



The Potato's Kingdom

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Age: 6+

There sure is a lot going on in auntie Tiia's vegetable patch! The cauliflower's deepest desire is to get married, the carrots are solving the mystery of the baby carrots, the onion wants to become a stand-up comedian and the tiny pea is crying her eyes out from loneliness. The chili and the bell pepper cannot figure out who is related to whom, the pumpkin growing in the far corner yearns for a more central position, the radish however does not want to become a salad, but to go on a round-the-world trip. It's no wonder that the potato who rules over this kingdom is completely exhausted by the autumn.



Reading sample

pp. 23–25

The Bell Pepper and Chili's Tiff

"There's no way we could be related! Out of the question!" the bell pepper railed.

"I sure believe we are! Haven't you seen the book *Bell Pepper and Chili: From Seed to Table?*" the chili asked.

"Ha, quite the imagination you've got!" the bell pepper replied.

"I noticed it when they brought us inside," the chili continued.

"Really? Did you get a chance to read it from cover to cover, too?" the bell pepper snapped back.

"No... But with that title... and I've always had a sort of feeling, anyway. Just look at us! You can't deny there's a resemblance, can you?! We're both red and have a green stalk and our shape..."

"Sure, but look at how tiny you are! And they say you're spicy to boot," the bell pepper interrupted. "You could never compete with me!"

"Compete? Why should I want to compete with you?" the chili asked in surprise.

The bell pepper rolled his eyes and turned his back on her. There was no point answering such a silly question.

The chili tried bringing the topic up a couple times more after that. It would be so nice to do something together! Secretly, she even dreamed of having a grand family reunion of chilis and bell peppers someday. But when the bell pepper wouldn't stop being so snooty, she simply let it go.

One day, Aunt Tiia came into the greenhouse and picked all the ripe vegetables, including a few chilis and bell peppers. She carried them into the kitchen and started making lecho, a type of jarred stew. It was all a bit much for the bell pepper. He closed his eyes and tried to meditate. Meditation had been all the rage in the greenhouse lately.

When the bell pepper opened his eyes again, he found he was in a glass jar and delighted to see he'd been chopped up into neat little pieces. But he was also shocked to see the chili swimming all around him. What on earth is going on?! he wondered.

"Hey," said the chili chunks softly.

"What are you doing here?" the bell pepper chunks snarled.

"We're flavoring the lecho. What about you?"

"Who else is in this jar?" the bell

peppers asked, ignoring the question.

"Just onions and tomatoes," the chilis replied. "That's usually all that goes into lecho. Plus, we're the ones who make it taste the way it does..."

"What are you talking about? Look at how few of you there are here compared with us! There's no way you could be lecho's most important ingredients," the bell pepper chunks growled defensively.

The days dragged on and the vegetables in the lecho had to put up with the bell peppers' endless grumbling. Now, the chilis couldn't bear to think they might be related.

When Aunt Tiia unscrewed the jar one evening, the vegetables heard something interesting for the first time in ages. She was reading aloud from a cookbook.

"Bell peppers are the bigger and milder-tasting sisters of chili peppers. The two complement each other wonderfully..."

The chunks of bell pepper, which started complaining about how sudden changes in light were bad for them the second the lid was unscrewed, suddenly fell silent. Never before had it been so quiet in the jar of lecho.

pp. 30–32

The Onion's Tears

The onion was having a hard time—all the other vegetables were avoiding him. There was a rumor going around the field that anyone who talked to him would start crying. Even vegetables who had never spoken to the onion were keeping their distance just to be safe.

In his family, the onion was known as a jokester and the life of the party. The shallots and pearl onions were especially fond of his humor. But even though the onion tried to convince himself that his closest relatives' attention was enough, he gradually became unhappy.

Secretly, the onion dreamed of becoming a stand-up comedian and making big crowds laugh. He knew the vegetables on the field would be more than enough for an audience. Still, all of them scurried away the moment he walked past.

On a couple of occasions, the onion tried to blend into a crowd of other vegetables, even disguising himself as a potato! But when the potatoes started counting off as they usually

did, they quickly figured out who was extra and the poor onion's cover was blown.

The onion felt very sad. So sad that tears welled up in his eyes. A life without jokes seemed pointless, but what was the point of coming up with jokes when you couldn't share them with the world?

One day, a new vegetable moved onto the field—a leek. The newcomer was excited to meet everyone, so she organized a garden party and invited the whole neighborhood.

The onion decided to show up early so he could get to know her a little better in private. His jokes were a hit with his new neighbor, and he quickly won her over. But as soon as the other vegetables showed up and spotted him, they turned right back around to leave.

"Hey, everybody," the onion called out, trying to stop them. "I only make humans cry, not other vegetables! You don't have to be afraid of me!"

The vegetables completely ignored the onion, and the number of guests kept shrinking.

Not wanting the leek's party to be ruined, the onion decided to go home himself. The leek stopped him, though, and whispered: "Tell them one of your jokes!"

So, the onion worked up his courage and said loudly:

"Lots of people cry when they chop onions. But we're the ones heading for the frying pan!"

A few of the vegetables on their way out paused and gaped at the onion. Bolder ones chuckled to themselves.

"Honey, why are you crying?' 'Because of the onion!' 'Jeez Louise! You vegans . . .'" the onion continued, growing more and more confident.

Now, the guests were even laughing.

The onion kept telling more jokes. At first, he didn't dare to tease any vegetables other than onions, but before long, he gave the tomatoes, green beans, and others a chance to laugh at themselves, too. Soon, the roaring laughter coming from the garden party persuaded the rest of the vegetables to return.

They all laughed so hard that there were tears in their eyes.