

## CHAPTER 14 - SONS AND GRANDSONS GREET THE SCARECROW

Although the Scarecrow had been on Silver Island only a few days, he had already instituted many reforms, and thanks to his cleverness the people were more prosperous than ever before. Cheers greeted him wherever he went, and even old Chew Chew was more agreeable and no longer made bitter remarks to Happy Toko. The Scarecrow himself, however, had four new wrinkles and was exceedingly melancholy. He missed the carefree life in Oz, and every minute that he was not ruling the island he was thinking about his old home and dear, jolly comrades in the Emerald City.

"I almost hope they will look in the Magic Picture and wish me back again," he mused pensively. "But it is my duty to stay here. I have a family to support." So he resolved to put the best face he could on the matter, and Happy Toko did his utmost to cheer up his royal master. The second morning after the great victory, he came running into the silver throne room in a great state of excitement.

"The honorable Offspring have arriven!" announced Happy, turning a somersault. "Come, ancient and amiable Sir, and gaze upon your sons and grandsons!" The Scarecrow sprang joyously from his silver throne, upsetting a bowl of silver fish and three silver vases. At last a real family! Ever since his arrival, the three Princes and their fifteen little sons had been cruising on the royal pleasure barge, so that the Scarecrow had not caught a glimpse of them.

"This is the happiest moment of my life!" he exclaimed, clasping his yellow gloves and watching the door intently. Happy looked a little uneasy, for he knew the three Princes to be exceedingly haughty and overbearing, but he said nothing, and next minute the Scarecrow's family stepped solemnly into the royal presence.

"Children!" cried the Scarecrow, and with his usual impetuosity rushed forward and flung his arms around the first richly clad Prince.

"Take care! Take care, ancient and honorable papa!" cried the young Silverman, backing away. "Such excitement is not good for one of your advanced years." He drew himself away firmly and, adjusting a huge pair of silver spectacles, regarded the Scarecrow attentively. "Ah, how you have changed!"

"He looks very feeble, Too Fang, but may he live long to rule this flowery island and our humble selves!" said the second Prince, bowing stiffly.

"Do you not find the affairs of state fatiguing, darling papa?" inquired the third Prince, fingering a jeweled chain that hung around his neck.

"I, as your eldest son, shall be delighted to relieve you should you wish to retire. Get back ten paces, you!" he roared at Happy Toko.

The poor Scarecrow had been so taken aback by this cool reception that he just stared in disbelief.

"If the three honorable Princes will retire themselves, I will speak with my grandsons," he said dryly, bowing in his most royal manner. The three Princes exchanged startled glances. Then, with three low salaams, they retired backward from the hall.

"And now, my dears--!" The Scarecrow looked wistfully at his fifteen silken-clad little grandsons. Their silver hair, plaited tightly into little queues, stood out stiffly on each side of their heads and gave them a very curious appearance. At his first word, the fifteen fell dutifully on their noses. As soon as they were right side up, the Scarecrow, beginning at the end of the row, addressed a joking question to each in his most approved Oz style. But over they went again, and answered merely:

"Yes, gracious Grand-papapapah!" or "No honorable Grandpapapapah!" And the constant bobbing up and down and papahing so confused the poor Scarecrow that he nearly gave up the conversation.

"It's no use trying to talk to these children," he wailed in disgust, "they're so solemn. Don't you ever laugh?" he cried in exasperation, for he had told them stories that would have sent the Oz youngsters into hysterics.

"It is not permissible for a Prince to laugh at the remarks of his honorable grandparent," whispered Happy Toko, while the fifteen little Princes banged their heads solemnly on the floor.

"Honorable fiddlesticks!" exclaimed the Scarecrow, slumping back on his throne. "Bring cushions." Happy Toko ran off nimbly, and soon the fifteen little Princes were seated in a circle at the Scarecrow's feet. "To prevent prostrations," said the Scarecrow.

"Yes, old Grandpapapapah!" chorused the Princes, bending over as far as they could.

"Wait!" said the Scarecrow hastily, "I'll tell you a story. Once upon a time, to a beautiful country called Oz, which is surrounded on all sides by a deadly desert, there came a little girl named Dorothy. A terrible gale--Well, what's the matter now?" The Scarecrow stopped short, for the oldest Prince had jerked a book out of his sleeve and was flipping over the pages industriously.

"It is not on the map, great Grand papapapah," he announced solemnly, and all of the other little Princes shook their heads and said dully, "Not on the map."

"Not on the map--Oz? Of course it's not. Do you suppose we want all the humans in creation coming there?" Calming down, the Scarecrow tried to continue his story, but every time he mentioned Oz, the little Princes shook their heads stubbornly and whispered, "Not on the map," till the usually good-tempered Scarecrow flew into perfect passion.

"Not on the map, you little villains!" he screamed, forgetting they were his grandsons. "What difference does that make? Are your heads solid silver?"

"We do not believe in Oz," announced the oldest Prince serenely. "There is no such place."

"No such place as Oz--Happy, do you hear that?" The Scarecrow's voice fairly crackled with indignation. "Why, I thought everybody believed in Oz!"

"Perhaps your Highness can convince them later," suggested the Imperial Punster. "This way, offspring." His Master, he felt, had had enough family for one day. So the fifteen little Princes, with fifteen stiff little bows, took themselves back to the royal nursery. As for the Scarecrow, he paced disconsolately up and down his magnificent throne room, tripping over his kimona at every other step.

"You're a good boy, Tappy," said the Scarecrow as Happy returned, "but I tell you being a grandparent is not what I thought it would be. Did you hear them tell me right to my face they did not believe in Oz? And my sons--ugh!"

"Fault of their bringing up," said Happy Toko comfortingly. "If your serene Highness would just tell me more of that illustrious country!" Happy knew that nothing cheered the Scarecrow like talking of Oz, and to tell the truth Happy himself never tired of the Scarecrow's marvelous stories. So the two slipped quietly into the palace gardens, and the Scarecrow related for the fourteenth time the story of his discovery by Dorothy and the story of Ozma, and almost forgot that he was an Emperor.

"Your Highness knows the history of Oz by heart," said Happy admiringly as the Scarecrow paused.

"I couldn't do that," said the Scarecrow gently, "for you see, Happy, I have no heart."

"Then I wish we all had none!" exclaimed Happy Toko, rolling up his eyes. The Scarecrow looked embarrassed, so the little Punster threw back his head and sang a song he had been making up while the Scarecrow had been telling his stories:

The Scarecrow was standing alone in a field,      Inviting the crows to  
keep off,      When the straw in his chest began tickling his vest      And he  
couldn't resist a loud cough.

The noise that was heard so surprised ev'ry bird,      that the flock flew  
away in a fright,      But the Scarecrow looked pleased, and he said "If I'd  
sneezed      It wouldn't have been so polite."

"Ho!" roared the Scarecrow, "You're almost as good at making verses as Scraps, Write that down for me, Tappy. I'd like to show it to her."

"Hush!" whispered Happy, holding up his finger warningly. The Scarecrow turned so suddenly that the silver pigtail pinned to the back of his hat wound itself tightly around his neck. No wonder! On the other side of the hedge the three Princes were walking up and down, conversing in indignant whispers.

"What a horrible shape our honorable Papa has reappeared in. I hear that it never wears out," muttered one. "He may continue just as he is for years and years. How am I ever to succeed him, I'd like to know. Why, he may outlive us all!"

"We might throw him into the silver river," said the second hopefully.

"No use," choked the third. "I was just talking to the Imperial Soothsayer, and he tells me that no one from this miserable Kingdom of Oz can be destroyed. But I have a plan. Incline your Royal ears-- listen." The voices dropped to such a low whisper that neither Happy nor the Scarecrow could hear one word.

"Treason!" spluttered Happy, making ready to spring through the hedge, but the Scarecrow seized him by the arm and drew him away.

"I don't believe they like their poor papa," exclaimed the Scarecrow when they were safely back in the throne room. "I'm feeling older than a Kinkajou. Ah, Happy Oko, why did I ever slide down my family tree? It has brought me nothing but unhappiness."