

Story #368 (Tape #2, 1972)

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Finger Child

Once there was a woman who was unable to bear a child. She consulted hodjas about what she could do to cure her sterility. One of them said to her, "What you should do is to get forty pea pods and put them by the fireplace. Then you will have children." The woman did as she was told: bought the forty pea pods and left them by the fireplace for forty days. At the end of the forty days, forty babies were born out of the peas.

On a day when the woman was making bread and her husband was out working in the fields, the forty babies began to cry all at the same time, "Mother, give me some bread!" The woman became impatient with them and hit them with a flyswatter. One blow was enough to kill the babies. One of the babies, a girl,¹ had hid herself in a shoe before the fatal blow came.

By now the woman had finished baking the bread and had prepared her husband's lunch. She began to complain, "Now, who's going to take lunch to my husband?"

When the little girl in the shoe heard the complaint, she said, "Mother, I shall take it for you. I was hiding in the shoe."

The woman gave the lunch bag to the girl, who took it to the field to her father. Her father was plowing the field. Before she got close

¹First, the narrator says that the only child who survived the blow was a girl. Later she refers to the child as a boy.

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to him, he asked, "Father, how can I get to you without getting hurt?"

The man answered, "Come by the edge,"

Later the boy asked again, "How can I get close to you, father?"

"Come through the middle, my son," the man replied.

When the boy asked again, "Father, how can I get close to you?" the man answered, "Choose any direction you like." When the boy came beside his father, "Where is my bread?" the man asked.

"I have eaten it all," the boy answered, "When you told me to come by the edge, I ate the edge of the bread. When you told me to go by the middle, I ate the middle of it. Then when you told me to choose any direction I wanted, I finished the rest of it."

"In that case, I shall have to go home to have my lunch," the man said, "Keep an eye on the plow and the oxen while I'm gone."

The boy sat on the side of the road and started waiting, and the oxen began to graze. Several men happened to be passing by, and they noticed the unattended oxen grazing. They wanted to steal the oxen. The boy shouted, "Don't touch my oxen," but they did not even hear him. He was standing under a mushroom, and he was so tiny that his head did not even touch it. One of the oxen opened his mouth to eat the mushroom, and he accidentally swallowed the little boy. Just then the boy's father returned, before the thieves had the time to steal the oxen.

That evening when the woman was milking the cows,² she heard a voice coming from the udder of the cow, "Don't milk. Please don't milk." When the woman told her husband about the strange sounds coming from the cow's

²The oxen are referred to as cows here. Milk cows are not often used for plowing or other work.

udder, the man cut open the cow. They saw nothing in the cow's stomach, however, and so they threw it away. A hyena ate the cow's stomach.

That night when it went out to hunt sheep and goats, a voice coming from his stomach warned the sheep and the goats against the approaching enemy. Thus he could not catch any prey that night. Later he complained to a wolf, "My friend, whenever I go out to hunt prey, a voice coming from my stomach frightens it away."

The wolf advised his friend to swallow a snake and drink lots of water. The hyena followed this advice. He defecated the little boy with the remains of the snake.

Then the wolf ate the remains. When he went sheep and goat hunting that night, the voice coming from his stomach warned the shepherds, "Watch out, shepherds; there is a wolf approaching," it said. This time the wolf kept his own advice and defecated the little boy.

Once he was liberated, the boy climbed an apple tree. A giant happened to be passing by, and when he saw the little boy in the apple tree, he said, "You little midget, how could you get up there?"

"It wasn't difficult," the boy answered.

"Since you are already up there, give me an apple," the giant said. As the boy was giving him the apple, the giant grabbed him and put him in his bag. He was planning to take the boy to his wife.

On the way home, the giant was urged to urinate. When he put his bag down, the little boy slipped out of it and climbed another apple tree. Seeing him up in the apple tree, the giant said, "Give me an apple."

When the boy extended his hand to give the giant an apple, the giant grabbed him again. With the boy in his bag, the giant started walking

homeward. "This time," he said to himself, "I'll wet my pants and won't stop." However, the giant was soon forced to break his resolution: When he put down his bag to urinate, the boy again slipped out of it and climbed an apple tree. But the giant tricked him with the usual, "Give me an apple," for the third time. The giant finally succeeded in taking the little boy to his wife.

The giant's wife, Fatma, was busy lighting the stove. Her husband said, "This little creature will make good fuel for the stove. I have to go wash my pants now."

Fatma told the boy to get ^{into} the stove, but he said, "Show me how to do it." When she was showing him how to get in, the little boy pushed her into the stove. Then he ran out and climbed a poplar tree. In the meantime, the giant returned.

When he saw the boy on the uppermost branch of the poplar tree, he asked, "How did you get up there?" "I stuck knives and scissors in the bark of the tree and used them as a ladder."

The giant put knives and scissors in the bark of the tree, but he cut himself when he stepped on them. The giant's wife burned in the stove, and the giant died of his wounds. His house and other possessions were left to the little boy, who is still living today.