

The Story of the Rabbit and the Tomato

By: Zoya Pirzad

Translated by: Kodi Khadivar – Chicago

Every day I say to myself, “Today I will write a story.” But at night, after washing the dishes from dinner, I yawn and say, “Tomorrow, tomorrow I will write it for sure.”

I wash the dishes. I clean the kitchen and go sit in front of the television. I say to myself, “On a piece of paper I’ll write a few sentences about the story I have in mind. I’ll stick the paper to the bathroom mirror so tomorrow when I’m washing my hands and face, I’ll remember the story I wanted to write.” Tomorrow after I make dinner, before the kids come home from school and my husband comes home from work, I’ll get a chance to write.

For lunch tomorrow, I’ll make tomato rice; it doesn’t take much time to make. The kids like tomato rice, but my husband – I can just imagine his face. He’ll put his head down, eat his food and without speaking, get up from the table. I know he doesn’t like tomato rice, but he won’t complain or make excuses. To make it up to him, I’ll prepare a food he likes the day after tomorrow. I’ll go buy herbs and cook herb stew, since the day after tomorrow I won’t have a story to write.

I’ll have time to clean the herbs. I’ll have time to complain to the man selling herbs, and ask him why his herbs are full of mud and garbage. Then I’ll fill the sink with water and soak them. I’ll wash them once, drain the water and refill the sink. I’ll wash them again. Then I’ll wash them a third and fourth time – sometimes I’ll even wash them seven or eight times. I’ll put on my glasses and turn the herbs over as I examine them to make sure there’s no dirt left on them. Next I’ll chop the herbs. This time I’ll be careful not to cut my hand. I always cut my hand when I’m chopping herbs. My husband always laughs, “After 15 years, the way you handle the household tasks is still naïve.” I laugh at myself; I know he’s joking. I’ll chop the herbs very finely. My mother says, “The herbs must be chopped finely for good herb stew.” And she herself is skilled in chopping herbs. She chops very fast and never cuts her hand. She also has a special way of frying herbs. After 15 years, I have learned her technique. You must constantly turn the herbs over so they don’t burn but fry up well. I should also remember to soak the beans beforehand so they cook faster. Last time I made herb stew, I forgot to soak the beans. The meat was

cooked and tender, but the beans weren't done. My husband didn't say anything, but when I was cleaning the tablecloth, I saw he had collected his beans to a corner of his plate. That night my daughter said, "My stomach hurts." My husband lowered his newspaper and looked at me. Then he smiled and pointed to the kitchen. My husband, like most husbands, wouldn't know that 13-year-old girls get a lot of stomachaches.

Preparing the tomato rice tomorrow won't take much time, so I will write my story. I want to write a children's story. It's about a rabbit that fell into a hole dug by a hunter. The hole is deep and the rabbit cannot get out. The rabbit's friends find him, but they're unable to get him out of the hole. They bring him food and water so he doesn't starve to death and sometimes they talk to him from above so he doesn't get bored. The rabbit stays in the hole for days and days. He has food to eat and the hole is warm and comfortable, but he longs to be free. From inside the hole, he sees a piece of the sky that sometimes is bright and blue and sometimes gray and cloudy. During the day he sees birds flying, and at night he sees stars.

I still don't know how the rabbit gets out of the deep hole. Tomorrow I will think of something for him. I should write a short summary up to this part of the story so I don't forget. I yawn. I should go to bed so tomorrow I'll be in a good mood. Tomorrow I must bring the little rabbit out of the deep hole. I'm thirsty. I go to the kitchen, open the refrigerator and pick up a bottle of water. The fruit drawer catches my eye. I only have two tomatoes, and two tomatoes is not enough for tomato rice.



Zoya Pirzad

Tomorrow I must buy tomatoes. I drink the water. I'm tired. I put the glass back in its place, turn off the light and leave the kitchen. I wanted to make a note of something. What was it? I take a piece of paper from a small notebook, and I write "tomatoes" on it. I must stick the paper to the bathroom mirror so tomorrow I'll remember that...

About the Author

Born in 1952 in Abadan, Iran, Zoya Pirzad is a renowned Iranian writer and novelist. Pirzad's first novel, "I Turn off the Lights" (*Man cheragh-ha ra khamush mikonam*) has been published numerous times in Iran and has been translated to several languages. She won Houshang Golshiri award for The Best Novel of the Year.