

CHAPTER 8 - THE SCARECROW STUDIES THE SILVER ISLAND

Two days had passed since the Scarecrow had fallen into his Kingdom. He was not finding his royal duties as pleasant as he had anticipated. The country was beautiful enough, but being Emperor of the Silver Islands was not the simple affair that ruling Oz had been. The pigtail on the back of his hat was terribly distracting, and he was always tripping over his kimono, to which he could not seem to accustom himself. His subjects were extremely quarrelsome, always pulling one another's queues or stealing fruit, umbrellas, and silver polish. His ministers, the Grand Chew Chew, the Chief Chow Chow, and General Mugwump, were no better, and keeping peace in the palace took all the Scarecrow's cleverness.

In the daytime he tried culprits in the royal court, interviewed his seventeen secretaries, rode out in the royal palanquin, and made speeches to visiting princes. At night he sat in the great silver salon and by the light of the lanterns studied the Book of Ceremonies. His etiquette, the Grand Chew Chew informed him, was shocking. He was always doing something wrong, dodging the Imperial Umbrella, speaking kindly to a palace servant, or walking unattended in the gardens.

The royal palace itself was richly furnished, and the Scarecrow had more than five hundred robes of state. The gardens, with their sparkling waterfalls, glowing orange trees, silver temples, towers and bridges, were too lovely for words. Poppies, roses, lotus and other lilies perfumed the air, and at night a thousand silver lanterns turned them to a veritable fairyland.

The grass and trees were green as in other lands, but the sky as always full of tiny silver clouds, the waters surrounding the island were of a lovely liquid silver, and as all the houses and towers were of this gleaming metal, the effect was bewildering and beautiful.

But the Silver Islanders themselves were too stupid to appreciate this beauty. "And what use is it all when I have no one to enjoy it with me," sighed the Scarecrow. "And no time to play!"

In Oz no one thought it queer if Ozma, the little Queen, jumped rope with Dorothy or Betsy Bobbin, or had a quiet game of croquet with the palace cook. But here, alas, everything was different. If the Scarecrow so much as ventured a game of ball with the gardener's boy, the whole court was thrown into an uproar. At first, the Scarecrow tried to please everybody, but finding that nothing pleased the people in the palace, he decided to please himself.

"I don't care a kinkajou if I am the Emperor, I'm going to talk to whom I please!" he exclaimed on the second night, and shaking his glove at a bronze statue, he threw the Book of Ceremonies into the fountain. The next morning, therefore, he ascended the throne with great firmness. Immediately, the courtiers prostrated themselves, and the Scarecrow's arms and legs blew about wildly.

"Stand up at once," puffed the Scarecrow when he had regained his balance.

"You are giving me nervous prostration. Chew, kindly issue an edict forbidding prostrations. Anyone caught bowing in my presence again shall lose--" the courtiers looked alarmed "--his pigtail!" finished the Scarecrow.

"And now, Chew, you will take my place, please. I am going for a walk with Tappy Oko."

The Grand Chew Chew's mouth fell open with surprise, but seeing the Scarecrow's determined expression, he dared not disobey, and he immediately began making strange marks on a long, red parchment. Happy Toko trembled as the Scarecrow Emperor took his arm, and the courtiers stared at one another in dismay as the two walked quietly out into the garden.

Nothing happened, however, and Tappy, regaining his composure, took out a little silver flute and started a lively tune.

"I had to take matters into my own hands, Tappy," said the Scarecrow, listening to the music with a pleased expression. "Are there any words to that song?"

"Yes, illustrious and Supreme Sir!"

Two spoons went down a Por-ce-Lane, To meet a China saucer,
A 'talking China in a way To break a white man's jaw, Sir!

sang Happy, and finished by standing gravely on his head.

"Your Majesty used to be very fond of this song," spluttered Happy. (It is difficult to speak while upside down, and if you don't think so, try it!)

"Ah!" said the Scarecrow, beginning to feel more cheerful, "Tell me something about myself and my family, Tappy Oko."

"Happy Toko, if it pleases your Supreme Amiability," corrected the little silver man, somersaulting to a standstill beside the Scarecrow.

"It does and it doesn't," murmured the Scarecrow. "There is something about you that reminds me of a pudding, and you tapped the drum, didn't you? I believe I shall call you Tappy Oko, if you don't mind!"

The Scarecrow seated himself on a silver bench and motioned for the Imperial Punster to sit down beside him. Tappy Oko sat down fearfully, first making sure that he was not observed.

"Saving your Imperial Presence, this is not permitted," said Tappy uneasily.

"Never mind about my Imperial Presence," chuckled the Scarecrow. "Tell me about my Imperial Past."

"Ah!" said Tappy Oko, rolling up his eyes, "You were one of the most magnificent and magnanimous of monarchs."

"Was I?" asked the Scarecrow in a pleased voice.

"You distributed rice among the poor, and advice among the rich, and fought many glorious battles," continued the little man. "I composed a little song about you. Perhaps you would like to hear it?"

The Scarecrow nodded, and Tappy, throwing back his head, chanted with a will:

Chang Wang Woe did draw the bow-- And twist the queues of a
thousand foe!

"In Oz," murmured the Scarecrow reflectively as Tappy finished, "I twisted the necks of a flock of wild crows--that was before I had my excellent brains, too. Oh, I'm a fighting man, there's no doubt about it. But tell me, Tappy, where did I meet my wife?"

"In the water!" chuckled Tappy Oko, screwing up his eyes.

"Never!" The Scarecrow looked out over the harbor and then down at his lumpy figure.

"Your Majesty forgets you were then a man like me--er--not stuffed with straw, I mean," exclaimed Happy, looking embarrassed. "She was fishing," continued the little Punster, "when a huge silver fish became entangled in her line. She stood up, the fish gave a mighty leap and pulled her out of the boat. Your Majesty, having seen the whole affair from the bank, plunged bravely into the water and, swimming out, rescued her, freed the fish, and in due time made her your bride. I've made a song about that, also."

"Let's hear it," said the Scarecrow. And this is what Happy sung:

Tsing Tsing, a Silver Fisher's daughter, Was fishing in the silver water. The moon shone on her silver hair And there were fishes everywhere!

Then came a mighty silver fish, It seized her line and with a swish Of silver fins upset her boat. Tsing Tsing could neither swim nor float.

She raised her silver voice in fear And who her call of help should hear But Chang Wang Woe, the Emperor, Who saved and married her, what's more!

"Did I really?" asked the Scarecrow, feeling quite flattered by Happy's song.

"Yes," said Happy positively, "and invited me to the wedding, though I was only a small boy."

"Was Chew Chew there?" The Scarecrow couldn't help wondering how the old Nobleman had taken his marriage with a poor fisherman's daughter.

Happy chuckled at the memory. "He had a Princess all picked out for you," he confided merrily:

And there he stood in awful pride And scorned the father of the bride!

"Hoh!" roared the Scarecrow, falling off the bench. "That's the Ozziest thing I've heard since I landed in the Silver Islands. Tappy, my boy, I believe we are going to be friends! But let's forget the past and think of the present!"

The Scarecrow embraced his Imperial Punster on the spot. "Let's find something jolly to do," he suggested.

"Would your Extreme Highness care for kites?" asked Happy. "'Tis a favorite sport here!"

"Would I! But wait, I will disguise myself." Hiding his royal hat under the bench, he put on Happy Toko's broad-rimmed peasant hat. It turned down all 'round and almost hid his face. Then he turned his robe inside out and declared himself ready.

They passed through a small silver town before they reached the field where the kites were to be flown, and the Scarecrow was delighted with its picturesque and quaint appearance. The streets were narrow and full of queer shops. Silver lanterns and little pennants hung from each door, the

merchants and maidens in their gay sedans and the people afoot made a bright and lively picture.

"If I could just live here instead of in the palace," mused the Scarecrow, pausing before a modest rice shop. It is dangerous to stop in the narrow streets, and Happy jerked his master aside just in time to prevent his being trodden on by a huge camel. It sniffed at the Scarecrow suspiciously, and they were forced to flatten themselves against a wall to let it pass. Happy anxiously hurried the Emperor through the town, and they soon arrived at the kite flying field. A great throng had gathered to watch the exhibition, and there were more kites than one would see in a lifetime here. Huge fish, silver paper dragons, birds--every sort and shape of kite was tugging at its string, and hundreds of Silver Islanders--boys, girls and grown-ups-- were looking on.

"How interesting," said the Scarecrow, fascinated by a huge dragon that floated just over his head. "I wish Dorothy could see this, I do indeed!"

But the dragon kite seemed almost alive, and horrors! Just as it swooped down, a hook in the tail caught in the Scarecrow's collar, and before Happy Toko could even wink, the Emperor of the Silver Islands was sailing towards the clouds. The Scarecrow, as you must know, weighs almost nothing, and the people shouted with glee, for they thought him a dummy man and part of the performance. But Happy Toko ran after the kite as fast as his fat little legs would carry him.

"Alas, alas, I shall lose my position!" wailed Happy Toko, quite convinced that the Scarecrow would be dashed to pieces on the rocks. "Oh, putty head that I am to set myself against the Grand Chew Chew!"

The Scarecrow, however, after recovering from the first shock, began to enjoy himself. Holding fast to the dragon's tail, he looked down with great interest upon his dominions. Rocks, mountains, tall silver pagodas, drooping willow trees, flashed beneath him. Truly a beautiful island! His gaze strayed over the silver waters surrounding the island, and he was astonished to see a great fleet sailing into the harbor--a great fleet of singular vessels with silken sails.

"What's this?" thought the Scarecrow. But just then the dragon kite became suddenly possessed. It jerked him up, it jerked him down, and shook him this way and that. His hat flew off, his arms and legs whirled wildly, and pieces of straw began to float downward. Then the hook ripped and tore through his coat and, making a terrible slit in his back, came out. Down,

down, down flashed the Scarecrow and landed in a heap on the rocks. Poor Happy Toko rushed toward him with streaming eyes.

"Oh radiant and immortal Scarecrowcus, what have they done to you?" he moaned, dropping on his knees beside the flimsy shape of the Emperor.

"Merely knocked out my honorable stuffing," mumbled the Scarecrow. "Now Tappy, my dear fellow, will you just turn me over? There's a rock in my eye that keeps me from thinking."

Happy Toko, at the sound of a voice from the rumpled heap of clothing, gave a great leap.

"Is there any straw about?" asked the Scarecrow anxiously. "Why don't you turn me over?"

"It's his ghost," moaned Happy Toko, and because he dared not disobey a royal ghost, he turned the Scarecrow over with trembling hands.

"Don't be alarmed," said the Scarecrow, smiling reassuringly. "I'm not breakable like you meat people. A little straw will make me good as new. A little straw--straw, do you hear?" For Happy's pigtail was still on end, and he was shaking so that his silver shoes clattered on the rocks.

"I command you to fetch straw!" cried the Scarecrow at last, in an angry voice. Happy dashed away.

When he returned with an arm full of straw, the Scarecrow managed to convince him that he was quite alive. "It is impossible to kill a person from Oz," he explained proudly, "and that is why my present figure is so much more satisfactory than yours. I do not have to eat or sleep and can always be repaired. Have you some safety pins?" Happy produced several and under the Scarecrow's direction stuffed out his chest and pinned up his rents.

"Let us return," said the Scarecrow. "I've had enough pleasure for one day, and can't you sing something, Tappy?" Running and fright had somewhat affected Happy's voice, but he squeaked out a funny little song, and the two, keeping time to the tune, came without further mishap to the Imperial gardens. Happy had just set the royal hat upon the Scarecrow's head and brushed off his robes when a company of courtiers dashed out of the palace door and came running toward them.

"Great Cornstarch!" exclaimed the Scarecrow, sitting heavily down on the silver bench. "What's the matter now? Here are all the Pig-heads on the Island, and look how old Chew Chew is puffing!"

"One would expect a Chew Chew to puff," observed Happy slyly. "One would--" But he got no further, for the whole company was upon them.

"Save us! Save us!" wailed the courtiers, forgetting the royal edict and falling on their faces.

"What from?" asked the Scarecrow, holding fast to the silver bench.

"The King--the King of the Golden Islands!" shrieked the Grand Chew Chew.

"Ah yes!" murmured the Scarecrow, frowning thoughtfully. "Was that his fleet coming into the harbor?"

The Grand Chew Chew jumped up in astonishment. "How could your Highness see the fleet from here?" he stuttered.

"Not from here--there," said the Scarecrow, pointing upward and winking at Happy Toko. "My Highness goes very high, you see!"

"Your Majesty does not seem to realize the seriousness of the matter," choked the Grand Chew Chew. "He will set fire to the island and make us all slaves." At this, the courtiers began banging their heads distractedly on the grass.

"Set fire to the island!" exclaimed the Scarecrow, jumping to his feet. "Then peace to my ashes! Tappy, will you see that they are sent back to Oz?"

"Save us! Save us!" screamed the frightened Silvermen.

"The prophecy of the beanstalk has promised that you would save us. You are the Emperor Chang Wang Woe," persisted the Grand Chew Chew, waving his long arms.

"Woe is me," murmured the Scarecrow, clasping his yellow gloves. "But let me think."