

TELL ME A STORY EPAMINONDAS AND HIS AUNT (an American folktale)

adapted by Amy Friedman and illustrated by Jillian Gilliland

Epaminondas visited his mother's sister -- his aunt -- every day, and each time he did, she gave him something to take home to his mother.

One day when he arrived at her house, she was just taking a nice big cake out of the oven. "Would you like to take some home to your mother?" she asked, and Epaminondas nodded, "Yes, I would." So she cut him a big slice of golden cake with chocolate icing, and put it in his hand. He clutched it tightly in his fist and hurried home.

When he walked in the door, his mother looked at his hand. "What have you got there, Epaminondas?" she asked.

"Cake, Mama," he said.

"Cake!" she cried, bursting into tears. "Epaminondas, you haven't got the sense you were born with, son! The way to carry a nice piece of golden cake with chocolate icing is to wrap it up carefully in green leaves and put it in your hat and put your hat on top of your head and hurry on home. Do you hear me, Epaminondas?"

"Yes, Mama, I hear you," he said. The very next day he visited his aunt, and when he was about to leave for home, she handed him a pound of sweet butter. "Take this home to your mama, Epaminondas. It's fresh sweet butter."

Epaminondas took the butter and walked outside and gathered some green leaves. He wrapped the butter in those leaves and put the package in his hat and put his hat on his head, and he began to walk home.

But it was a hot day, and the sun was beating down on Epaminondas' head, and pretty soon that butter began to melt. It melted right through those leaves and into the hat and right down onto Epaminondas' forehead. That butter ran down his forehead into his eyes. It slithered on his cheeks and slipped into his ears and trickled down his neck. When he reached home, the only butter Epaminondas had was all over him.

His mother groaned. "Epaminondas, you haven't got the sense you were born with! Don't you know the way to carry butter is to wrap it up in some big green leaves and take it down to the stream and cool it in water, and then lift it into your hands and carefully carry it home as fast as you can? Do you hear me, Epaminondas?"

He nodded, "Yes, Mama, I hear you."

A few days passed, and Epaminondas visited his aunt again. This time she gave him a little puppy dog to take home to his mother.

Epaminondas lifted up the little puppy and took it outside. He gathered some leaves and wrapped up that puppy dog

Epaminondas and his Aunt



and took it down to the stream and dipped it in the water and let it cool. Then he asked, "Puppy dog, are you cool yet?" That little puppy dog began to shiver, so he knew it was cool. He picked it up and hurried home.

"That's a puppy dog!" his mother said when she saw him. "Haven't you got the sense you were born with? The way to carry a puppy dog is to take a long piece of string and tie one end of it gently around the neck and then you put the puppy dog on the ground and take hold of the other end of the string and you carefully lead the puppy dog home. Do you hear me?"

"Yes, Mama," Epaminondas said, "I hear you."

The next day when Epaminondas visited his aunt, she gave him a fresh loaf of bread to carry home to his mother. That bread smelled as fresh and crusty and delicious as anything he had ever smelled. So he tied a string around one end of the loaf, very gently, and then he placed it on the ground. He took hold of the other end of the string and dragged that crusty loaf of bread behind him, just like his mother had shown him.

When he reached home, his mother took one look at the thing at the end of the string and she wailed, "Epaminondas, you haven't got the sense you were born with! You never did have the sense you were born with! You never will have the sense you were born with! Listen to me, son. I'm not going to tell you more ways to bring home your aunt's gifts. Don't visit her anymore. I'll visit her myself. But I'll tell you one more thing, Epaminondas! You see those six pies I've just baked? I've set them here on the door step to cool. Now you listen to me, Epaminondas. When you walk out the door of this house, you be careful where you step. Do you hear me?"

"I hear you, Mama," he said.

Mama put on her shawl and her bonnet and picked up her basket, and off she went to visit her sister, Epaminondas' aunt. The six pies sat cooling in a row on the third step.

Epaminondas walked out the door and looked down at the steps. As carefully as he could, he walked onto the first step, and he walked onto the second, and even more carefully, he stepped onto the third step. As he did ever so carefully -- as carefully as he could -- he stepped on every single one of those pies.

Guess what?

No one knows what happened next because the person who told me the story didn't know what happened. Nobody in the neighborhood knew what happened. Nobody who knew anybody in that neighborhood knew what happened.

But you might be able to guess

"Tell Me a Story 3: Women of Wonder," the third CD in the audiobook series, is now available. For more information, please visit www.mythsandtales.com.

COPYRIGHT 2010 UNIVERSAL UCLICK