

The grandmother's table

Once there was a feeble old woman whose husband died and left her all alone, so she went to live with her son and his wife and their little daughter.

Every day the old woman's sight dimmed, and her hearing grew worse, and sometimes at dinner her hands trembled so badly the peas rolled off her spoon or the soup ran from her dish.

The son and his wife could not help but be annoyed at the way she spilled her meal all over the table. And one day, after she knocked over a glass of milk, they told each other that enough is enough.

They set up a small table for her in the corner next to the broom closet and made the old woman eat her meals there.

She sat all alone, looking with tear-filled eyes across the room at the others. Sometimes they spoke to her while they ate, but usually it was to scold her for dropping a bowl or a fork.

One evening just before dinner, the little girl was busy playing on the floor with her building blocks, and her father asked her what she was making.

"I'm building a little table for you and mother," she smiled, "so you can eat by yourselves in the corner someday when I get big." Her parents sat staring at her for some time and then suddenly both began to cry.

That night they led the old woman back to her place at the big table. From then on she ate with the rest of the family, and her son and his wife never seemed to mind a bit when she spilled something every now and then.

(Attributed to the Brothers Grimm)