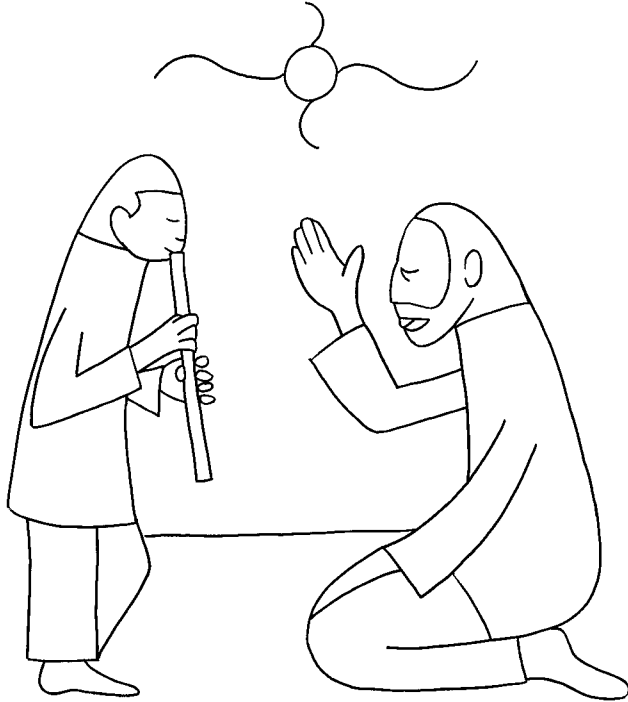


## THE NEY



Abdal woke as the golden sun was tickling his face with its beams. He smiled and yawned, enjoying the warmth of the sunshine. He then remembered that today was the day, the very day, he would get his ney flute. As he leapt out of bed and looked out the window, the nightingale was singing sweetly on the ledge.

‘Oh, Nightingale, I must tell you: today Grandfather is taking me to the reed beds.’ Nightingale nodded.

‘We are going to find a reed that wants to become my ney, so I can learn to play your songs.’ Nightingale sang even sweeter. She added melodies she had heard at the mosque. Abdal hummed along with her. They danced and whirled in the fresh smile of sunlight that poured in through the window.

Abdal heard his grandmother calling, 'Abdal, the bread is out of the oven!'

*She doesn't have to tell me, even the sun can smell its delicious odour,* he thought to himself.

'Here,' he said to his friend Nightingale, 'have your breakfast.' Abdal carefully placed some seed cake on the window ledge. He kissed her little head and raced down the stairs to the fresh smell of coffee.

Grandfather was at the table smiling. 'Well, did you sleep well?'

'Oh, yes,' said Abdal, 'and Nightingale sang the sweetest song this morning.'

Grandmother sat down. Together they gave thanks for both the day and the wonderful food. Abdal spread honey on his bread and tried to eat slowly.

Grandfather smiled, 'You can

hardly sit still.'

'Oh, Grandfather, my first ney! Will it mind being taken from the reed bed away from the others?'

'Yes,' said Grandfather honestly, 'so you must only take the one that offers itself to you. Then it will be your friend forever and your hearts will be as one.'

Finishing their breakfast and hugging Grandmother goodbye, Abdal and Grandfather went out into the bright sunshine.

'Hello and blessings!' called the carpet-seller, opening his shop and placing rugs outside to tempt buyers.

'Blessings on your day,' replied Grandfather. They then went into the mosque to say a prayer for the day ahead.

*Oh, God, bless my ney and send me music to bring joy to everyone,* prayed Abdal. He could feel a warm fluttering

in his heart, like the red softness of a rose petal.

Grandfather took his hand and they walked through the busy streets. Finally, they came to the road out of the town. They walked through the fields and came to the lake. There on the banks were the reeds, singing rustling songs to the wind.

'Take your time choosing your reed,' said Grandfather. Abdal walked slowly, looking and listening. On the far side of the lake were smaller reeds. One seemed to call to him. He walked over and smiled at it.

'Abdal,' it said, 'take me for your ney. The other reeds have been here longer than I, and they are more attached to this place.'

'Oh, thank you, little reed,' said Abdal.

The reed smiled at his family and

said, 'Goodbye to you all. I am going away to become a ney, but I know that soon you will grow another in my place.'

Grandfather came with his sharp knife and cut the reed. Abdal felt tears come to his eyes. 'Oh, no, Grandfather, we have killed the reed!'

'Yes,' said Grandfather, 'but you will bring it back to life.'

Abdal sat in sadness as Grandfather gently carved the reed into the most beautiful ney. When Abdal was at last calm, Grandfather said softly, 'Abdal, I want you to breath in and out.'

Abdal calmed himself and concentrated on his breath. Suddenly, he was in heaven watching all the heavenly musicians play the most wonderful music. At that moment he felt Grandfather give him the newly carved reed. As he put the reed to his

lips he could feel the breath of life blow through the ney. It was alive again, making wonderful music.

Nightingale came to listen and sing along, and Grandfather whirled slowly as Abdal played. First Abdal played scales, then songs that Grandmother sang while she worked. Finally, he played melodies he had heard when the Quran was recited in the mosque.

‘Oh Grandfather, this is the most beautiful ney in the world,’ smiled Abdal.

‘Yes,’ said Grandfather, ‘and you play it like an angel of heaven.’

The next day Abdal took his ney to the market place. Suddenly, he saw his friend Iman. He waved and called to her, ‘Iman, come look at my ney!’

Iman smiled and walked over. ‘May I hold it in my hands?’ she asked.

‘Of course,’ said Abdal. ‘You are

my best friend.’

Iman held the ney and smiled. After looking at it for a time, she handed it back to Abdal saying, ‘It really is alive. Play my favourite song about the mouse and the frog.’

Abdal played the song about the two friends, Mouse and Frog. Soon everyone stopped what they were doing and began singing along to the music. When Abdal finally finished, there was a hushed silence, until everyone started to clap and shake hands with him.

‘Oh, Abdal, I love your playing, and you as well,’ said Iman.

Abdal became a great musician when he was older. People would come from miles around to hear the sweet sound of his ney, and he would never forget the day he breathed new life into it.