

The Snake Prince and Pumpkin Seed

Poj Niam Kev Nyoaj Siab

This story was told by Yer Vang, and it was translated by Shuayee Dorothy Vang. The story was originally told to Yer and his cousins by his great uncle, and Yer liked to hear it very much.

Once a long, long time ago there lived a widow with her two daughters in a small village. The older daughter's name was Pumpkin vine, and the younger daughter's name was Pumpkin Seed.

The little family had a garden out by the river. They all were working very hard for the upcoming growing season. They had one little problem though. There was this big, huge rock right in the middle of the garden.

One day when the widow was working with her daughters in the garden, she said to herself, "If someone could be able to move this rock from the middle of my garden, I'll let him marry one of my daughters."

The family went home for the day. The next day when they got to the garden, to their surprise, the huge rock in the middle of their garden was gone!

The widow started to laugh and exclaimed, "I was only kidding. I wouldn't let any either of my daughters marry the man who removed that rock."

They all thought that was the last of the big rock, but the next day when the women got to the garden, the rock was right back in the middle of the garden again.

Once more the widow said to herself, "If someone could be able to move this rock from the middle of my garden, I'll let him marry one of my daughters."

The next day, the rock was gone again, but the widow said, "I didn't mean it. I wouldn't allow one of my daughters to marry the man who moved that rock."

This happened two more times. The widow again promised one of her daughters in marriage to whomever moved the rock, and again she brushed the promise off, just to find the rock right back in its original place.

Finally, on the morning of the fifth day when the widow again promised one of her daughters in marriage to whomever removed the rock, a snake came out and said, "If you promise not to lie anymore, I will remove the rock."

The widow was so startled by the snake, that she promised not to lie anymore. The snake slithered from the edge of the garden to the middle and wrapped his tail around the rock. He picked up the rock and threw it in the river. Since her daughters hadn't come to the garden on this particular day, the snake followed the widow to her home.

When they got to the hut, the widow stood outside and explained what had happened in the garden and that one of them would have to marry the snake. Since neither Pumpkin Vine nor Pumpkin Seed wanted to marry the snake, they both refused to open the door for their mother and the snake.

The widow and the snake waited and waited. It was getting quite dark outside, but still the girls wouldn't open the door.

The widow softly whispered through the door to her daughters, "I will kill the snake when it falls asleep tonight."

Even though her mother said the plan would work, Pumpkin Vine still wouldn't open the door. Pumpkin Seed, on the other hand, thought her mother might be right, so she opened the door.

When the girls saw the snake, the snake's huge size and ugliness frightened them. Pumpkin Vine objected greatly to the thought of even agreeing to marry the snake. The widow finally convinced Pumpkin Seed to marry the snake. After all that was said and done, the snake followed Pumpkin Seed wherever she went. When she went to bed that night, the snake coiled himself beside her on her bed.

That night the widow, as promised, crept into her daughter's room, knife in hand, intending to kill the snake. But instead of finding a snake in bed beside her daughter, she found the most handsome young man she had ever seen. She didn't have the heart to kill him.

The next morning when Pumpkin Seed awoke and found the snake alive and well, she cried and demanded to know why her mother hadn't kept her promise to kill the snake. The widow promised to kill the snake that night and asked for her trust.

That night, the snake again slid into Pumpkin Seed's bed and coiled beside her. When the widow again crept silently into the room with a knife to kill the snake, she again found the handsome young man. Once more she couldn't bring herself to kill him.

The next morning, Pumpkin Seed woke up and found the snake in her bed, still unharmed. She cried and cried and demanded to know why the snake was still alive. The widow again asked for one more chance to kill the snake.

The next morning, the sun was shining brightly and the day seemed perfect, but when Pumpkin Seed woke up, she still found the snake alive and in her bed. Now she had no choice; she would have to go with the snake to his home. On the way there, they passed a crystal clear stream. The snake told her that he was going to take a bath behind the big rocks and that she should wait where she was. Pumpkin Seed agreed.

The snake warned her that she would see lots of colorful bubbles pouring down the stream.

He said, "You must not touch the green ones, but you can touch any of the other colored bubbles."

She again nodded in agreement.

The snake was gone for a while when sure enough, bubbles started sliding down the stream. She stood there in amazement as the glittering colored bubbles drifted by. She touched some of the bubbles and they turned into gold jewelry in her hands. When she touched the white bubbles, they turned into silver jewelry. She had never been so happy in her life. She had never owned such beautiful riches. She happily put the jewelry on herself.

As she was admiring the jewelry she thought, "Why shouldn't I have to green ones?"

She reached down and scooped some green bubbles out of the water. As soon as they were out of the water, they turned into snakes in her hands. She tried frantically to shake the snakes off her hands, but they wouldn't come off.

A moment later, a handsome young man came toward her, and she quickly hid her hands behind her back.

"Why are you hiding your hands?" asked the man.

Her voice quivered as she told him that her husband was a snake and he was up the stream bathing and that he had told her to keep her hands like that.

He laughed and told her that he was her husband. She couldn't believe it. For proof, he showed her the snakeskin he had shed. Pumpkin Seed felt ashamed as she showed him her hands,

but he simply blew on her hands and the snakes fell off and disappeared. Then they went home and they both lived together in magical bliss for the rest of forever.