

CHAPTER 11 - SIR HOKUS OVERCOMETH THE GIANT

"I don't believe we'll ever find the way out of this forest."

Dorothy stopped with a discouraged little sigh and leaned against a tree. They had followed the road for several hours. First it had been fine and wide, but it had gradually dwindled to a crooked little path that wound crazily in and out through the trees. Although it was almost noonday, not a ray of sun penetrated through the dim green depths.

"Methinks," said Sir Hokus, peering into the gloom ahead, "that a great adventure is at hand."

The Cowardly Lion put back his ears. "What makes you methink so?" he rumbled anxiously.

"Hark thee!" said Sir Hokus, holding up his finger warningly. From a great way off sounded a curious thumping. It was coming nearer and nearer.

"Good gracious!" cried Dorothy, catching hold of the Cowardly Lion's mane.

"This is worse than Pokes!"

"Perchance it is a dragon," exulted the Knight, drawing his short sword. "Ah, how it would refresh me to slay a dragon!"

"I don't relish dragons myself. Scorched my tongue on one once," said the Cowardly Lion huskily. "But I'll fight with you, brother Hokus. Stand back, Dorothy dear."

As the thuds grew louder, the Knight fairly danced up and down with excitement. "Approach, villain!" he roared lustily.

"Approach till I impale thee on my lance. Ah, had I but a horse!"

"I'd let you ride on my back if it weren't for that hard tin suit," said the Cowardly Lion. "But cheer up, my dear Hokus, your voice is a little hoarse." Dorothy giggled nervously, then seized hold of a small tree, for the whole forest was rocking.

"How now!" gasped the Knight. There was a terrific quake that threw Sir Hokus on his face and sent every hair in the lion's mane on end, and then a great foot came crashing down through the treetops not three paces from the little party. Before they could even swallow, a giant hand flashed down-

ward, jerked up a handful of trees by the roots, and disappeared, while a voice from somewhere way above shouted:

What are little humans for? To feed the giant Bangladore.
Broiled or toasted, baked or roasted, I smell three or maybe four!

"You hear that?" quavered the Cowardly Lion. Sir Hokus did not answer. His helmet had been jammed down by his fall, and he was tugging it upward with both hands. Frightened though Dorothy was, she ran to the Knight's assistance.

"Have at you!" cried Sir Hokus as soon as the opening in his helmet was opposite his eyes. "Forward!"

"My heart is beating a retreat," gulped the Cowardly Lion, but he bounded boldly after Sir Hokus.

"Varlet!" hissed the Knight, and raising his sword gave a mighty slash at the giant's ankle, which was broad as three tree trunks, while the Cowardly Lion gave a great spring and sank his teeth in the giant's huge leg.

"Ouch!" roared the giant in a voice that shook every leaf in the forest. "You stop, or I'll tell my father!" With that, he gave a hop that sent Sir Hokus flying into the treetops, stumbled over a huge rock, and came crashing to the earth, smashing trees like grass blades. At the giant's first scream, Dorothy shut her eyes and, putting her hands over her ears, had run as far and as fast as she could. At the awful crash, she stopped short, opened her eyes, and stared 'round giddily.

The giant was flat on his back, but as he was stretched as far as four city blocks, only half of him was visible. The Cowardly Lion still clung to his leg, and he was gurgling and struggling in a way Dorothy could not understand.

She looked around in a panic for the Knight. Just then, Sir Hokus dropped from the branch of a tree.

"Uds daggers!" he puffed, looking ruefully at his sword, which had snapped off at the handle, "'Tis a pretty rogue!"

"Don't you think we'd better run?" shiver Dorothy, thinking of the giant's song.

"Not while I wear these colors!" exclaimed Sir Hokus, proudly touching Dorothy's hair ribbon, which still adorned his arm. "Come, my good Lion, let us dispatch this braggart and saucy monster."

"Father!" screamed the giant, making no attempt to move.

"He seems to be frightened, himself," whispered Dorothy to the Knight. "But whatever is the matter with the Cowardly Lion?"

At that minute, the Cowardly Lion gave a great jerk and began backing with his four feet braced. The piece of giant leg that he had hold of stretched and stretched, and while Sir Hokus and Dorothy stared in amazement, it snapped off and the Cowardly Lion rolled head over paws.

"Taffy!" roared the Cowardly Lion, sitting up and trying to open his jaws, which were firmly stuck together.

"Taffy!" At this, Sir Hokus sprang nimbly on the giant's leg, ran up his chest, and perched bravely on his peppermint collar.

"Surrender, Knavel!" he demanded threateningly. Dorothy, seeing she could do nothing to help the Cowardly Lion, followed. On her way up, she broke off a tiny piece of his coat and found it most delicious chocolate.

"Why, he's all made of candy!" she cried excitedly.

"Oh, hush!" sobbed the giant, rolling his great sourball eyes. "I'd be eaten in a minute if it were known."

"You were mighty anxious to eat us a while ago," said Dorothy, looking longingly at the giant's coat buttons. They seemed to be large marshmallows.

"Go away!" screamed the giant, shaking so that Dorothy slid into his vest pocket. "No one under forty feet is allowed in this forest!"

Dorothy climbed crossly out of the giant's pocket. "We didn't come because we wanted to," she assured him, wiping the chocolate off her nose.

"Odds bodikins! I cannot fight a great baby like this," sighed Sir Hokus, dodging just in time a great, sugary tear that had rolled down the giant's nose. "He's got to apologize for that song, though."

"Wait!" cried Dorothy suddenly. "I have an idea. If you set us down on the edge of the forest and give us all your vest buttons for lunch, we won't tell anyone you're made of candy. We'll let you go," she called loudly, for the giant had begun to sob again.

"Won't you? Will you?" sniffed the foolish giant.

"Never sing that song again!" commanded the Knight sternly.

"No, Sir," answered the giant meekly. "Did your dog chew much of my leg, Sir?" Then, before Dorothy or Sir Hokus had time to say a word, they were snatched up in sticky fingers and next minute were dropped with a thump in a large field of daisies.

"Oh!" spluttered Dorothy as the giant made off on his taffy legs. "Oh, we've forgotten the Cowardly Lion!" But at that minute, the giant reappeared, and the lion was dropped beside them.

"What's this? What's this?" growled the Cowardly Lion, looking around wildly.

"We got him to lift us out of the forest," explained Dorothy. "Have you swallowed the taffy?" The lion was still dizzy from his ride and only shook his head feebly.

Sir Hokus sighed and sat heavily down on a large rock. "There is no sort of honor, methinks, in overcoming a candy giant," he observed, looking wistfully at the plume still pinned to Dorothy's dress. "Ah, had it but been a proper fight!"

"You didn't know he was candy. I think you were just splendid." Jumping up, Dorothy fastened the plume in the Knight's helmet. "And you're talking just beautifully, more like a Knight every minute," she added with conviction. Sir Hokus tried not to look pleased.

"Give me a meat enemy! My teeth ache yet! First singing, then candy-leg pulling! Gr-ugh! What next?" growled the Cowardly Lion.

"Why, lunch, if you feel like eating," said Dorothy, beginning to give out the vest buttons which the giant had obediently ripped off and left for them. They were marshmallows, the size of pie plates, and Dorothy and Sir Hokus found them quite delicious. The Cowardly Lion, however, after a doubtful sniff and sneeze from the powdered sugar, declined and went off to find something more to his taste.

"We had better take some of these along," said Dorothy when she and Sir Hokus had eaten several. "We may need them later."

"Everything is yellow, so we must be in the Winkie Country," announced the Cowardly Lion, who had just returned from his lunch. "There's a road, too."

"Mayhap it will take us to the jeweled city of your gracious Queen." Sir Hokus shaded his eyes and stared curiously at the long lane stretching invitingly ahead of them.

"Well, anyway, we're out of the forest and Pokes, and maybe we'll meet someone who will tell us about the Scarecrow. Come on!" cried Dorothy gaily. "I think we're on the right track this time."