

Story #288 (Milli Kütüphane Tape)

Narrator: Saliha Arel

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Pekmez Mother

Tek Once there was and once there wasn't, when God's creatures were many, and it was a sin to talk too much, at one time there was a merchant, and he had an only daughter who was the apple of his eye. She had a Negro nurse. One day, the girl saw her father with his chin in his hand, deep in thought, and she asked, "What are you thinking about, Father?"

"It is this," he said. "All my friends are going on a pilgrimage [to become hacı]. I want to go, too, only I cannot leave you here alone. You are young and you are beautiful, and I can't leave you."

"Oh, you can," said the girl. "It's easy. You can go." [You know, in olden times it used to take a long time to go on a pilgrimage and to come back.] "This is what you can do," she said. "You can buy us bread and all sorts of foods. You can stack them in the house, enough to last us for a whole year. And then you can close the door and wall it up, and shut us in, and I'll stay here, inside the house, with my nurse and wait for you."

"But," said the father, "how can you stay in the house all year round? Won't you be bored?"

"Oh, no," she said. "I won't get bored. I'll stay and wait for you."

So he carried in all sorts of foods and supplies, and loaded the

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house with food and water, and he walled up the door and left with his friends. The girl began to live in this walled-in house, with the nurse, who knew nothing about talking and exchanging ideas.

There was a padişah in that land, and he had a son. This son happened to be one who had been looking for a sensitive and good girl to marry. He heard about this walled-in girl and, "What sort of girl is she?" he wondered, and he decided to go and see her. "I'll go and see her," he said. He wrapped something around his head and he went incognito, ^{Disguise} pretending he was a seller of pekmez. He went there and he started selling pekmez.

Pekmez mother I am; pekmez I sell.

Happiness to all gloomy hearts I bring.

My sweet stories are balm for the soul;

I erase trouble from the heart as I sing.

The pekmez seller went around and around the house, saying this.

When the girl heard this, she said, "Oh, the pekmez seller is here! My father forgot to buy us pekmez, among all the things he provided for us. Shall we buy some pekmez?"

And the nurse said, "All right. If you want to, let's do."

"Pekmez mother, Pekmez mother!" she called. "I'll hang down the basket, with the money in it, and you give me pekmez. And, what's more, Pekmez mother, please come and sell pekmez around here."

"All right," said the Pekmez mother. "You seem to be bored in there." So every day Pekmez mother came and saw the girl not very happy, and said, "What's wrong with you? Why are you so sad?"

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"Why shouldn't I be sad?" said the girl. "Everybody's father is coming from the pilgrimage, and everyone is getting to paint the doors green [when the pilgrims came from the pilgrimage, their doors were painted green]. Don't you see? Everyone is getting ready for the welcome--getting ready to paint the doors green--and we have no one. We can't do anything. We're just walled in here."

"Don't worry," said Pekmez mother. "I'll do it for you. I'll paint the door for you, and I'll get the food ready to welcome your father."

Every day, Pekmez mother came around and sang, and the girl enjoyed this. When it was time for the pilgrims to come, ^{carriage} carriages came from the padişah's palace, and they opened the door, took her into a carriage, and took her to meet her father.

When the father saw the girl come to meet him, he felt very badly about it, because the girl was a very beautiful one. He said, "But I had walled her in! How can she be out?"

"You don't have to worry about it," she said. "It was only Pekmez mother. You remember, you forgot to buy us pekmez when you left, and there was a pekmez seller who came around every day, and when we told her that you were coming and we couldn't come and meet you, she saw to it that we could."

They came home, and the food was prepared, and there was a feast in the house for Hacı Baba. Later, the padişah invited them to his palace to have dinner, and when they went to his dinner, the padişah asked Hacı Baba to give his daughter to the padişah's son, the crown prince. And Hacı Baba said, "Just as you see fit, sir."

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But all the time, this girl and Pekmez mother were together; now that the merchant had returned, the pekmez seller could come more freely to the house. The girl was to marry the crown prince, but she said, "I won't go there unless Pekmez mother comes with me."

Finally, they said, "All right. Pekmez mother will come along with you." So they put Pekmez mother in the same carriage with her, the bride's carriage.

At last it was evening, and the bridegroom was to come, but Pekmez mother was sitting by the bride, and the bride kept begging all the time, "Please, Pekmez mother, don't leave me alone. Don't go, Pekmez mother. You stay with me."

But he had to leave, because he had to go and get dressed and become the bridegroom. The bride began to cry, "Pekmez mother, Pekmez mother, don't go away." But he went away, anyway. The bride cried all the time, because she didn't know why Pekmez mother wanted to leave.

When the bridegroom came in, she was still crying for her Pekmez mother. "Now, look at me," said the man, finally. And he brought out a bundle in which there were all the wrappings--the headwear and the copper pekmez holder in it. "Look here," he said. "Now here is your Pekmez mother. And here is your husband. This is how I got you," he said. "Now we're going to lead a whole life together."

So they had a wedding of forty days and forty nights. They ate and drank, and had their wishes fulfilled. And they lived happily ever after.