



The Maiden of the Sea

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Armenian

Easy
4 min read

There was an old woman and her son who lived on the seacoast. She used to cast a loaf of bread into the sea every morning. One day she said to her son:

“My son, I am getting old, and I feel that I shall soon die. Listen to my advice, and every morning cast a loaf of bread to the sea.”

The old woman died, and the lad continued casting a loaf of bread into the sea every morning. One evening as he came back home from his work he was surprised to see the house swept and cleaned. Another day he put some meat in the cupboard, and in the evening, lo! the meat was cooked and the table ready for him. This was repeated several times. One day he hid himself under the stairs. Soon a splash of water was heard in the sea, and, lo! a big fish cast itself on the threshold. At once the skin of the fish fell down, and out of it came a maiden as beautiful as the shining moon. She swept the house clean, and finishing the kitchen work was just going out of the door, when the lad took hold of her.

“Mamma, mamma! help me!” exclaimed the maiden. Immediately a voice came from the sea: “Be not afraid, daughter, that is my son-in-law.” By the will of God and the permission of the mother, the maiden became the bride of the lad. At once the priest was called, who performed the marriage ceremony, and for seven days they celebrated the wedding festival.

One day, as the bride was working with a needle before the window, the Prince, who was taking a walk in his

seashore orchard, saw her and was enchanted by her beauty. Finding out that she was a married woman, he decided to destroy her husband and get her in marriage. He immediately summoned the lad, and said:

“I want you to make me a tent so large that all my army may be accommodated in it, and yet half of it remain empty. I will give you three days’ time to prepare it; if you don’t make it ready by that time your head shall be cut off and all your property confiscated.”

The lad came home with a sad face. What should he say to the Prince at the end of the third day? Surely his head should be cut off. The bride, seeing him, said:

“How now, husband! what is the matter? Why are you sad to-day?”

“Nothing,” answered the lad, sighing.

“Nay, your face is changed,” said the bride. “I pray you what is the matter?”

The lad told her what the Prince had ordered him to do.

“Never mind, husband,” said she, and putting her head out of the window toward the sea, she cried:

“Mamma, mamma! send us up our small tent, please. We want to go a-camping.”

The small tent was thrown up from the sea. The lad took it to the Prince. It took his servants seven days to pitch it. Not only the Prince’s army, but all his people were accommodated in it, and yet half of it was empty.

“This is right well,” said the Prince, “but you see there is no furniture to put on the ground. I want you to bring me a rug to suit the tent exactly. If you don’t bring it in three days your head shall be cut off.”

The lad told his wife, and she asked her mother to send up the small rug, which was taken to the Prince. The Prince next day bade the lad fetch him a cluster of grapes so large that all his army might eat and not be able to finish it. On the following day that also was brought. Then the Prince wanted him to bring him a three-day old baby who could walk and talk like grown-up people. This time the lad was dismayed, because it was a sheer impossibility, and he thought he would surely lose his head this time.

“Never mind that, husband,” said his wife, in the evening; and turning toward the sea, she cried:

“Mamma! send up here the baby for a while, we want to see him.”

The baby was given up, and the lad took him to the Prince, still doubting in his mind whether the baby could do what the Prince required. On the way the lad's foot slipped and the baby was shaken.

“Have you not your eyes about you, brother-in-law,” the baby said, “or have you a mind to fall down and crush me under you?” The lad was pleased at the baby's reproach, because it assured him that his head would not be cut off. On being presented to the Prince the baby at once walked toward him, jumped up to his lap and giving the Prince a box on his ear, said:

“Are you not ashamed, Prince, to give so much trouble to my brother-in-law? You want to kill him and be married to my sister, do you? For shame, Prince, for shame!”

Thereupon the Prince gave up his evil intention, apologized to the lad and asked forgiveness. So the lad and his bride of the sea were left unmolested and they are still living on the border of the sea.

Three apples fell from heaven; one for me, one for the story-teller, and one for him who entertained the company.

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