

Story 1768 (1994 Tape 4)

Narrator: Mustafa Yavuz

Location: Bostancı village
Sünehri kaza,
Sivas Province

Casualties of the Salt War

Two Laz¹es went into partnership to raise salt. They planted salt for two years in a row, but their efforts produced nothing. One of them said, "We have now planted salt for two years, but we have not had any results from our work. Let us find a solution for our difficulty."

One evening they met at a friend's house to talk about this matter. He suggested, "It may be flies eating the salt."

One of the Laz¹es asked, "What shall we do about this?"

The other Laz said, "Let us take our rifles to the field in the morning and wait for the arrival of the

¹The word Laz referred originally to an ethnic minority living primarily in Trabzon and Rize provinces, along the extreme eastern end of the Turkish Black Sea coast. More recently the word has come to be applied to any resident of the entire 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 the Laz¹es are, of course, much like other people.

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flies.

next morning they went to their salt field. One stationed himself on one end of the field, and the other stood on the opposite end. Time passed, and around noon it became quite hot in the field. That heat brought out the flies. A fly landed on the nose of one Laz. He signaled this fact only by whistling so softly that it would not frighten the fly away. His signal meant, "One of the enemy has landed! Shoot it!" The other Laz, who understood the signal, raised his rifle, took careful aim, and fired. He hit the fly.

Going over to where his friend lay dead, he said to the flies swarming around, "One of yours is dead. One of ours is dead. And we also lost a bag of salt."