

Story 1978 (1992 Tape 4)

Narrator: Leyla Özdemir, 25

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

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Two Lazes¹ and Their Penguin

One day two Laz friends were walking down Sakarya Street in Ankara. One of them was carrying a large penguin under his arm. When a policeman observed them, he approached the two and asked, “What are you doing here with that penguin?”

“we are just carrying him along with us,” one of the Lazes answered.

“You should take that penguin to the zoo at once,” said the policeman.

two friends looked each other in the face, and then one of them said, “All right. We shall do that.”

Three or four hours later the policeman saw the same two Lazes, and to his annoyance, he saw that they were again carrying the

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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penguin about with them. He asked them harshly, “Didn’t I tell you to take that penguin to the zoo?”

“Yes, sir, you did, and so we took it to the zoo. It enjoyed the zoo so much that now we are taking it to the cinema.”²

²This is a widely distributed tale, not one restricted to Turkey. The South African numskull Van der Merwe carries on his shoulder a crocodile, which he first takes as directed to the zoo and then to the movies. See Barbara K. Walker’s Laughing Together: Giggles and Grins from Around the Globe (New York: UNICEF/Four Winds Press, 1977; Minneapolis: UNICEF/Free Spirit Publishing, 1992), p. 64.