

Story 1545 (1992 Tape 1

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Location: Derinkuyu, a kaza town
of Nevşehir Province

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The Laz¹ and the Meritless Corpse

Once a Laz was visited by one of his former military companions. The Laz was very pleased to see this old army friend. One day during that friend's visit, the Laz took him on a tour of the town. After a while they came to the cemetery of that town.

As they walked through this cemetery, the Laz gave his friend much information about the people buried there. "This man killed and killed and killed, but during the fourth attack on the enemy he was himself killed." Pointing to another grave, he said, "The man who is buried here killed and killed before he too was killed." As they continued through the cemetery, the Laz repeated such remarks about the occupant of grave after grave.

After a while, however, they came to a grave over which

¹The Laz people are a large ethnic minority living primarily in extreme northeastern Turkey along the Black Sea coast. While there are Lazes throughout Turkey, the vast majority live in Rize, Trabzon, and Artvin provinces. Although their native language is a form of Megrillian Caucasian, most adult Lazes speak Turkish readily, though not without occasional dialectal pronunciations. Like the inhabitants of three or four villages elsewhere in Turkey, Lazes are often stereotyped as being stupid. Of course, they are not in fact any more stupid than anyone else; they are simply the butt of folk humor.

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the Laz said nothing at all. He just passed in silence past that particular grave. Noticing this, the guest asked, "Why do you say nothing about the man in this grave? How did he die? Who was he?"

The Laz answered, "Ha-a-a, that man! He didn't kill anybody, and he himself wasn't killed! He died of natural causes-- a complete nobody!"