



THE KING AND THE WEAVER

Once upon a time, there was a land ruled by an old king. One day, a messenger from abroad approached him. The messenger didn't say a word, however; instead, he silently examined the king's throne, took out a piece of chalk, and drew a thick line around it. It was a curious, unsettling thing to do, and the king had no idea what to make of it.

"What in the world is the meaning of this?" the king asked, indignant. But he didn't get an answer. The messenger just stood there, looking at the throne, completely silent.

The king was alarmed by this behaviour and called for all his advisors to council him and tell him what the circle around the throne could mean. But the advisors didn't have the faintest idea. Now the king got angry.

"If you don't know what it means, find me someone who does! If you can't find someone to explain this to me, I'll have you all executed!" he threatened.

The advisors scattered and began searching the country inside and out for someone wise enough to explain the meaning of the circle around the throne. They stopped in every house in every town, but they couldn't find anyone until one day, when they chanced upon a cottage hidden deep in the hills in the middle of nowhere.

They knocked on the door, but nobody opened. After a short debate they

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decided to go in anyway, but when the advisors finally entered, they didn't find a living soul inside. All they saw was just a cradle hanging from the ceiling, gently rocking itself.

"What magic is this?" they wondered. "There's no one around!" They opened the next door to find another room, also completely empty save for a gently rocking cradle hanging from the ceiling.

Mystified, they left the house and climbed a nearby hill. From the top of the hill, they saw wheat drying on the roof of the mysterious house, with reeds growing just above, swaying from side to side and scaring off the birds that wanted to feed on the grains.

"How's that possible? There's not even a breeze today! How are the reeds moving?" wondered the advisors again. One of them stuck his finger in the air to check for wind again, but there wasn't even a trace of a breeze. Suddenly they noticed a shimmering light in one of the windows. There had been no light at all in the two rooms they had already found, so there had to be one more room in the house that they hadn't checked! So they climbed down the hill again, and indeed – there was a hidden room in the house. They entered cautiously, and inside they found a weaver weaving on his loom.

"What magic controls this house?" the advisers demanded to know, impatiently. "The cradles rock on their own and the reeds swing with no wind."

"Oh, it is my magic, of course! I'm doing all those things," replied the weaver, never looking up from his loom.

"Are you mocking us?" asked the angry advisors. "How is it possible that you could be doing all those things when you're just sitting here and weaving?"

"Come, take a closer look at my loom," said the weaver.

They came closer – and suddenly they saw that there were three separate threads coming from the loom. Two of them led to the cradles and the third to the reed. As he worked the loom, the weaver also tugged the threads ever so gently, and by doing this moved both the cradles and the reed. The advisors at once knew the weaver would be able to help them.

"You must come with us to the king. You may be able to help us solve a mystery,"

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they said, and immediately explained to him what, exactly, the mystery was. The weaver listened carefully to their words, and when they finished, he nodded, stood up, and walked out. Perplexed, they watched as he went to one of the rooms, picked up two wooden dolls, put them in his pocket, then caught a hen in the yard and put it in a wicker basket.

“Alright,” the weaver said. “I’m ready.”

Once at the palace, the weaver took his time examining the circle. When he was done, he examined the mysterious messenger, who was still standing nearby in perfect silence. The weaver looked carefully at him, took out the wooden dolls from his pocket and threw them in front of the messenger. The messenger, in return, silently reached in his own pocket, took out a handful of millet seeds and threw them on the ground. The weaver chuckled, raised his eyebrows and pulled the hen from the basket. He put it down and it immediately started eating the seeds from the ground. Before long, there wasn’t a single seed left on the floor. When the strange messenger saw that, he turned around and promptly walked away. Everyone in the room stared at the weaver, completely baffled about what they had just witnessed. The weaver seemed pleased with himself, and picked the chicken up and began to pet it.

“What just happened?” the king asked.

“Ah, yes,” the weaver said, looking at the king. “The messenger came here to tell you that the ruler of his land is marching his army towards you and wants to surround you. That’s why he drew the line around your throne.”

“Well... then why did you throw those wooden dolls at him?” the king asked, still confused.

“To show him that our army is stronger than theirs, of course. And that next to us they look like children who should be playing with dolls, not plotting a war,” the weaver said, matter-of-factly.

“Alright, I see, but why did he throw the seeds back at you and why did your hen eat them?”

“Is it not clear? The seeds were meant to tell us that their army is great in numbers. By letting out the hen, I told him that no matter how great their army is, not a

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single one of them will be left alive if they come.” The weaver smiled and put the chicken back in the basket.

“And he understood you?” asked the tsar.

“He must have. He ran away, after all.”

Amazed by the weaver’s cunning, the king offered the man a rich reward and the post of the chief advisor.

“That’s a lovely offer,” said the weaver, but you see, I don’t want to be a royal advisor. I simply wouldn’t have time, there’s too much work waiting for me at home.”

And so he left and went home to his hidden cottage and his loom, to live happily.