

The snake, the hunter and the milk – a Palestinian folk tale

There was once a hunter who lived in a lonely place on the edge of the desert with his wife and children. His wife kept sheep and she milked them, bringing in a bowl of milk every day.

One day the hunter went out to hunt. After a long time of finding nothing, he found a nest of eggs in the sand. He took them, knowing that these were snake eggs, but then he saw the snake returning. He hid behind a rock watching her, and when she found her eggs were gone, she turned away. The snake knew that the only one who could have taken her eggs was that hunter. He followed her through the sand to his home. He saw her slide inside and watched from the doorway as she slid towards the bowl of milk. She put her mouth to the milk in the bowl and released her poison.

'Because I took her eggs, now she wants to poison my family,' he thought.

He ran back through the sand faster than the snake and put the eggs back in the nest. When the snake reached the nest, she saw her eggs were there. Then she turned again towards the hunter's home.

Once again he followed her, and from the doorway he saw her move against the bowl until it tipped, splashing the milk onto the floor. After that she slid out of the house.

The hunter thought: 'Why did I take what isn't mine? If I take what isn't mine, then I deserve bad fortune. It's better that we live in peace and harmony, side by side.'