

The Dribblesome Teapots

And Other Incredible Stories



NORMAN HUNTER



Contents

Cover

About the Book

Title Page

Dedication

Foreword

1 The Dribblesome Teapots

2 The Priceless Present

3 The Unexpected Banquet

4 The Queen Who Economized

5 The King with the Paper Face

6 The King Must Be Obeyed

7 The Secret of Squelchways

8 The Unsuitable Suits

9 The Dragon Who Cheated

10 The Secret Document

About the Author

Also by Norman Hunter

Copyright

About the Book

Full of fantastical places like Kumdown Upwardz, Gadzooks and Urgburg-under-Ug, eccentric kings and queens, lessons in kindness, peace and even royal thriftiness, wrapped up in more than a smattering of nonsense, *The Dribblesome Teapots* brings together ten modern fairy tales to be enjoyed by generation after generation of young readers.

The
Dribblesome
Teapots

and Other Incredible Stories



NORMAN HUNTER

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY FRITZ WEGNER

RHCP DIGITAL

*To my wife, who inspired some of the characters in this
book - the nice ones, of course.*

Foreword

(Explaining sort of talk that you can skip if you like)

These stories are legends of the future. In the ordinary way a legend is a tale of something supposed to have happened in the past. These stories haven't happened yet but perhaps one day they may. You never know. Wouldn't it be fun if they did?

NORMAN HUNTER

The Dribblesome Teapots

Tea was more than just an ordinary afternoon sort of affair in Sypso-Sweetleigh. It was positively a State function, yes it was. The King and Queen would as soon have thought of missing their own coronation as missing their tea.

There were eight kinds of bread and butter and sixteen kinds of cake, ranging from the very plain and wholesome to the terribly indigestible and delicious. The tea-service was of gold except the teapot, and that was a lovely big brown earthenware one, known as a Brown Betty. The Queen declared it was the only kind of pot that made good tea. It had the Royal arms on the inside as well as the outside because the Queen was so specially thorough she couldn't bear to think that things you didn't see weren't as nice as those you did. She always washed her neck much farther down than necessary; she insisted on all the cupboards being tidy inside and she even had her shoes polished on the soles, which was rather awkward sometimes because they made her slither about on the carpet. Still, she had learned to skate ages ago, so she managed to slither quite majestically.

'I declare I'm simply gasping for a cup of tea,' said Her Majesty one day when it was getting half-past fourish.

'My dear, ought you to gasp?' asked the King. He was known as King Nutherkupp II because that sounded nice

and royal, but his real name was Leslie Jones. 'I mean to say,' he added, 'it isn't very majestic, is it?'

'It may not be very majestic,' said the Queen, 'but it is most exceedingly very true,' and she rang the bell for tea so hard that all the servants came hurrying in at once.

'Now, now, now,' said the Queen, 'I didn't ring for all of you. You know perfectly well I ring once for the Butler, twice for the footman, three times for the parlour-maids, four times for the Cook and so on.'

'Pardon, Majesty,' said the Butler, bowing so low that a clump of picture cards he was collecting from tea-packets fell out of his waistcoat pocket all over the floor and were picked up by the first and second footmen who were collecting the same set. 'Your Majesty rang so many times we were not quite sure if you were ringing once a lot of times, or twice not so many times, or three times several times, or . . .'

'Oh, go away, all of you,' cried the Queen, shooing them out like a lot of chickens. 'I rang for tea, and please hurry up with it.' She sat down and went on gasping to herself, while the King tried to make up his mind whether to have plain wholesome cake which was good for him, but which he didn't like, or delicious creamy pastries which he loved, but which gave him pains.

Then in came tea with the Butler all of a tremble, but trying not to show it because, most terrible of things to occur, he had chipped a bit off the spout of the Queen's Brown Betty!

'Perhaps Her Majesty won't notice it,' he thought. 'It's only a weeny little chip.' So he had rubbed a chocolate éclair on the chipped part to make it dark like the rest of the teapot and was hoping for the best and wondering how he could prepare for the worst, not knowing what the worst might be.

'Ah, tea at last,' said the Queen, brightening up, while the King suddenly made up his mind to have some of the plain

wholesome cake first while he was hungry and then go on to the creamy pastries afterwards and hope that the plain wholesome cake would stop the pains that the creamy pastries gave him from being very noticeable.

The Queen began to pour out. And goodness gracious, how awful! The chipped spout of the Brown Betty made the tea dribble all over the tablecloth and all over her robes!

For a moment there was silence except for the drip, drip, drip of the tea on to the carpet. The Butler came over so queer that the footman gave him back the tea-packet cards, but still he felt no better.

‘O-o-o-o-oh, disgraceful,’ screamed the Queen, jumping up and putting the teapot down with such a bang that three lumps of sugar jumped out of the bowl into the King’s tea; which he didn’t at all mind because the Queen would never give him enough sugar anyway.

‘Look at my lovely robes,’ moaned the Queen, ‘and oh, look at my lovely tablecloth, the one that Aunt Chrissie made for me with her own hands too! Not that she could have made it with anybody else’s hands, but oh dear me, I shall cry, I know I shall.’

But she didn’t cry, she went on talking and wailing and moaning and wringing her hands while the footmen began wringing the tablecloth to get the dribbled-over tea out of it. But alas and alack, they wrung it over the King’s cake and made it all squodgy so that he had to have creamy pastries after all, pains or no pains, though it was pains all right as it turned out. Not that it was all right, him having pains, you know, but neither was it the least bit all right the Queen’s teapot going all dribbly like that.

‘If there’s one thing I cannot stand, it’s a teapot that dribbles,’ cried the Queen. ‘Oh, and that one was such a beautiful pourer. I can’t understand what can have happened.’

The Butler could understand perfectly well, but he simply dared not tell the Queen about chipping the spout. So he

said, 'I will fetch another teapot, Majesty.'

He fetched the best silver pot that was never used. But that was so ancient, having been part of the crown jewels of Sypso-Sweetleigh or something for years and years, that it was full of holes and dribbled in all directions instead of only at the spout.

'Oh, get me a teapot that doesn't dribble!' cried the Queen, gasping more than ever for her tea and not caring whether it was majestic or otherwise.

'Er - er - yes, Majesty,' said the Butler.

He brought the kitchen teapot, which was enamel and always had dribbled, only the Cook always held a bit of sponge under it. He brought a toy teapot from the little princess's toy cupboard, but that had no spout, and he brought two little ornamental sort of teapots with 'A present from Brighton' written on them and which didn't dribble because they were solid right through so weren't any more use than if they had.

'Oh, oh, oh, oh! this is terrible,' cried the Queen. 'Not a teapot in the Palace that can be used. Oh, disgraceful! I must have a teapot that doesn't dribble, I must, I must. Half the kingdom reward for anyone who can bring me a teapot that pours without dribbling!'

'Here, here, here, half a mo!' cried the King, getting all flurried and agitated and forgetting to speak regally. 'You can't do that. What do you think's going to happen to Sypso-Sweetleigh if you go offering half of it for teapots?'

But it was too late. The Royal Herald who was a fearfully anxious-to-please sort of person had dashed out the minute the Queen said 'half the kingdom for a teapot that pours without dribbling', and before he could be caught and told to stop he had shouted the proclamation all round the city.

'Oh dear, oh dear, now you have done it, you have,' cried the King. 'Half the kingdom for a teapot! Oh, it's awful! As if you couldn't have gone up the road and bought another teapot. Those proclamation and reward sort of businesses