

The Mystery of the Fifty-Cent Piece



A Ghost Story

A Dark Road, A Long Way from Home

The story begins with a couple from New York. They are travelling home to New England in a horse carriage. It starts getting dark, and they are lost somewhere near a town called Spiegletown. They must find shelter for the night.



carriage (n.) a private vehicle with four wheels, pulled by horses.



A Faint Light in the Trees... A Safe Place to Rest?



WIFE: "George, I'm so tired that I can't stay up longer."

HUSBAND: "Can you see that light through the trees? It must be a house. Let's ride our horse there."

A Strange Welcome in the Dead of Night

Soon, they reach a little house. An old man and his wife are standing at the door, smiling pleasantly. They are already dressed in nightclothes.

HUSBAND: Good evening! Sorry for disturbing you so late. Do you think we could spend the night here?



An Offer That Seems Too Kind



The old couple welcomes them in.

OLD MAN: "Please, welcome! Our house is not as luxurious as a hotel, but it's cosy."

OLD WOMAN: "Please, have a cup of hot tea and some cakes. They are freshly baked."

The old couple refuses to accept any money, saying, 'We consider you our guests.'

A Secret Payment Left Behind

The next morning, the travelers wake up very early and get ready to leave quietly.

HUSBAND: “Very few people are as kind as this couple. We can’t go without leaving them some money. Here, a fifty-cent coin. I’ll put it in the centre of the kitchen table. They can’t miss it.”



Investigator's Notes: A Moment to Consider the Clues

Question 1: The old couple was very kind and refused money. Why do you think the husband left the fifty-cent piece anyway?

Question 2: What do you predict will happen next in the story?



A Rest Stop in the Town of Spiegletown

The couple gets into their carriage and travels for a few miles. They stop for a rest at a little restaurant in the nearby town of Spiegletown. The husband begins to tell the owner of the restaurant about the very kind, nice old couple who gave them a room for the night.



The Story That Changed Everything

OWNER: (scared) “Where do you say that house is?”

HUSBAND: “On the hill, just outside Spiegletown.”

OWNER: “You must be mistaken. That house was on fire... it killed the Brown family three years ago!”



The Awful Truth of the House on the Hill

The restaurant owner explains the shocking truth: The old couple, Mr. and Mrs. Brown, died in a fire that destroyed their cottage long ago. He says it is obvious that “nobody can live in that place.”



A Desperate Race Back to the Truth

The husband cannot believe what he is hearing.

HUSBAND: "I don't believe it! Mr. and Mrs. Brown are as alive as you and me."

The couple rushes out of the restaurant and travels back to the cottage to see if the story is true.



All That Remained Was a Burned-Out Shell

They arrive at the location. But there is no cosy house. In its place, they find the ruins of a burned-out building. It is clear the house was abandoned long ago.



HUSBAND: “What’s that? That place can’t be the same! I must have missed the track.”

WIFE: (screams)
“Look! Look on the kitchen table!”

ruins (n.) what is left of a building after it has been destroyed.

The Impossible Coin



The husband looks into the ruins. In the centre of the wreckage, he sees a burnt kitchen table. And there, in the very middle of the burnt table... lay a shiny fifty-cent piece.



Some Debts Are Always Paid