

Princess Stew  
by  
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From his short story Princess Stew  
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1500 words

### Characters

Innkeeper: dressed in peasant clothes and apron

Innkeeper's wife: dressed in peasant dress and apron

Princess: dressed in splendid traveling clothes.

Servant 1: dressed in traveling coat and hat.

Servant 2: dressed identical to Servant 1

Servant 3: dressed identical to Servant 1 and 2

Maid-in-Waiting: dressed in traveling cloak

### Staging

Time: Old England, a time when princesses traveled to and from their castles in carriages. Noon

Scene: Inside a country inn. Stage center is the dining area. A long table and bench stand downstage. Stage right is entrance. Stage left is the kitchen area. A stove with a large kettle on top stands against wall. A shelf holds a salt shaker, carrots, and onions.

SCENE ONE:

At rise: INNKEEPER and INNKEEPER'S WIFE bustle about the dining area. They set the table with a single goblet and spoon.

INNKEEPER

The princess is coming! We'll soon be rich!

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

The princess is coming! We'll soon be famous!

INNKEEPER

The princess could have chosen any other inn on the highway for her noonday meal.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

But she's chosen our small humble place. Oh, we'll soon be wealthy.

INNKEEPER

Soon we'll be renowned throughout the kingdom. Everyone from far and wide will want to come out to our inn.

(Trumpets sound off stage. INNKEEPER and INNKEEPER'S WIFE freeze and exchange smiles.)

INNKEEPER

(straightening apron)

The princess is here! What riches we'll have.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

(tidying hair)

She's here! She's here! What celebrities we'll be.

(SERVANT 1, SERVANT 2, and SERVANT 3 enter stage right. They look around room, remove hats, and bow to INNKEEPER and INNKEEPER'S WIFE.)

SERVANT 1

Greetings innkeeper! Madam!

SERVANT 2

Good day, innkeeper! Madam!

SERVANT 3

A gracious hello, innkeeper! Madam! We are the princess's attendants...

SERVANT 1

Her helpers...

SERVANT 2

Her servants. And the princess is very grateful...

SERVANT 3

Thankful...

SERVANT 1

Most appreciate of this invitation to your inn...

SERVANT 2

Tavern...

SERVANT 3

Eating establishment. The princess is very hungry...

SERVANT 1

Starving...

SERVANT 2

Famished after traveling...

SERVANT 3

Being on the road...

SERVANT 1

Riding this morning between her castles.

(PRINCESS enters stage right followed by MAID-IN-WAITING. INNKEEPER bows and INNKEEPER'S WIFE curtsies.)

INNKEEPER

What an honor it is to have you at our humble inn, Your Highness.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

(gesturing toward table)

My Lady, right this way. Please have a seat over here, My Lady.

(PRINCESS nods and sits at table. SERVANT 1, SERVANT 2, SERVANT 3, and MAID-IN-WAITING stand behind her.)

INNKEEPER

We'll bring you your meal at once, Your Highness.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

My Lady, we prepared a special stew especially for you, My Lady.

(INNKEEPER and INNKEEPER'S WIFE hurry to stove. INNKEEPER holds a bowl. INNKEEPER'S WIFE ladles in stew from the kettle.)

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

Ah, what a delicate and refined princess she appears to be.

INNKEEPER

And no doubt, as all real princesses, she has delicate and refined taste buds.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

One kind word from her about our stew and people will come from across the kingdom to taste this special fare.

(INNKEEPER carries bowl toward table.  
INNKEEPER'S WIFE follows.)

INNKEEPER

And that will make us rich!

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

And that will make us famous!

(INNKEEPER and INNKEEPER'S WIFE stop on  
either side of PRINCESS. INNKEEPER  
places bowl before her.)

INNKEEPER

There you have it, Your Highness.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

A savory stew, made with the finest vegetables in the kingdom.

(PRINCESS tucks napkin under chin and  
picks up spoon. INNKEEPER and  
INNKEEPER'S WIFE exchange nods.  
PRINCESS dips spoon into stew bowl,  
raises it to lips, but hesitates.)

PRINCESS

But...what about my servants? What are they to eat?

(INNKEEPER and INNKEEPER'S WIFE  
exchange more looks.)

INNKEEPER

Please understand, Your Highness. We are a poor couple.  
This is a modest inn. Our cupboards are almost bare.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

My Lady, it would be a great hardship on us to feed everyone  
here, My Lady.

PRINCESS

(nods slightly)

Very well.

(PRINCESS sips stew. She licks lips and whispers to SERVANT 1 who whispers to SERVANT 2 who whispers to SERVANT 3 who whispers to MAID-IN-WAITING.)

INNKEEPER

(to MAID-IN-WAITING)

What did Her Highness say? What's her view about our stew?

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

Did she like it? Did she say it was delicious? Delightful? Delectable?

MAID-IN-WAITING

The princess said...the stew...needs salt.

SERVANT 3

More salt.

SERVANT 2

Additional salt.

SERVANT 1

Not enough salt.

INNKEEPER

(picking up stew bowl)

Salt, Your Highness?

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

My Lady, more salt. Right away, My Lady.

(INNKEEPER and INNKEEPER'S WIFE whisk off to stove. INNKEEPER'S WIFE takes salt shaker from shelf.)

INNKEEPER

(holding up bowl)

A pinch of salt to make us rich.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

(salts stew)

A dash of seasoning to make us famous.

(INNKEEPER and INNKEEPER'S WIFE return to table. INNKEEPER places bowl before PRINCESS.)

INNKEEPER

There you have it, Your Highness. Your stew, freshly salted.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

My Lady, stew to your liking, My Lady.

(PRINCESS nods. She dips spoon into bowl, sips it, and puckers lips. She whispers to SERVANT 1 who whispers to SERVANT 2, who whispers to SERVANT 3, who whispers to MAID-IN-WAITING.)

INNKEEPER  
(to MAID-IN-WAITING)  
Yes? Yes? Give us the word?

INNKEEPER'S WIFE  
Did she say the stew was scrumptious? Savory? Sensational?

MAID-IN-WAITING  
The princess said...the stew...was *too* salty.

SERVANT 3  
(shaking head)  
Too much salt.

SERVANT 2  
An overdose of salt.

SERVANT 1  
You over did it with the salt.

INNKEEPER  
(picking up stew bowl)  
No problem. Please accept out apologize, Your Highness.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE  
My Lady, we'll fix it right away, My Lady.

(INNKEEPER and INNKEEPER'S WIFE return to stove and dump stew into kettle.)

INNKEEPER  
So now what do we do to the stew? Adding salt was easy. But removing salt is impossible.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE  
(grabbing carrots and potatoes)  
There's only thing we can do. Add more vegetables to the kettle. Adding more carrots and potatoes will dilute the saltiness.

INNKEEPER  
(chopping up vegetables)  
Yes! Yes! Chop! Chop! Chop! We'll add more veggies to make us famous.

(INNKEEPER'S WIFE adds vegetables to kettle. INNKEEPER holds up bowl.)

INNKEEPER'S WIFE  
 (ladling stew into bowl)  
 Some more stew to the stew to make us rich.

(INNKEEPER and INNKEEPER'S WIFE hustle  
 back to table. INNKEEPER places bowl  
 before PRINCESS.)

INNKEEPER  
 There you are, Your Highness. Less salt. Better for you.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE  
 My Lady, stew just the way you like it, My Lady.

(PRINCESS dips spoon into bowl and  
 takes sip. She nods and whispers to  
 SERVANT 1 who whispers to SERVANT 2 who  
 whispers to SERVANT 3 who whispers to  
 MAID-IN-WAITING.)

INNKEEPER  
 (to MAID-IN-WAITING)  
 Yes? Yes?

INNKEEPER'S WIFE  
 Did she say it is fabulous? Fantastic? Flavorsome?

MAID-IN-WAITING  
 Her grace says the stew is much better. But...a bit more salt  
 would make it perfect.

SERVANT 3  
 A dash more salt.

SERVANT 2  
 A touch of salt.

SERVANT 1  
 Just a sprinkle of salt will do it.

INNKEEPER  
 (picking up stew bowl)  
 If it's salt that's needed, Your Highness. More salt we'll  
 add.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE  
 And as soon as the stew pleases you, My Lady, we'll name it  
 Princess Stew, that's what we'll do, My Lady.

(INNKEEPER and INNKEEPER'S WIFE rush to  
 stove.)

INNKEEPER  
 Add just a touch. We're almost there I can feel it.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

(sprinkles salt in kettle with fingers)

There. Now I'm sure it's to her taste. Isn't it amazing how the princess can detect the slightest shift in seasoning.

(INNKEEPER and INNKEEPER'S WIFE return to table. INNKEEPER places bowl before PRINCESS. PRINCESS takes another sip.)

PRINCESS

(making sour face)

Oh my! Oh, dear! What have you done?

(PRINCESS fans mouth with hand and drinks from goblet. She whispers to SERVANT 1 who whispers to SERVANT 2 who whispers to SERVANT 3 who whispers to MAID-IN-WAITING.)

INNKEEPER

(to MAID-IN-WAITING)

What is it? What happened?

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

Good gracious! Is it too good? Too yummy? Too tasty?

MAID-IN-WAITING

The princess says the stew is now *far* too salty.

SERVANT 3

(shaking head)

Much too salty.

SERVANT 2

Much, much too salty.

SERVANT 1

Much, much, *much* too salty.

INNKEEPER

(lifting bowl)

No problem, Your Highness.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

My Lady, we'll take care of it, My Lady.

(INNKEEPER and INNKEEPER'S WIFE shuffle to stove and dump stew into kettle.)

INNKEEPER

(chops up more vegetables)

Chop! Chop! Chop! The Princess and her fickle taste buds are driving me batty.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

(adding vegetables to kettle)

But only a few more veggies will take away the saltiness.  
Just think how famous our Princess Stew will make us.

INNKEEPER

And *rich!* Don't forget *rich!*

(INNKEEPER and INNKEEPER'S WIFE return  
to table with stew bowl.)

INNKEEPER

(placing bowl before princess)

There now, Your Highness. All taken care of.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

My Lady, what do you say about our Princess Stew now, My  
Lady?

(PRINCESS sips stew. She nods and  
takes another taste.)

PRINCESS

Hmm! Hmm! But...

(PRINCESS whispers to SERVANT 1 who whispers  
to SERVANT 2 who whispers to SERVANT 3 who  
whispers to MAID-IN-WAITING.)

INNKEEPER

(to MAID-IN-WAITING)

What now? What did she say this time?

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

Is the stew mouth-watering? Is the stew lip-smacking? Is  
the stew taste-bud tickling?

MAID-IN-WAITING

The princess said almost. But it needs... more salt

SERVANT 3

More salt.

SERVANT 2

Additional salt.

(INNKEEPER removes bowl before SERVANT  
1 can speak.)

INNKEEPER

(stomping toward stove)

I know. I know.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE  
(following husband.)

No trouble, My Lady. We'll get it right this time, My Lady.

INNKEEPER

I'd like to dump this stew over that woman's royal head.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE  
(adding salt to bowl grain by grain)

One grain ... two... three... four... five... six... seven...  
eight... nine...ten grains of salt. That's all!

(INNKEEPER and INNKEEPER'S WIFE return to table. INNKEEPER places bowl before PRINCESS. PRINCESS tastes stew. She drops spoon and whispers something angrily to SERVANT 1 who whispers to SERVANT 2 who whispers to SERVANT 3 who whispers to MAID-IN-WAITING.)

MAID-IN-WAITING

Too salty

SERVANT 3

Too too salty.

SERVANT 2

Too too too salty.

SERVANT 1

Toooooo salty.

INNKEEPER  
(picking up bowl)

Whatever.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

My Lady, most impressive taste buds, My Lady.

(INNKEEPER and INNKEEPER'S WIFE return to stove and dump stew into kettle.)

INNKEEPER  
(chopping more vegetables)

Chop! Chop! Chop! Who knew the princess's taste buds could be *this* sensitive.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE  
(adding vegetables to kettle)

All the more important to get the ingredients right. Just one kind word from her about this Princess Stew and everyone will flock to our inn to try it.

INNKEEPER

(holds up bowl)

We'll be rich and famous.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

(ladling stew into bowl.)

Famous and rich.

(INNKEEPER and INNKEEPER'S WIFE return to table and place bowl before PRINCESS.)

INNKEEPER

There, Your Highness. I'm sure we got the recipe right this time.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

My Lady, not too many vegetables and not too much salt, My Lady?

(PRINCESS sips stew. She nods and takes another taste and another. She nods and sets down spoon. INNKEEPER and INNKEEPER'S WIFE shake hands. They lean forward to hear PRINCESS's words.)

PRINCESS

Innkeeper...

INNKEEPER

Yes? Yes?

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

(impatiently)

Say anything, My Lady.

PRINCESS

Innkeeper and Madam, I believe there's now enough stew in your pot to feed my servants. Would you bring them each a bowl.

(INNKEEPER and INNKEEPER'S WIFE look stunned. SERVANT 1, SERVANT 2, SERVANT 3, and MAID-IN-WAITING sit at table and chat among themselves.)

INNKEEPER

Your Highness?

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

But My Lady...

(SERVANT 1, SERVANT 2, SERVANT 3, and MAID-IN-WAITING scowl at couple.)

INNKEEPER

Coming right up, Your Highness.

INNKEEPER'S WIFE

Right away, My lady.

(PRINCESS smiles and raises goblet to servants. INNKEEPER and INNKEEPER'S WIFE trudge to stove, shrugging. Lights fade.)