishman rushed to her side to light the cigarette. After awhile she dropped her handkerchief. The Frenchman and the Englishman raced each other to be the one to pick it up and return it to her.

A little while later the woman farted. The Frenchman pretended that he was the one who had farted. He said, "Please pardon me. I am not feeling well, for I have a bad cold."

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.

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Still later the woman farted again. This time the Englishman pretended that he was the offender. He said, "Please excuse me. I have a severe stomach ache today."

When the train reached the destination of the Laz, he grabbed his luggage, and as he was going out the compartment door, he said very loudly, "Fellows,² if that woman farts again, you may say that I was the one who did it!"

²The narrator said here Uşaklar, which means boys in some parts of Turkey, especially in the northernmost provinces. It may also mean children.