

The Tale of the Scissors

Reg Down
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A pair of scissors went out for a walk one day – ‘tick-tack tickety-tack’. He walked down the road till he came to mansion. ‘Knock-knock-knock’ went the scissors on the door. ‘Creeeeeek’ went the heavy door as it opened. A butler looked down his nose at him.

“Yeeeeesss?” said the butler. “To what do we owe this pleasure?”

“I want a job,” said the scissors.

“A job?” said the butler.

“Yes,” said the scissors. “Any job will do. Well, almost any job. I’m good at cutting cloth and paper.”

“We have no cloth or paper cutting jobs,” said the butler.

“Anything else?” asked the scissors, hopefully.

The butler pondered.

“Hmmmmmm,” he said, stroking his long and snobbish nose. “There is the lawn out back,” he said at last. “You may cut that, if you wish.”

So the scissors tickety-tacked around the mansion to the back. Before him lay a stretch of lawn badly in need of a trim.

“Ah, that’s the job for me,” declared the scissors, and set to. ‘Snip-snap snickety-snap’ went the scissors cutting the overgrown grass down to size. Soon, every blade of grass was exactly the same height.

“Excellent,” said the butler when he saw what the scissors had done, secretly impressed. “Now rake up the cuttings.”

The scissors opened his blades and using them as a two pronged rake – ‘rick-rake rickey-rake’ – gathered up the cuttings into neat piles.

“Wonderful, old chap,” said the butler. “Now dump the cuttings into the compost over by the vegetable garden.”

The scissors went at it—‘hifft-heft-hiffety-heft’—he carried the clipping piles and placed them on the compost. Now the lawn looked perfect.

“By Jove,” said the butler, hardly able to contain himself. “You are a hard worker, and a good one. You may have tea, should you desire. It’s in the kitchen.”

The scissors went to the kitchen. Mrs Wellsbugly, the house matron, made the scissors a cup of tea.

“How do you take it?” she asked. “With, or without, milk? With sugar or plain?”

“None of the before,” said the scissors, “but a drop of oil would be nice—household grade, please.”

So Mrs Wellsbugly dripped a drop of household oil into the tea and the scissors drank it.

“Ah, that hits the spot,” said the scissors, opening and closing his blades. “Nothing like a drop of oil to keep things lubricated. What shall I do now?”

“Come with me,” said Mrs Wellsbugly. “You may help the mistress arrange flowers.”

She took the scissors down the hall into the drawing room.

“Miss Peabottle, I have an assistant for you,” said Mrs Wellsbugly. “His name is Scissors—and so is his appearance and actuality.”

“Pleased to meet you,” said the mistress of the house stretching out her hand.

“I’d better not shake your hand,” said the scissors. “I might cut your fingers off.”

“Indeed, that’s true,” said the mistress, withdrawing her hand quickly. “Now come help me with these flowers. Most of them need cutting, I am sure.”

‘Snip-snack snickey-snack’ went the scissors and in no time at all the flowers were cut to the right length and placed into vases.

“How delightful,” cried the mistress, blinking her eyes. “I do believe you will be most useful. Mrs Wellsbugly, please arrange for Master Scissors to be in our employ. He may sleep in the servants’ quarters.”

The scissors was shown to the room of the late Mizz Broadnutter. She had recently died of eating too much white bread at one sitting. The scissors had never slept in a bed before. He tossed and turned and had a nightmare. He dreamed he was being chased by a large, white, flapping ghost who wanted to smother him. He fought the ghost off with all his might and main—‘snip-snap-snippety-snap’—and made short work of the phantom. In the morning he discovered that he’d cut the bed sheets to shreds. He hid them under the bed and didn’t dare tell anyone.

When he arrived down stairs there was panic and chaos. The maids were running around hysterically and the butler stood in the main entry, telephone in his left hand, repeating over and over, as if in shock, "The King and Queen have the pleasure of arriving shortly."

The mistress was turning frantically in circles, "My hair! My hair! Oh, my hair! It's such a mess. What shall I do?"

"Come with me," said the scissors without hesitation, and he brought the distraught Miss Peabottle into the drawing room.

"Have a seat," said the scissors, holding a chair for her.

The mistress sat.

"If you will, ma'am," said the scissors, "undo your tresses," and the mistress of the house, hardly aware of her surroundings, obeyed.

'Snip-snap, snippety-snap' went the scissors, sending locks and fringes flying.

Just as he finished the butler and house matron walked in. Mrs Wellsbugly stared, then fainted. The butler stood speechless, his long, snobbish nose drooping in disbelief. Just then trumpets sounded. 'Toot toot-toot toooooooot! Toot toot-toot toooooooot!' they blazed in fanfare.

Moments later the doorbell rang. It echoed loudly in the hall, seeming to go on forever. The butler opened his mouth to speak, closed it, and exited the room as if to his own execution.

"How do I look?" asked Miss Peabottle, touching her hair.

"Wonderful," said the scissors. "Better than the lawn."

They stepped over Mrs Wellsbugly's body and entered the foyer. The front door opened and a herald cried aloud: "Oyez, oyez, the King and Queen of Great Tainbri are arrived."

The maids and the butler threw themselves to the floor and groveled. Miss Peabottle tried to kneel but fell back on her bum. The scissors, being unbendable in the knee because he didn't have any, opened his shears and did the splits.

"I say," said the king, stepping in and eyeing the household, "what a curious lot."

"Indeed," agreed the queen, joining him and looking around. "And who might you be?" she asked the scissors.

"I am a pair of scissors," said the scissors, unsplitting and resplitting himself decorously.

The butler rushed to his mistress and helped her up. The queen, no longer distracted by the scissors, saw Miss Peabottle's shorn hair.

"Goodness," said the queen. "Your hair. It looks like a freshly cut lawn."

"Indeed," said the scissors, interjecting, "that's how I meant it to be. Every hair is short and exactly the same length. I call it the 'Lawn Look'. Very refreshing and easy to look after."

"Yes, yes," agreed Miss Peabottle, touching her spikiness and trying to make the best of it. "Eminently practical. No bother to wash at all."

"No bother to wash? How excellent," said the queen. "I shall have one of those too."

So the queen's hair was shorn short and spiky by the scissors. Her ladies-in-waiting gasped in horror. "How beautiful, Your Majesty," they cried, blushing through their lies. "I must have my hair done just so."

The scissors was kept busy all morning shearing the ladies-in-waiting, and before they returned to the king's castle in the City of Donlon a new fashion was born. The scissors was elevated to the rank of Royal Scissors and soon was shearing the entire nobility. When they were shorn the middle class followed. Finally the working class women had to have the new look as well. All falsely claimed they liked the style and all truly declared the style easy to tend.

The scissors made such a good living that he had himself gold plated and lived in a jewel encrusted sewing box with his pinking shears wife. He had a special scissor's case made to sleep in which stopped him from cutting up the bed sheets at night.

Finally the scissors' luck changed. He became overconfident and was chatting casually to the queen as he trimmed her hair—'snip-snap snip-snap snip- ...'

"Ouch!" cried the queen as her royal ear rolled across the floor.

The doctor and the tailor were called, but neither could sew the ear back on again.

"Oh, Your Majesty," cried the ladies-in-waiting, aghast. "Your ear! It looks ... ummm ... so elegant,"—but none of these ladies were prepared to have an ear cut off. Instead they copied the queen as she grew her hair out and covered over the missing appendage.

As for the scissors? He was stripped of his royal title and no longer allowed to cut anything without the guiding hand of a human being. The custom spread, and that's the way it's been ever since.