

Story #372 (Not on tape)

Narrator: 90-year-old grandmother of Faruk Simer

Location: Istanbul

Date: July 1966

Miticik and the Witch woman

Once long ago in another country there lived three boys who were friends, and the smallest of the three was called Miticik. Every morning their mothers said, "Play here in the village, and we shall not worry about you. Be sure not to go into the forest to play."

One day, not minding their mothers at all, they went to play in the forest, and they wandered this way and that all day, until they could not find their way home because of the darkness of evening. Seeing a light in the distance, they ran toward it, and there was a house. Tok, tok, tok, they knocked at the door, and an old woman hobbled to open it.

"Come in, come in, my children," she cried, and in they went. Now, in truth, this woman was a witch, and she meant to eat them all. But first they must fall asleep in order that she could tie their hands and feet and put them in her little cage.

She gave them a good hot supper and put them, one, two, three, to bed. She listened and listened until after a while she did not hear a sound from them. "Who is awake and who is asleep?" she called.

Now the others were asleep, but Miticik was still awake. "The littlest one is awake," he called.

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"What, Miticik! Why don't you sleep?" asked the old woman

"Well, auntie, my mother always cooks me an egg before I go to bed. Then I go to sleep," said Miticik

So the old woman cooked an egg and Miticik ate it. But still he did not go to sleep.

After a while, "Who is awake and who is asleep?" called the old woman.

"The littlest one is awake," answered Miticik.

"What! Still awake? What will help you to go to sleep?" the woman asked.

"Well, auntie, my mother gives me parched corn and raisins to eat at bedtime. Then I go to sleep, said Miticik

So the old woman brought him parched corn and raisins, but still he did not go to sleep.

After a while, "Who is awake and who is asleep?" called the old woman.

"The littlest one is awake," answered Miticik.

"What! Still awake, are you? What can I get you that will help you to sleep?" she asked.

"Well, auntie, I am thirsty. At home, when I am thirsty, my mother goes to the well to fetch me water in a sieve. When she brings it back, I drink it, and then I sleep," said Miticik.

The old woman took a sieve and started toward the well. As soon as she had stepped through the door, Miticik shook his friends. "Wake up!" he whispered. "We must run away from this old witch!" And the boys woke up.

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On a shelf by the door, Miticik saw <sup>maybe objects</sup> a cake of soap, a needle, a sharp knife. "I may as well take these. Perhaps they will be useful," said he, and so he put them in his pocket. Away the three boys ran.

As for the old woman, she couldn't catch any water in the sieve and she couldn't catch any water in the sieve, so home she came. But she looked for Miticik, he was gone, and so, for that matter, were the other two. Away she went, running after them.

Now, Miticik was watching behind him, and when he could feel the old woman's breath on his neck, he turned and threw the cake of soap right at her. To his surprise, the cake of soap grew and grew until it became a mountain, slippery all around. The boys kept on running, glad of that soap.

The old woman slipped and slithered and slid, trying to get up over that mountain, but it was no use. "I'll run around it," she decided, and she ran and ran till she came round to the other side. "Now I'll catch you!" she cried, and Miticik heard her

They kept running and running, till Miticik could see the old woman's apron flapping. Carefully he picked the needle out of his pocket and held it between his thumb and fingers. As soon as he felt the old woman's breath on his neck, he threw the needle at her. Of a sudden, it became a whole mountain of needles, all sticky and prickly and sharp as they could be.

Well, the boys ran on, glad of that needle, and the old woman tried and tried to weave her way among the needles, but it was no use. She just couldn't climb that mountain. "I'll run around it," she decided, and she ran and ran till she came round to the other side. "Now I'll catch you!" she cried, and Miticik heard her

They kept running and running, till Miticik could hear her panting and puffing just behind them. Turning, he threw the knife just as hard as he could throw, and that sharp knife cut a crack in the earth so long and so wide that the old woman couldn't run around it and she couldn't jump over it. Shaking her fist, she shouted, 'I'll get you the next time!" and then she turned around and hobbled home.

As for the three boys, they never stopped running till they got to their own houses. And you may believe they never went into the forest again to play.