

CHAPTER 9 - "SAVE US WITH YOUR MAGIC, EXALTED ONE!"

For several minutes, the Scarecrow sat perfectly still while the company stood shaking in their shoes. Then he asked loudly, "Where is the Imperial Army?"

"It has retired to the caves at the end of the Island," quavered the Grand Chew Chew.

"I thought as much," said the Scarecrow. "But never mind, there are quite a lot of us."

"Us!" spluttered a tall Silverman indignantly. "We are not common soldiers."

"No, very uncommon ones, but you have hard heads and long nails, and I dare say will manage somehow. Come on, let's go. Chew, you may take the lead."

"Go!" shrieked the Grand Chew Chew. "Us?" The Courtiers began backing away in alarm. "Where--er--what--are your Highness' plans?"

"Why, just to conquer the King of the Golden Islands and send him back home," said the Scarecrow, smiling engagingly. "That's what you wanted, isn't it?"

"But it is not honorable for noblemen to fight. It--"

"Oh, of course, if you prefer burning--" The Scarecrow rose unsteadily and started for the garden gates. Not a person stirred. The Scarecrow looked back, and his reproachful face was too much for Happy Toko.

"I'll come, exalted and radiant Scarecrowcus! Wait, honorable and valiant Sir!"

"Bring a watering can, if you love me," called the Scarecrow over his shoulder, and Happy, snatching one from a frightened gardener, dashed after his Master.

"If things get too hot, I'd like to know that you can put me out," said the Scarecrow, his voice quivering with emotion. "You shall be rewarded for this, my brave Tappy."

Happy did not answer, for his teeth were chattering so he could not speak.

The harbor lay just below the Imperial Palace, and the Scarecrow and Happy hurried on through the crowds of fleeing Silvermen, their household goods packed upon their heads. Some cheered faintly for Chang Wang Woe, but none offered to follow, save the faithful Happy.

"Is this king old?" asked the Scarecrow, looking anxiously at the small boats full of warriors that were putting out from the fleet.

"He is the son of the King whom your Majesty conquered fifty years ago," gulped Happy. "Ha--has your Imperial Highness any--plan?"

"Not yet," said the Scarecrow cheerfully, "but I'm thinking very hard."

"Then, goodbye to Silver Island!" choked Happy Toko, dropping the watering can with a crash.

"Never mind," said the Scarecrow kindly. "If they shoot me and I catch fire, I'll jump in the water and you must fish me out, Tappy. Now please don't talk any more. I must think!"

Poor Happy Toko had nothing else to say, for he considered his day finished. The first of the invaders were already landing on the beach, and standing up in a small boat, encased in glittering gold armor, was the King of the Golden Islands, himself. The sun was quite hot, and there was a smell of gunpowder in the air.

Now the Scarecrow had encountered many dangers in Oz and had usually thought his way out of them, but as they came nearer and nearer to the shore and no idea presented itself, he began to feel extremely nervous. A bullet fired from the king's boat tore through his hat, and the smoke made him more anxious than ever about his straw stuffing. He felt hurriedly in his pocket, and his clumsy fingers closed over the little fan he had plucked from the bean pole.

Partly from agitation and partly because he did not know what else to do, the Scarecrow flipped the fan open. At that minute, a mighty roar went up from the enemy, for at the first motion of the fan they had been jerked fifty feet into the air, and there they hung suspended over their ships, kicking and squealing for dear life. The Scarecrow was as surprised as they, and as for Happy Toko, he fell straightway on his nose!

"Magic!" exclaimed the Scarecrow. "Someone is helping us," and he began fanning himself gently with the little fan, waiting to see what would happen

next. At each wave of the fan, the King of the Golden Islands and his men flew higher until at last not one of them could be seen from the shore.

"The fan. The magic is in the fan!" gasped Happy Toko, jumping up and embracing the Scarecrow.

"Why, what do you mean?" asked the Scarecrow, closing the fan with a snap. Happy's answer was drowned in a huge splash. As soon as the fan was closed, down whirled the king's army into the sea, and each man struck the water with such force that the spray rose high as a skyscraper. And not till then did the Scarecrow realize the power of the little fan he had been saving for Dorothy.

"Saved!" screamed Happy Toko, dancing up and down. "Hurrah for the Emperor!"

The Emperor, without a plan, Has won the victory with a fan.

The Silver Islanders had paused in their flight at the queer noises coming from the harbor, and now all of them, hearing Tappy Oko's cries, came crowding down to the shore and were soon cheering themselves hoarse. No wonder! The drenched soldiers of the king were climbing swiftly back into their boats, and when they were all aboard, the Scarecrow waved his fan sidewise (he did not want to blow them up again), and the ships swept out of the harbor so fast that the water churned to silver suds behind them, and they soon were out of sight.

"Ah!" cried the Grand Chew Chew, arriving breathlessly at this point, "We have won the day!"

"So we have!" chuckled the Scarecrow, putting his arm around Happy Toko. "Call the brave army and decorate the generals!"

"It shall be done," said the Grand Chew Chew, frowning at Happy. "There shall be a great celebration, a feast, and fireworks."

"Fireworks," quavered the Scarecrow, clutching his Imperial Punster. By this time, the Silver Islanders were crowding around the Emperor, shouting and squealing for joy, and before he could prevent it, they had placed him on their shoulders and carried him in triumph to the palace. He managed to signal Happy, and Happy nodded reassuringly and ran off as fast as his fat little legs could patter. He arrived at the palace almost as soon as the Scarecrow, lugging a giant silver watering can, and, sitting calmly on the

steps of the throne, fanned himself with his hat. The Scarecrow eyed the watering can with satisfaction.

"Now let them have their old fireworks," he muttered under his breath, and settled himself comfortably. The Grand Chew Chew was hopping about like a ditched kite, arranging for the celebration. The courtiers were shaking hands with themselves and forming in a long line. A great table was being set in the hall.

"What a fuss they are making over nothing," said the Scarecrow to Happy Toko. "Now in Oz when we win a victory, we all play some jolly game and sit down to dinner with Ozma. Why, they haven't even set a place for you, Happy!"

"I'd rather sit here, amiable Master," sighed Happy Toko happily. "Is the little fan safely closed?"

The Scarecrow felt in his pocket to make sure, then leaned forward in surprise. The Royal Silver Army were marching stiffly into the hall, and the courtiers were bobbing and bowing and cheering like mad.

The General came straight to the great silver throne, clicked his silver heels, bowed, and stood at attention.

"Well," said the Scarecrow, surveying this splendid person curiously, "what is it?"

"They have come for their decorations," announced the Grand Chew Chew, stepping up with a large silver platter full of medals.

"But I thought Tappy Oko and I saved the Island," chuckled the Scarecrow, nudging the Imperial Punster.

"Had the Imperial Army not retired and left the field to you, there would have been no victory," faltered the General in a timid voice. "Therefore, in a way we are responsible for the victory. A great general always knows when to retire."

"There's something in that," admitted the Scarecrow, scratching his head thoughtfully. "Go ahead and decorate 'em, Chew Chew!"

This the Grand Chew Chew proceeded to do, making such a long speech to each soldier that half of the Court fell asleep and the Scarecrow fidgeted uncomfortably.

"They remind me of the Army of Oz," he confided to Happy Toko, "but we never have long speeches in Oz. I declare, I wish I could go to sleep, too, and that's something I have never seen any use in before."

"They've just begun," yawned Happy Toko, nearly rolling down the steps of the throne, and Happy was not far wrong, for all afternoon one after the other of the courtiers arose and droned about the great victory, and as they all addressed themselves to the Scarecrow, he was forced to listen politely. When the speeches were over, there was still the grand banquet to be got through, and as the Silver Islanders ate much the same fare as their Chinese cousins, you can imagine the poor Scarecrow's feelings.

"Ugh!" shivered the Scarecrow as the strange dishes appeared, "I'm glad none of my friends are here. How fortunate that I'm stuffed with straw!" The broiled mice, the stewed shark fins and the bird nest soup made him stare. He had ordered Happy Toko to be placed at his side, and to watch him happily at work with his silver chopsticks and porcelain spoon was the only satisfaction he got out of the feast.

"And what is that?" he asked, pointing to a steaming bowl that had just been placed before Happy.

"Minced cat, your Highness," replied Happy, sprinkling it generously with silver polish.

"Cat?" shrieked the Scarecrow, pouncing to his feet in horror. "Do you mean to tell me you are eating a poor, innocent, little cat?"

"Not a poor one at all. A very rich one, I should say," replied Happy Toko with his mouth full. "Ah, had your Highness only your old body, how you would enjoythis!"

"Never!" shouted the Scarecrow so loudly that all of the Courtiers looked up in surprise. "How dare you eat innocent cats?" Indignantly he thought of Dorothy's pet kitten back in Oz. Oz--why had he ever left that wonderful country?

"Your Highness has eaten hundreds," announced the Grand Chew Chew calmly. "Hundreds!"

The Scarecrow dropped back into his chair, too shocked for speech. He, the Scarecrow of Oz, had eaten hundreds of cats! What would Dorothy say to that? Ugh! This was his first experience with Silver Island fare. He had always spent the dinner hours in the garden. He sighed, and looked

wistfully at the bean pole in the center of the hall. Every minute he was feeling less and less like the Emperor of the Silver Island and more and more like the plain Scarecrow of Oz.

"Your Majesty seems out of spirits," said Happy Toko as he placed himself and the huge watering can beside the Emperor's bench in the garden later in the evening.

"I wish I were," said the Scarecrow. "To have an Emperor's spirit wished on you is no joke, my dear Tappy. It's a blinking bore!" At that moment, the fireworks commenced. The garden, ablaze with many shaped silver lanterns, looked more like Fairyland than ever. But each rocket made the Scarecrow wince. Showers of stars and butterflies fell 'round his head, fiery dragons leaped over the trees, and in all the Fourth of July celebrations you could imagine there were never such marvelous fireworks as these. No wonder Happy Toko, gazing in delight, forgot his promises to his Royal Master.

Soon the Scarecrow's fears were realized, and his straw stuffing began to smoke.

"Put me out! Put me out!" cried the Scarecrow, as a shower of sparks settled in his lap. The royal band made such a din and the courtiers such a clatter that Happy did not hear.

All of the Silver Islanders were intent on the display, and they forgot all about their unhappy and smoking Emperor.

"Help! Water! Water! Fire!" screamed the Scarecrow, jumping off his throne and knocking Happy head over heels. Thus brought to his senses, Happy hurriedly seized the watering can and sprinkled its contents on the smoking Emperor.

"Am I out?" gasped the Emperor anxiously. "A fine way to celebrate a victory, lighting me up like a Roman candle!"

"Yes, dear Master," said the repentant Happy, helping the dripping Scarecrow to his feet, "it only scorched your royal robe. And it's all over, anyway. Let us go in."

The dripping Emperor was quite ready to follow his Imperial Punster's advice.

"Now that I am put out, let us by all means go in," said the Scarecrow gloomily, and the two slipped off without anyone noticing their departure.

"I'm afraid I'll have to have some new stuffing tomorrow," observed the Scarecrow, sinking dejectedly on his throne. "Tappy, my dear boy, after this never leave me alone, do you hear?" Happy Toko made no reply. He had fallen asleep beside the Imperial Throne.

The Scarecrow might have called his court, but he was in no mood for more of the Silver Islanders' idea of a good time. He longed for the dear friends of his loved Land of Oz.

One by one the lights winked out in the gardens, and the noisy company dispersed, and soon no one in the palace was awake but the Scarecrow. His straw was wet and soggy, and even his excellent brains felt damp and dull.

"If it weren't for Tappy Oko, how lonely I should be." He stared through the long, dim, empty hall with its shimmering silver screens and vases. "I wonder what little Dorothy is doing," sighed the Scarecrow wistfully.