



# The rolling pumpkin

– a folk tale from Iran

Once upon a time in Iran, an old lady lived in a tiny village near a big and scary forest.

She had a daughter who was married and lived on the other side of the forest.

She missed her daughter and one day she decided to visit her for the Eid celebration.



To get there, she had to walk through the scary forest. She packed a bag of food, put on her shoes and her long black floral chador, and set out.

She walked and walked, until she came to the deepest part of the forest. As she walked, she kept singing:

*Alo dokhtar balo qorbunatam man, be ghorbat rafti o heirunatam man.*

(My beloved daughter, I love you, you have moved to a faraway place and I long for you.)



All of a sudden, a wolf appeared right before the old lady, and she froze where she was.

*'Yum! What a yummy meal,'* said the wolf, drooling greedily.

The old lady kept her wits about her and said: *'I am not yummy, look at my thin flat tummy. I am so skinny and dry, not enough to satisfy.'*

The wolf stopped drooling and said: *'But what shall I do, I am so hungry?'*

And the old lady replied: *'Let me visit my daughter for Eid who will feed me savoury and sweet.'*

*'When all over me I have lots of meat, I will be good for you to eat.'* The wolf thought this was a good idea and told the old lady to hurry up because he was terribly hungry! She left as quickly as she could.



All of a sudden, a tiger jumped down from a tree in front of her.

The tiger took out his sharp claws and said: *'Yum! What a yummy meal!'* Again the old lady said:

*'I am not yummy, look at my thin flat tummy. I am so skinny and dry, not enough to satisfy.'*

At this, the tiger withdrew its claws and said:

*'But what shall I do, I am so hungry?'* Again, the old lady replied: *'Let me visit my daughter for Eid who will feed me savoury and sweet. When all over me I have lots of meat, I will be good for you to eat.'* The tiger went along with it and told her to hurry back because he was very hungry. The old lady left as quickly as she could.



All of a sudden, a lion appeared in front of the old lady, roaring right in her face, with his mane all puffed up.

‘Please wait! It will be an honour for me to be eaten by the king of the forest. But the mighty king should have a much better meal,’ said the old lady, and continued:

*‘I am not yummy, look at my thin flat tummy. I am so skinny and dry, not enough to satisfy.’*

At this, the lion’s mane fell flat around his head, and he said:

*‘But what shall I do? I haven’t had anything to eat for a week!’* Just like before, the old lady said:

*‘Let me visit my daughter for Eid who will feed me savoury and sweet. When all over me I have lots of meat, I will be good for you to eat.’* The lion thought this was a good idea and promised to wait until she was back.



The old lady finally reached her daughter's house after dark. She was so happy to see her daughter that she forgot everything that had happened on the way. She stayed with her daughter for seven days and seven nights and ate lots of good food.

Then came the day when she had to go back home. That's when she suddenly remembered all the dangerous animals who were waiting for her along the way, wanting to eat her, and she told her daughter about it. They sat down and started thinking.



They had an idea: They went to the bazar, bought a big pumpkin and brought it home. They cut off the top to make a lid. Then, they took a spoon, a fork, a pick and a shovel, and dug out the pumpkin flesh. They dug and scraped, dug and scraped, until the inside of the pumpkin was hollow.



Then, the old lady hopped in the pumpkin with her bag.

Her daughter put the lid on.

With the help of her husband and other villagers, she pushed the pumpkin and sent it rolling.



The pumpkin rolled and rolled and disappeared in the depths of the forest.

Suddenly, the old lady's head bumped into the pumpkin wall. It was because the lion had stopped the pumpkin from rolling by putting a foot in its way.

Looking at the pumpkin, the lion asked:

*'Rolling pumpkin, tell me: Have you seen a fat lady on your way here?'*

*'No, Wallah, please roll me away, push me away,'* said the old lady from inside the pumpkin. And the lion kicked the pumpkin and sent it rolling again.



‘Thud!’ This time it was the tiger who had stopped the pumpkin. The tiger asked:

*‘Rolling pumpkin, tell me: Have you seen a fat lady on your way here?’*

*‘No, Wallah, please roll me away, push me away,’* the tiger heard the pumpkin say, so he rolled the pumpkin away.



‘Thud!’ The old lady’s head hit the pumpkin wall again. This time it was the wolf who had stopped the pumpkin with its snout. Sniffing at the pumpkin, the wolf asked:

*‘Rolling pumpkin, tell me: Have you seen a fat lady on your way here?’*

*‘No, Wallah, please roll me away, push me away,’* said the pumpkin.

But the wolf recognised the old lady’s voice. With his sharp teeth, he removed the lid and jumped in the pumpkin. But the old lady had made a lid on the other side of the pumpkin, too. She opened the other lid and jumped out. She was quick to put the lid back on, so that it hit the wolf’s snout. Then, she reached to the top end of the pumpkin and put that lid on as well. Now the wolf was trapped inside the pumpkin.



The old lady, who had gotten stronger after eating lots of food, pulled all her strength together and rolled the pumpkin off, with the wolf inside. The pumpkin rolled and rolled, all the way until it fell down a deep, dark valley from a cliff. Happy and safe, the old lady went home and enjoyed a nice cup of tea. And that is how the story ends.





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