

CHAPTER 17 - DOUBTY AND CAMY VANISH INTO SPACE

For a short time, everything went well. Then Dorothy, turning to see how Sir Hokus was getting along, discovered that the Doubtful Dromedary had disappeared.

"Why, where in the world?" exclaimed Dorothy. The Comfortable Camel craned his wobbly neck and, when he saw that his friend was gone, burst into tears. His sobs heaved Sir Hokus clear out of his seat and flung him, helmet first, into the dust.

"Go to!" exploded the Knight, sitting up. "If I were a bird, riding in yon nest would be easier." The last of his sentence ended in a hoarse croak. Sir Hokus vanished, and a great raven flopped down in the center of the road.

"Oh, where is my dear Karwan Bashi? Oh, where is Doubty?" screamed the Comfortable Camel, running around in frenzied circles. "I wish I'd never come on this path!"

"Magic!" gasped Dorothy, clutching the Cowardly Lion's mane. The Comfortable Camel had melted into air before their very eyes.

"I doubt it, I doubt it very much!" coughed a faint voice close to her ear. Dorothy ducked her head involuntarily as a big yellow butterfly settled on the Cowardly Lion's ear.

"Our doubtful friend," whispered the lion weakly. "Oh, be careful, Dorothy dear. We may turn into frogs or something worse any minute."

Dorothy and the Cowardly Lion had had experiences with magic transformations, and the little girl, pressing her fingers to her eyes, tried to think of something to do. The raven was making awkward attempts to fly and cawing "Go to, now!" every other second.

"Oh, I wish dear Sir Hokus were himself again," wailed Dorothy after trying in vain to recall some magic sentences. Presto! The Knight stood before them, a bit breathless from flying, but hearty as ever.

"I see! I see!" said the Cowardly Lion with a little prance. "Every wish you make on this road comes true. Remember the sign: 'Wish Way.' I wish the Comfortable Camel were back. I wish the Doubtful Dromedary were himself again," muttered the Cowardly Lion rapidly, and in an instant the two creatures were standing in the path.

"Uds bodikins! So I did wish myself a bird!" gasped the Knight, rubbing his gauntlets together excitedly.

"There you are! There you are!" cried the Comfortable Camel, stumbling toward him and resting his foolish head on his shoulder. "Dear, dear Karwan Bashi! And Doubty, old fellow, there you are too! Ah, how comfortable this all is."

"Not two--one," wheezed the Doubtful Dromedary. "And Camy, I doubt very much whether I'd care for butterflying. I just happened to wish myself one!"

"Don't make any more wishes," said the Cowardly Lion sternly.

"Methinks a proper wish might serve us well," observed Sir Hokus. He had been pacing up and down in great excitement. "Why not wish--"

"Oh, stop!" begged Dorothy. "Wait till we've thought it all out. Wishing's awfully particular work!"

"One person better speak for the party," said the Cowardly Lion. "Now, I suggest--"

"Oh, be careful!" screamed Dorothy again. "I wish you would all stop wishing!" Sir Hokus looked at her reproachfully. No wonder. At Dorothy's words, they all found themselves unable to speak. The Doubtful Dromedary's eyes grew rounder and rounder. For the first time in its life, it was unable to doubt anything.

"Now I'll have to do it all," thought Dorothy, and closing her eyes she tried to think of the very best wish for everybody concerned. It was night and growing darker. The Cowardly Lion, the Camel and Dromedary and Sir Hokus peered anxiously at the little girl, wondering what in the world was going to happen. Being wished around is no joke. For five minutes Dorothy thought and thought. Then, standing in the middle of the road, she made her wish in a clear, distinct voice. It was not a very long wish. To be exact, it had only eight words. Eight--short--little words! But stars! No sooner were they out of Dorothy's mouth than the earth opened with a splintering crash and swallowed up the whole company!