

The Giant and the Shoemaker

Once upon a time there was a shoemaker who used to travel from one village to another, repairing people's shoes. One morning he decided to take a shortcut through the wood when, all of a sudden, he met a giant.

"Good morning, man-cub," said the giant. "I have been waiting for someone like you a long time. Come here! Let me eat you!"

"No way!" replied the man. "First let us play a game to see who of us is the better man."

"Very well," said the giant. "What can you do?"

"You start," replied the man, "and you will see that anything you can do, I can do better."

The giant burst out laughing.

"We'll see!" he said. The giant picked up a stone from the ground, and crushed it to powder with his fist.

The man secretly put his hand in his bag, took out a soft cheeselet and pretended to pick up a stone from the ground. He squeezed the cheeselet in his hand until water started dripping from it. The giant's eyes widened.

"This man seems to be stronger than I am," he thought. But he did not give up. The giant picked up another stone from the ground, turned it round and round in his hand and threw it as far as he could with all his strength.

"Let us see if you can throw it further than I can," said the giant to the shoemaker.

The man took out a sling from his pocket, put a stone in it, turned it round with all his might and the stone flew straight up. It disappeared.

The giant was amazed and started scratching his head.

"But surely, you cannot do this," said the giant after some time, and, with that, he grabbed the largest tree in the wood and tore it out of the ground, roots and all.

The man smiled. He opened his bag, took out a long rope and began to tie it from tree to tree.

“What are you doing?” asked the giant.

“I am going to uproot the whole wood!” replied the man.

“No, no, please ... do not do that!” shouted the giant. “If you do, I will not have a place to live in.”

And he ran off to the centre of the wood. When the giant arrived home, he told his mother the whole story.

“Beware of that man-cub,” said his mother, “because he is cunning and he will kill you.”

The giant kept thinking about what his mother had told him. “Then I had better kill him before he kills me!” he said to himself.

The next day the giant and the shoemaker met again.

“Good morning, man-cub,” said the giant.

“Good morning,” replied the shoemaker.

“Do you know what I wish you would show me?” began the giant. “I wish you would show me where you sleep.”

“With pleasure,” replied the shoemaker. “Follow me.”

The shoemaker took the giant to the edge of the wood and, sometime later, showed him a hut in the middle of a field.

“That’s where I sleep,” said the shoemaker, “in that hut!”

“Very well,” said the giant. “Have a good day!” And the giant went off to work.

However, that night the shoemaker did not go to sleep in his hut. He climbed a tall tree and slept hidden in its leaves and branches. In the middle of the night he heard heavy, lumbering footsteps approaching.

In the moonlight, the shoemaker saw the giant approaching, carrying a huge boulder on his head. The giant approached the hut and threw the boulder on it with all his strength. The tiny hut was shattered to pieces. The giant thought that he had managed to get rid of the shoemaker.

So you can imagine how surprised he was when, the next morning, the giant met the shoemaker again, safe and sound.

“Good morning, Mr Giant,” said the shoemaker, with a huge grin.

“How can it be?” said the giant, his eyes wide open with amazement. “How can you still be here? Didn’t you feel anything while you were sleeping in your hut last night?”

“Yes,” said the shoemaker, grinning. “I felt something like a bit of plaster falling on my face.”

The giant could not believe his ears. “Man-cub,” said the giant, “you are indeed very strong, but there is one thing which I am surely better at than you.”

“What?” asked the shoemaker. “Eating!” laughed the giant.

“I am certain I eat much, much more than you do.”

“Let’s make a bet,” said the shoemaker.

“Very well,” said the giant. “What shall we cook?” “Ravioli!” replied the shoemaker.

“Tomorrow we will meet here again at noon and we will bring all we need with us.”

And so they did just that. The next day, precisely at noon, the giant and the shoemaker met in the wood. They brought a large pot, ravioli and sauce, and they started cooking. The wood soon smelled of food.

When everything was ready, they spread a tablecloth on the ground, served the food in plates and started to eat. But the sly shoemaker had worn a long jacket underneath which was hidden a leather bag tied to his neck. For every ravioli he ate, he threw five into the bag. He would eat one and throw five into the bag. The giant was eating the ravioli six at a time and soon the pot was empty.

“See how I ate more than you did!” laughed the giant.

“No, I ate more,” said the shoemaker.

“No, I ate the most!” said the giant.

“Very well,” answered the shoemaker. “Let’s count them!”

“How can we count them?” asked the giant, wide-eyed. “We have eaten them, so now they are in our bellies.”

“Of course we can,” said the shoemaker. “Like this!” And with that, the shoemaker grabbed a knife, slit the leather bag and the ravioli spilled out onto the ground.

The giant did not want to lose face. He took the knife and slit his tummy open!
And he fell down to the ground and died. Although the shoemaker was just a
man-cub, his cunning led him to outwit the enormous giant.