Story 1735 1994 Tape 1

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Location: Taşkale village, Karaman (provincial capital but formerly kaza merkezi), Karaman Province

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Pertinent Question, Practical Answer

There was a Laz[1] who was walking along with his left arm crooked out in a curved position and his hand held tightly against his left hip. As he walked along in this awkward posture, he seemed to be lost in thought.

A passerby observed the Laz with his body contorted in this way, and he was curious about the reason for his behavior. He followed the Laz for a way along the street, and when the Laz boarded a bus, the observer did also. He noticed that even while the Laz was seated in the bus, he continued to keep his arm in the same awkward position. Unable to restrain his curiosity any longer, the observer asked the Laz, "Are you ill or crippled?"

[1]The Lazes live along the Black Sea coast. The word Laz in most anecdotes refers to any resident of the area, though the word was derived from the Lazi, an ethnic minority that speaks a Mingrelian-Caucasian language. Lazes are stereotyped as being stupid or inept, though of course they are no less intelligent than other people.

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I am not," answered the Laz.

"Are you then perhaps crazy?"

I am not crazy," answered the Laz.

The observer then said, "My attention was drawn to you when I saw you walking along the street. Why is your left arm curved around that way with your hand held so tightly against your hip?"

Looking down at his arm, the Laz exclaimed, "Oh, mother![2] The watermelon must have fallen out of my grasp!"

[2]In colloquial Turkish, "Mother!" is an interjection expressing surprise.