



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The Giant's Pupil

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Long years ago there lived a little boy whose name was Manoel. His father and mother were so very poor that they could not afford to send him to school. Because he did not go to school he played all day in the fields on the edge of the forest where the giant lived.

One day Manoel met the giant. The giant lived all alone in the forest, so he was very lonely and wished he had a little boy like Manoel. He loved little Manoel as soon as he saw him, and after that they were together every day. The giant taught Manoel all the secrets of the forests and jungles. He taught him all the secrets of the wind and the rain and the thunder and the lightning. He taught him all the secrets of the beasts and the birds and the serpents.



Manoel grew up a wise lad indeed. His father and mother were very proud of him and so was his kind teacher, the giant.

One day the king's messenger rode up and down the kingdom with a message from the king's daughter. The king's daughter, the beautiful princess of the land, had promised to wed the man who could tell her a riddle she could not guess. All the princes who had sung of love beneath the palace window had been very stupid. The princess wished to marry a man who knew more than she did.

When Manoel heard the words of the messenger he said to his father and mother, "I am going to the palace to tell a riddle to the princess. I am sure I can give her one which she cannot guess."

"You are an exceedingly clever lad, I know, my son," replied his mother, "but there will be many princes and handsome cavalheiros at the palace to tell riddles to the princess. What if she will not listen to a lad in shabby clothing!"

"I will make the princess listen to my riddle," replied Manoel.

"What riddle are you going to ask the princess?" asked Manoel's father.

"I do not know yet," replied the lad. "I will make up a riddle on the way to the palace. I am going to start at once."

The kind giant who had been the lad's friend gave him his blessing and wished him luck. The lad's mother prepared a lunch for him to carry with him. His father sat before the door and boasted to all the neighbours that his son was going to wed the king's daughter. Manoel took his dog with him when he went on his journey, because he wanted some one for company.

Manoel journeyed on and on through the forests and jungles and after a time he had eaten all the lunch his mother had given him when he went from home. When he became hungry he spent his last vintem for some bread from a little venda in the town he passed through. He went on to the forest to eat the bread, and before he tasted of it himself he gave a piece to his dog. The dog died immediately. The bread was poisoned.

Even as Manoel stood by weeping for his faithful dog, three big black buzzards flew down and devoured the dead beast. They fell dead immediately. Just then the lad heard voices, and soon he saw seven horsemen approaching. The men were robbers, and though they had much gold in their pockets they had no food. "I am hungry enough to eat a dead buzzard," said the captain of the robbers. The robbers greedily seized the three buzzards and devoured them at once. The seven men immediately died from the poison.

"The buzzards stole the body of my dog, so they became mine," said Manoel. "The seven robbers stole my three buzzards, so they became mine, too." He took all the gold from the pockets of the seven robbers and dressed himself in the garments of the captain of the robbers because they were finest. He mounted the horse of the captain of the robbers because that was the best horse.

The lad rode on toward the palace of the king. After a time he became thirsty and pushed the horse into a gallop. The horse became covered with sweat, and with the horse's sweat he quenched his thirst. Soon he arrived at the royal palace.

Dressed in the robber's fine garments and mounted upon the robber's fine horse, Manoel had no difficulty in being admitted to the palace. He was taken at once before the princess to tell his riddle.

The princess saw in Manoel's eyes all the secrets of the forests and jungles which the kind giant had taught him. "Here is a youth who will tell me a riddle which will be worth listening to," said the princess to herself. All the princes and cavalheiros from all the neighbouring kingdoms had told her such stupid riddles that she had been bored nearly to death. She could always guess the answers, even before she had heard the end of the riddle.

This is the riddle which Manoel told the princess:

“I went away from home with a pocket full;

Soon it became empty;

Again it became full.

I went away from home with a companion;

My pocket-full killed my companion;

My dead companion was the slayer of three;

The three killed seven.

From the seven I chose the best;

I drank water which did not fall from heaven.

And here I stand

Before the loveliest princess in the land.”

The princess listened to the riddle carefully. Then she asked Manoel to say it all over again. The princess thought and thought, but she did not have a good guess as to the answer to the riddle.

No one in all the palace could understand Manoel’s riddle. “You have won my daughter as your bride,” said the king, after he had used all his royal wits to solve the riddle and could not do it.

When Manoel explained his riddle to the princess, she said, “Nossa Senhora herself must have sent you to me. I never could have endured a stupid husband.”

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