

Story 14: The Story of Zerka Zera

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Representing: *Kurdish Community*

The Story:

Once upon a time, there was a girl named Zerka Zera who lived with her mother in a village. One day she went to fetch water from the fountain and one of the village women said to her:

“Zerka Zera, you have seven brothers, why don't you ever visit them?”

The girl was very surprised. “No, I don't have any brothers,” she replied.

“No,” said the peasant woman, “you have seven brothers, but your mother has obviously hidden them from you. When you go home, tell your mother that you know the truth and find out where your brothers are.”

As soon as the girl returned home, she went to her mother and said:

“I have seven brothers. Tell me, where are they?”

At first the mother denied it, but when the girl insisted, she said, “Yes, it's true, but they are so far away and in such a bad place that I don't want to send you there, I can't do it to you.”

The girl stubbornly insisted, “No, I want to see my brothers, I will definitely go to them.” The mother agreed to tell the girl where her brothers were.

The next morning her mother made a mud donkey for Zerka Zera and added:

“My daughter, if you ride this donkey, it will take you to where your brothers are, right up to their house, but don't pay attention to what you see and hear and don't get off your donkey. If you get off, know that it will instantly turn into mud.”

Zerka Zera said “okay” and set off. After a while, she saw something shiny on the ground and forgot what her mother had said and got off the donkey. Of course, the donkey immediately turned into mud. She ran back home crying. “Mom, mom, my donkey has turned to mud!” she said. Her mother got angry and said, “Daughter, didn't I tell you? Why don't you listen to me?”. Zerka Zera calmed her down by saying, “Mommy, I promise I will listen to you this time.” So her mother set to work again and made another donkey from mud. She sent her daughter off on it.

The donkey walked and walked, taking her far away from home. This time she obeyed her mother and never got off the donkey. After a long time the donkey brought her to a hut on the top of a mountain. Zerka Zera got off the donkey. The donkey became mud again. She knocked on the door and said to her brothers, “I am your sister Zerka Zera.” Her brothers said, “Dear sister, why have you come here? This place is not safe, it is not good for you.”

“No, I came here to live with you and I will not go back to my mother,” she insisted. They had to say “okay”. “But if you are going to stay, you have to listen to us. You can stay with us and take care of our



housework. Look, we have a fireplace over there. That fireplace is the only fire we have, and that cat is the cat of our house. And that fig over there is this cat's fig. Don't you dare eat the cat's fig or the cat will pee on our fire and put it out.”

“Okay,” said Zerka Zera.

In the morning, her brothers went hunting and the girl started cleaning and cooking. Days passed like this. After a while, while she was working again, she saw a fig on the ground, forgot her brothers' warnings and put the fig in her mouth. When the cat saw this, it urinated on the fire in the fireplace and put it out. When the girl saw this, she began to beat her knees and said to herself, “What am I going to do, if my brothers come in the evening and don't see the fire, they will be very angry!”

She went out and looked around, and somewhere in the distance she saw the light of a fire. When she looked closer, she realized that it was coming from a cave. She approached the cave and saw three giant women baking bread by the fire. When she got there, she wept and sobbed and told them what had happened to her and asked for a pinch of fire. But the women said, “We can't give you any of our fire, each of us has a limited number of embers. Our giant husband would notice immediately and be very angry with us.” But Zerka Zera insisted and begged the women, crying. Finally they could not bear it and each gave her a tiny ember from their fire. So the girl took the fire and went home.

After a while, the giant returned from the hunt and as soon as he arrived, he roared, “I smell humans here, were there humans here?” The women denied it, saying, “No, no, no,” but the giant didn't believe them at all. “A human has definitely passed through here. Tell the truth quickly!” and the women told him what had happened. They also showed him which direction she was going. The giant followed her scent and came to her door. He knocked on the door and said, “Quickly give us back the fire you took or else!” “Can I keep it? We don't have any other fire and I need it to cook my food,” the girl begged, afraid to open the door. The giant said, “No, it is not possible, either you give me back my fire or you give me your pinky finger through the door hole, I will come every day to suck your pinky finger and draw your blood.” The girl accepted what the giant asked. The giant sucked the pinky finger the girl handed him through the door hole. The next day he came again and again asked for the finger and sucked it. This went on like this for days. Every time the giant sucked the girl's finger, the girl's spirit seemed to be drained, her color faded, and she grew weak. When the girl's brothers noticed this, they asked her, “My lamb, are you sick, don't you eat enough, what's wrong with you?” She insisted, “There is nothing wrong with me, I am fine.” Her brothers didn't believe her, so they devised a plan among themselves.

In the morning, Zerka Zera's brothers went out hunting as usual, but in fact the eldest brother hid in secret and waited. Then the giant came and asked for her finger. When the girl held out her finger, the giant immediately sucked it. The girl became pale and weak. Seeing this, the eldest brother could do nothing out of fear. The giant went on his way.

The brothers left the second brother on watch the next day. But he too covered in his place out of fear. Each day they left another brother behind, but none of them could do anything against the giant. Finally they decided that they should do it all together. This time when the giant appeared, they all came out of hiding and attacked him. Finally, they chopped off the giant's head and killed him. They buried his head in a field near the house and said to their sister, “Sister, learn this field well and don't go there. Don't pick any of the herbs that grow there and bring them to our house or bad things will happen to your brothers.” “Okay,” said Zerka Zera, and they went on with their lives.



Months passed, and one day Zerka Zera went out to gather herbs around the house to cook, but she couldn't find any. Finally, she came to the place where the giant's head was buried and saw that it was covered with the most beautiful and lush herbs she had ever seen. Zerka Zera could not resist and picked enough grass for one evening's meal. She went home and cooked it well, and when her brothers came in the evening, she put it in front of them and they ate it with great appetite. As soon as they ate, they turned into calves. Realizing what she had done, the girl began to beat herself up. Crying, she said, "What have I done? I didn't listen to my mother or my brothers, whatever happened to me happened because I didn't listen!"

Resigned to her fate, she began to take care of her brothers in this way from then on. She drove them ahead of him and took them to graze. A man came along and said, "What happened to you, my child? Why do you look so troubled?" Zerka Zera told him what had happened to her. The man calmed her down and hit the backs of the calves one by one with the stick in his hand, and they all returned to their old selves. Zerka Zera cried with excitement and joy and said, "My dear brothers! I will never disobey you again, I will act wisely" and the story ended.

Story Moral: *Children should listen to and obey their families when they are warned about something. Disobedience leads to harm.*