



Ririro

READ ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The Table, The Sifter And The Pinchers

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Once upon a time there was a man who was very poor. He had so many children it was difficult to earn money enough to provide for them all. Accordingly, he left home and hired out to the king of a distant land.

At the end of a year's time he went to the king and said: "I have served you faithfully for a whole year. Now I wish to return to my wife and children. Pay me, I pray you, what you owe me for my work."

The king said: "I will not reward you in money. I will give you something better than money. Here is a table. When you are hungry all you have to do is to say, 'Table, set yourself.' Then the table will immediately be spread with food."

"Thank you, good king," replied the man. "With this table it will be easy enough to provide food even for all my large family."

When the man had started home with his table he soon grew hungry. He put it down by the roadside under a leafy tree and said, "Table, set yourself." Immediately it was full of the most delicious food. The man ate all he could and gave the rest away to some beggars who passed that way.

"It is a lucky day for us," said the beggars as they thanked him.

That night the man stopped at an inn. He was so delighted with the magic powers of his table that he foolishly told the innkeeper about it.

"That would be a most excellent table for me to possess," thought the innkeeper. "With this in my possession I would soon be a rich man. I could charge my guests a price in proportion to the rich food I would serve them, and I'd never have to spend a cent of my money to buy supplies."

That night the innkeeper stole the table and substituted another for it which looked exactly like it. Early in the morning the man loaded the table on his back and hurried home to his wife and children.

"We'll never be hungry again!" he cried as he embraced his wife. "Never again shall our children call for food when we have nothing to give them!"

"How much did the king pay you?" asked his wife in surprise. The good woman well knew how much it cost to buy food enough to keep all their children from going hungry.

"The king did not pay me in money. He gave me something better than money," replied the man. "Do you see this table? Call the children. I want to show you something."

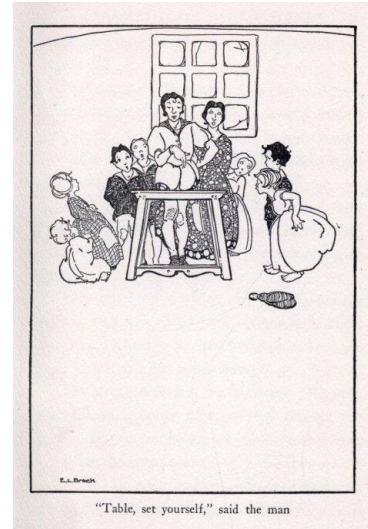
The man's wife and children all gathered about the table, watching it curiously.

"Table, set yourself," said the man.

The table remained standing in the center of the floor just as it was.

"What trick is this?" asked the good wife. She had been a bit suspicious from the moment she had heard that there was no money in her husband's pockets.

"I'll get the beggars I fed to prove to you what this table provided yesterday," he said when he had told all the story.



"You'd better go back to the king as fast as you can," advised the wife. "Take back this good-for-nothing table which he has imposed upon you and ask for some real money instead."

The man did as his wife advised. The king was thoughtful for a moment. He guessed that the man had been robbed.

At last he said: "I'll give you a sifter this time. Then when you need money all you have to do is to say, 'Sifter, sift!' It will sift out money as freely as if it were flour."

The man was delighted with the sifter. He sifted his pockets full of money immediately and hurried home. On the way he again spent the night at the inn.

"When I brought my table home it wouldn't work," he told the innkeeper. "I took it back and got something in its place which is all right."

The innkeeper watched him sift out money.

"Why don't I get that sifter?" thought the innkeeper. "I work very hard serving my guests even though the table provides the food for them. If I had this sifter I wouldn't have to work. I'd close the inn and pass the rest of my life enjoying the money I'd sift into my pockets so easily."

That night he stole the sifter and substituted another which looked exactly like it.

When the man reached home there was plenty of money in his pockets and his wife and children were happy for a little while. However, he soon wanted to display the magic gifts of his new sifter. Accordingly, he called his family

together.

"Sifter, sift," he commanded.

The sifter behaved just like any ordinary sifter.

"You have been tricked again!" cried his wife. She was very cross indeed and told her husband exactly what she thought of him.

Home was not a comfortable place for him that day, so he decided to hurry back to the king after he had emptied all the money in his pockets into his wife's lap.

"This will supply you for a while," he said. "It is quite as much as any ordinary husband would have brought home for a year's work."

"A woman hates to have her husband made a fool of," replied the woman as she rolled up the money and tucked it away carefully.

When the king had heard the story he was entirely convinced that the man had an enemy who had stolen both the table and the sifter.

"Where did you spend the night?" he asked.

The man told of passing the night in the inn.

"I've heard that innkeeper is going to retire from business, he has become so rich," said the king. "You'd better hurry there as fast as you can before he leaves town."

The laborer nodded his head thoughtfully, a wise look creeping into his eyes.

"Take these pinchers," ordered the king. "Use them on that innkeeper until he gives back the table and the sifter."

When the innkeeper was sore and black and blue from the pinchers he gave back the table and the sifter.

After that there were prosperous days indeed for the king's laborer. Whenever the children were hungry, he would say: "Table, set yourself," and immediately the table would be full of the most delicious food. Whenever his wife said, "I need some money," he would call out, "Sifter, sift," and the sifter would sift out money as freely and easily as if it were flour.

As for the pinchers, they proved to be quite as useful as the other gifts he received from the king. Whenever the children were naughty he had only to glance in the direction of those pinchers. The children would immediately behave as they should.

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