Once there was and twice there wasn't, when genies played at polo in the old Turkish bath, when the flea was a porter and the camel a barber-well, in those times there was a poor widow who had one son. Hour after hour, day after day, the old woman sat making fine lace. Each market day, her son took the lace to a corner of the bazaar and sold it for what few kurus he could get. With these coins he bought bread and cheese and olives, and somehow with Allah's help they managed to keep skin and bones together.

One day, however, the boy was unable to sell a single length of lace. Tired and disheartened, he sat on a stone and moaned to himself, what shall I do?

other touching the ground.

said the genie.

The boy was so startled that his tongue stuck to the roof of his mouth. At last he stammered, "I wish only your good health, sire."

"Ask what you wish, and it will be granted," the genie repeated.

And, "I wish only your good health, sire," the boy answered, his eyes staring half out of his head.

"Ask what you wish, and it will be granted," the genie said, and the ground trembled with the rumble of his voice
Finally the boy found courage to speak. "Today I could not sell the lace my mother made. She will be angry with me. And we have nothing at all in the house to eat."

"Here. Take this," replied the genie, handing the boy a small pumpkin. "Thank you," the boy said, "but a pumpkin is of no use to us. We have neither charcoal to cook it nor sugar to sweeten it."

"You need neither charcoal nor sugar for this pumpkin. Merely say, 'Open, tiny little squash. Shut, tiny little pumpkin!'" And the genie disappeared.

Puzzled, the boy stared about him. Then, clutching the pumpkin, he ran home.

His mother, watching for him in the doorway, was disgusted when she saw what he had. "My boy," she cried, "what am I to do with a pumpkin? I trusted you with the lace, and see what a fool you have made of yourself with our money!"

Quietly the boy put the pumpkin on the table. "Open, tiny little squash," said he. And immediately all sort of good foods came pouring from the pumpkin. With rice and meats and beans and sweets before her, how could any woman quarrel about the pumpkin? The two sat down and ate happily until their stomachs were filled.

They were so happy that they did not see their greedy neighbor Mehmet passing by the window. Mehmet stopped to stare astonished at what he saw inside. He could almost taste each delicious dish as he stood and watched. At last, when the boy and his mother had finished eating, the boy said, "Shut, tiny little pumpkin." In a blink, the rest of the food disappeared, and the pumpkin sat on the table just like any other pumpkin.
The boy put the wonderful pumpkin in front of the window, and at length he and his mother went to bed. As soon as they had fallen asleep, Mehmet reached in through the window and grasped the pumpkin. Eagerly he hurried home with it.

All night long Mehmet tried to open the pumpkin. "Open, pumpkin. Open, pumpkin!" he cried. But the pumpkin would not open. "Open, gourd. Open!" he said, but the pumpkin would not open. Mehmet knocked the pumpkin on the floor, on the table, on the chair, but it still would not open. He cut away at it with a knife, but not a mark was left on the shell. By morning, he was thoroughly disgusted. "I shall sell it," he decided, "since I cannot open it. But I shall sell it for a great deal of money, since it is a very valuable pumpkin."

That morning Mehmet tucked the pumpkin under his arm and went straight to the grocer. "You sell all day long," Mehmet said, "but I have something you will want to buy."

"A pumpkin? Why should I want a pumpkin?"

"Ah, but this is no ordinary pumpkin," Mehmet replied. "If you know how to open it, it will feed you all your life."

"How do you open it?" asked the grocer curiously.

"I wish I knew," answered Mehmet. "If I knew, I would keep it myself. Just think! I am willing to sell this wonderful pumpkin to you for only three gold liras."

"Three gold liras!" the grocer exclaimed. "And you cannot even tell me how to open it? Get along with your pumpkin! Perhaps you will find some fool to give you what you ask, but it will not be Hâmit the grocer. Three gold liras, indeed!"

Mehmet snuggled the pumpkin under his arm and hurried down the street to the butcher's. "You sell good meat," Mehmet said, "but I have something
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pumplk
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like pumpkin elf
Mehmet scurried out of the barber shop. Where could he go? the judge will see the worth of this pumpkin, muttered Mehmet, and he carried the pumpkin to the judge's house. "Sire, said Mehmet, "you know a good case from a bad case. I have a fine pumpkin here, just for you. will you buy it?"

The judge looked thoughtfully at the pumpkin. "How much are you asking for it?"

"Very little for such a wonderful pumpkin," Mehmet replied. "If you know how to open it, this pumpkin will feed you all your life. That is why I am asking three gold liras for it."

"How do you open it?"

"Alas, I do not know how to open it," Mehmet said. "If I knew how to open it, you may be sure I would keep it myself!"

The judge knew greedy Mehmet very well. "Mehmet, if you cannot open it, I cannot," said the judge. "I will buy it just as any ordinary pumpkin. And, since you are one of Allah's poor souls, I shall even give you a whole gold lira for it, but not three gold liras. No, indeed."

Sighing, Mehmet accepted the gold lira, and after he had left, the judge took the pumpkin in to his wife. "Here, my dear," he said. We shall have fresh pumpkin for dinner."

A few moments later, his wife came back carrying the pumpkin. "How am I to cook this pumpkin if I cannot even open it?" she asked. "I can't cut it with a knife; I can't break it with an axe.

"That Mehmet!" exclaimed the judge. "I should have known better to buy anything from him. Here, my dear, give me the pumpkin. It is fit for nothing but the trash heap. Tomorrow, find yourself a fine, fresh
pumpkin at the market. And the judge threw the pumpkin away.

Meanwhile, the boy and his mother had looked in vain all day long for their pumpkin. Finally, the boy chanced to pass the judge's house on his way home from evening prayers at the mosque. There on a heap of rubbish lay a small pumpkin. Could it be his pumpkin? Almost without hope, the boy said, "Open, tiny little squash." Immediately, all sorts of good foods began to pour from the pumpkin. Overjoyed, the boy ran to the rubbish heap. "Shut, tiny little pumpkin," he ordered, and the foods disappeared. Picking up the pumpkin, the boy ran all the way home with it. As soon as he was inside, he closed the door and covered the window. "Come, Mother," he called. "I have found our pumpkin. Let us eat."

From that time on, the boy kept the pumpkin safely hidden, and he and his mother lived comfortably together. They had their wish fulfilled; may we be as lucky in ours.