

Story #633 (1961-62, Tape #11)

Narrator: Unidentified

Location: Village of Zir, since then
renamed Uluköy; kaza of
Yenimahalle, Ankara Province

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The Finger Child

woodcutter -- family

The story of the finger child is about a woodcutter's family who had ^{children - seven} seven children. The youngest child was a tiny child, so they called it Finger Child. There came a terrible famine at the place where the woodcutter and his family lived. Instead of watching their children starve to death, the couple decided to take them to the woods and let them survive on their own there. At first the children's mother protested against this idea, but unable to find another solution, she at last had to be content. The finger child, lying awake at night, overheard the parents' conversation and, getting up earlier than anyone else, went to the creek side and gathered small pebbles from the bank of the creek so that she could leave a trail that would lead them back home when the parents took the children to the woods. In this way the next evening she was able to come back home with all her brothers and sisters. Although the children's return trip from the woods was not a joyous one, on the way back, in an unexpected way, they found a certain amount of money, and brought it back home with them. The mother was overjoyed to have the children back,

¹ Narrator says he first encountered this tale in Charles Perrault's collection. There it is called "Le Petit Pousee."

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and especially to be able to feed them. She told her husband over and over again that she was very happy.

After a period of time, about a year, there was another famine, and it became very difficult to find bread to feed the large family. Again the couple decided they had no other choice but to leave the children to fend for themselves in the woods. However, this time they locked Finger Child's room, so that when the child tried to go to the creek to gather pebbles to use to find their way back from the woods, she was unable to get out of her room. So, the finger child tore little pieces of bread from the bread she had taken with her, in order to leave a trail to guide them back home. But, unfortunately the birds picked the bread crumbs and destroyed the trail she had left behind.

The children and the finger child became terrified when night fell and it became pitch dark in the woods. The finger child tried to reassure her brothers and sisters as best she could. In hope of finding some help, she climbed up a tree to see what she could see. When she reached the upper branches of the tree, she saw a light nearby. So together with her brothers and sisters, she walked towards the light. They came to a house and knocked on the door. The door was opened by a woman. When the woman saw the children, she quickly tried to close the door on them. But the finger child begged the woman to let them in. She then told them that they had come to the wrong place. Her husband was an ogre who ate human cannibal beings, and if he saw children, he would be delighted at the prospect

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of eating them. But the children begged her to take them in, since the wolves in the woods would eat them if they stayed out. The woman, hoping to be able to convince her husband to leave the children be, took them in and fed them.

After a while the ogre came home. He sniffed around in the house and said, "I smell the son of Adam here," and started looking all around.

Adam -- son of -- as epithet for a human being

His wife, realizing that she would not gain anything by hiding the children, told her husband what had happened. In an attempt to save the children, she told her husband that the children were very tired and that they would make tastier eating in the morning after they had rested up.

cut up the children and eat them right away.

The giant quietly entered the children's room and in the dark he felt his daughters' nightcaps and thought, "My God, I almost cut up my own children." He crossed the room and, taking out his knife, he immediately cut the throats of his seven sleeping children.

Thus, the finger child and her brothers and sisters having escaped death by the exchange of head coverings, got up very early in the morning, and fled from the ogre's house. The giant pulled his magic boots on and chased the children into the woods. His

boots -- magic

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magic boots made it possible for him to run very fast. But the finger child found a Cave in the woods and hid herself and her brothers and sisters in that cave. Even though the giant passed by the cave four or five times, he did not see the finger child and her brothers and sisters who were hidden there. Finally the ogre got tired of all the running he had done and found a large open space right across from the cave where he could rest. Because he was very tired, he immediately fell into a deep sleep. When the finger child saw that the ogre was deep in sleep, she pounced upon him and, together with her brothers and sisters, killed him. Then the finger child put the giant's magic boots on herself and went straight to the ogre's house. She told the ogre's wife that the ogre had been captured by bandits, and that he had sent her to the house to get the biggest ransom she could from his wife. The poor wife gave the finger child all the ogre's treasure, and the finger child left the ogre's house in order to go back to her own family.

Together with her brothers and sisters, Finger Child found her way back to their home. There she gave the ogre's treasure, which she had earned, to her father so that they could all live happy and comfortable lives.

Later on the finger child entered the ^{King's service} king's service. Wearing the magic boots, she delivered his mail and lived a useful and fruitful life. mail delivery