

Story 2189 (1999 Tape 15)

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A Painful Story

My long-dead grandfather sometimes asked us if we knew this or that. When we were children, we occasionally claimed to have knowledge which we actually lacked. It was a mistake to pretend to have more knowledge than really possessed, for if our falsehood was detected, we were forced to listen to a story which had already bored us all too many times. Here was the story he would tell us.

Once there was a dull-witted girl who pretended to be smarter than she actually was. One day the girl's mother began to prepare some soup for the evening meal, but some urgent matter called her away from her work briefly. She therefore asked her daughter to finish making that soup. She gave the soup recipe to the girl and tried to explain how to cook this dish. "My daughter, do such and such and then so and so. First fry the onions slowly, adding tomato paste as they simmer. Heat some water

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in another pot, and when it comes to a boil, mix it carefully into the other ingredients.

But the girl was paying little attention to what her mother was saying. Her only response was, "Yes, --I know, I know." But when she started cooking the soup, she confused the ingredients and forgot the order in which each should be added to the mixture. What should she do first--open the jar of tomato paste or fry the onions? She could not remember, and so she went to a next-door neighbor for help. She said to that neighbor, "Auntie, I have forgotten how to make this soup. Will you please give me some directions about how to proceed?"

The woman's instructions were similar to those of the mother, and the girl's responses were exactly the same: "I know, I know."

The neighbor tried to remain patient once, twice, three times. "I know, I know, I know," the girl kept saying.

Unable to tolerate this any longer, the woman grew angry, and so she added one more piece of advice. She said, "After you have followed all of the directions I have given you so far, there is one more thing that you should do to make the soup perfect. You should stir into it a large

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handful of sand."

At dinner that evening the girl's father said to the girl's mother, "Wife, what kind of soup is this?"

"I instructed our daughter exactly how to make this kind of soup

When they questioned their daughter about this, she said, "I forgot some parts of the recipe, and so I went

door and asked our neighbor to tell me what ingredients I should use. I am sure that I followed her instructions."

Later they went to visit the neighbor and asked her what she had told their daughter to do about the soup. The woman told them what had happened. "She kept asking me questions about making soup, and I responded to all her questions. But as soon as she heard each of my answers, she would say, 'I know, I know.' This exasperated me so much after awhile that I could not resist telling her,

the final ingredient you should add to that soup is a large handful of sand

This was the story that my grandfather told, and whenever we claimed falsely to know something, we had to endure listening to that whole story still one more time.