

Story #561 (not taped; dictated)

Narrator: Dikmen Gürün [later Uçarer]

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Coward Ali and the Giants

*Trichte
süley*
shagfaut

Once there was and once there wasn't a candy maker. ^{Coward Ali} This candy maker had a helper named Ali. Ali was such a coward that if he happened to see a mouse half a kilometer away, he would start shouting and crying. The candy maker became disgusted with Ali because of his cowardice, and he sent the boy off to find another job. But everybody in the city was making fun of him, so his mother finally said, "Go away from this house and do not come back until you have gained some courage."

Poor Ali left the house and the city, crying. He walked for days and nights until at last he became so tired that he had to sleep. As he lay sleeping, he dreamed that he heard a man shouting at him, "Wake up, Ali! Wake up! There is a snake ready to kill you!" Ali opened his eyes and reached for a stone and began to hold it very firmly so that he might throw it at the snake when he saw it.

But suddenly he realized that what he was squeezing in his hand was something soft, not a stone. When he looked, he saw that it was the head of the snake that he had squeezed in his hand, and that the snake was dead. Ali was surprised. Then he began to think: "I didn't realize that I was that strong! Why should I be a coward? If I use my mind, I can do many good things and I can show my friends that I am not a coward."

He got up and continued on his way. On the way, he saw an eagle's nest, and there were eggs in the nest. He took those eggs and put them in his sack. He walked a little farther along the dusty road, and then

bent over, scooped up some of the dust, and put it into his sack with the eggs. As he went on and on along the way, he met a giant. The giant picked Ali up with one finger and said, "You will be my meat for dinner," and he took Ali into a big cave where thirty-nine other giants were living.

But Ali said, "You can't eat me, because I am stronger than you are. Let us have a contest to see which one of us is stronger."

The giant laughed and said, "All right. What is the contest?"

Ali said, "First, can you squeeze a piece of rock so hard that water will drop from it?"

The giant grabbed a small rock and squeezed and squeezed, but no water came out of the rock. While the giant was throwing the rock away, Ali reached into his sack and pulled out one of the eggs, hiding it well in his hand. He squeezed just a little, and much liquid fell to the ground. The giants were amazed.

Then Ali said, "Can you hit that big rock so hard that dust will fly out of it?"

The giant beat and beat at the rock with his big fists, but nothing happened to the rock. While the giant was rubbing his hands together afterwards to ease the soreness, Ali reached into his sack and scooped up a handful of dust and patted his hand against the rock. How the dust flew! Again, the giants were amazed. They said, "You are stronger than we are."

"Of course," Ali answered. "Now bring me forty trays of rice and forty fried lambs and leave me alone, for I am hungry."¹ The giants brought him the food he wanted, and then they left him alone. Ali ate a handful of rice and a small bit of one lamb. Then he dug a deep, deep hole and buried the rest of the food.

¹The ultimate test of the strong man's prowess would be his ability to eat a prodigious amount of food.

After an hour, Ali called the giants back and said, "Now I want you to take me back to my city." One of the giants bent down, and Ali climbed onto his shoulders. As soon as the giant felt how light Ali was, he said, "You lied to us, Ali. You are not strong."

Ali thought very quickly. Then, raising one of his arms up high above the giant's head, Ali said, "Can't you see, you stupid giant? With one hand I am holding up the sky. Do you want me to let it go so that it can fall down on you and kill you?"

The giant believed him and began to walk with great strides toward the city, with the other thirty-nine giants following him.

When Ali and the giants came to the city, the people could not believe their eyes. They were greatly frightened, and they began to beg, "Please don't kill us, but take all the money we have."

Ali summoned everybody to the center of the city, including the candy maker and his mother. He said, "I want to show you that I am not a coward, but very brave and clever. If I wished, my giants could destroy this whole city, but I will not ask them to do that. What's more, I forgive you all for treating me so badly." And he dismissed the giants with a wave of his hand.

As for the people, they were so happy that they began to kiss his hands and his forehead, and they feasted for forty days and forty nights.

Ali returned to his work for the candy maker, but this time the two were partners. May we all have the courage of Ali!