

CHAPTER 18 - DOROTHY FINDS THE SCARECROW!

The next thing Dorothy knew, she was sitting on the hard floor of a great, dark hall. One lantern burned feebly, and in the dim, silvery light she could just make out the Comfortable Camel scrambling awkwardly to his feet.

"I smell straw," sniffed the Camel softly.

"I doubt very much whether I am going to like this place." The voice of the Doubtful Dromedary came hesitatingly through the gloom.

"By sword and scepter!" gasped the Knight, "Are you there, Sir Cowardly?"

"Thank goodness, they are!" said Dorothy. Wishing other people about is a risky and responsible business. "They're all here, but I wonder where here is." She jumped up, but at a shuffle of feet drew back.

"Pigs! Weasels!" shrilled an angry voice, and a fat little man hurled himself at Sir Hokus, who happened to have fallen in the lead.

"Uds trudgeons and bludgeons and maugre thy head!" roared the Knight, shaking him off like a fly.

"Tappy, Tappy, my dear boy. Caution! What's all this?" At the sound of that dear, familiar voice Dorothy's heart gave a skip of joy, and without stopping to explain she rushed forward.

"Dorothy!" cried the Scarecrow, stepping on his kimona and falling off his silvery throne. "Lights, Tappy! More lights, at once!" But Tappy was too busy backing away from Sir Hokus of Pokes.

"Approach, vassal!" thundered the Knight, who under-stood not a word of Tappy's speech. "Approach! I think I've been insulted!" He drew his sword and glared angrily through the darkness, and Tappy, having backed as far as possible, fell heels over pigtail into the silver fountain. At the loud splash, Dorothy hastened to the rescue.

"They're friends, and we've found the Scarecrow, we've found the Scarecrow!" She seized Sir Hokus and shook him till his armor rattled.

"Tappy! Tappy!" called the Scarecrow. "Where in the world did he pagota?" That's exactly what he said, but to Dorothy it sounded like no language at all.

"Why," she cried in dismay, "it's the Scarecrow, but I can't understand a word he's saying!"

"I think he must be talking Turkey," droned the Comfortable Camel, "or donkey! I knew a donkey once, a very uncomfortable party, I--"

"I doubt it's donkey," put in the Dromedary importantly, but no one paid any attention to the two beasts. For Happy Toko had at last dragged himself out of the fountain and set fifteen lanterns glowing.

"Oh!" gasped Dorothy as the magnificent silver throne room was flooded with light, "Where are we?"

The Scarecrow had picked himself up, and with outstretched arms came running toward her talking a perfect Niagara of Silver Islandish.

"Have you forgotten your Ozish so soon?" rumbled the Cowardly Lion reproachfully as Dorothy flung her arms around the Scarecrow. The Scarecrow, seeing the Cowardly Lion for the first time, fairly fell upon his neck. Then he brushed his clumsy hand across his forehead.

"Wasn't I talking Ozish?" he asked in a puzzled voice.

"Oh, now you are!" exclaimed Dorothy. And sure enough, the Scarecrow was talking plain Ozish again. (Which I don't mind telling you is also plain English.)

The Knight had been watching this little reunion with hardly repressed emotion. Advancing hastily, he dropped on one knee.

"My good sword and lance are ever at thy service, my Lord Scarecrow!" he exclaimed feelingly.

"Who is this impulsive person?" gulped the Scarecrow, staring in undisguised astonishment at the kneeling figure of the Sir Hokus of Pokes.

"He's my Knight Errant, and he's taken such good care of me," explained Dorothy eagerly.

"Splendid fellow," hissed the Cowardly Lion in the Scarecrow's other painted ear, "if he does talk odds and ends."

"Any friend of little Dorothy's is my friend," said the Scarecrow, shaking hands with Sir Hokus warmly. "But what I want to know is how you all got here."

"First tell us where we are," begged the little girl, for the Scarecrow's silver hat and queue filled her with alarm.

"You are on the Silver Island," said the Scarecrow slowly. "And I am the Emperor--or his good-for-nothing spirit--and tomorrow," the Scarecrow glared around wildly, "tomorrow I'll be eighty-five going on eighty-six." His voice broke and ended in a barely controlled sob.

"Doubt that," drawled the Doubtful Dromedary sleepily.

"Eighty-five years old!" gasped Dorothy. "Why, no one in Oz grows any older!"

"We are no longer in Oz." The Scarecrow shook his head sadly. Then, fixing the group with a puzzled stare, he exclaimed, "But how did you get here?"

"On a wish," said the Knight in a hollow voice.

"Yes," said Dorothy, "we've been hunting you all over Oz, and at last we came to Wish Way, and I said 'I wish we were all with the Scarecrow,' just like that--and next minute--"

"We fell and fell--and fell--and fell," wheezed the Comfortable Camel.

"And fell--and fell--and fell--and fell," droned the Dromedary, "And--"

"Here you are," finished the Scarecrow hastily, for the Dromedary showed signs of going on forever.

"Now tell us every single thing that has happened to you," demanded Dorothy eagerly.

Happy Toko had recognized Dorothy and the Cowardly Lion from the Scarecrow's description, and he now approached with an arm full of cushions. These he set in a circle on the floor, with one for the Scarecrow in the center, and with a warning finger on his lips placed himself behind his Master.

"Tappy is right!" exclaimed the Scarecrow. "We must be as quiet as possible, for a great danger hangs over me."

Without more ado, he told them of his amazing fall down the beanstalk; of his adventures on Silver Island; of his sons and grandsons and the Gheewizard's elixir which would turn him from a lively Scarecrow into an old, old Emperor. All that I have told you, he told Dorothy, up to the very point where his eldest son had bound him to the bean pole and tied up poor,

faithful Happy Toko. Happy, it seems, had at last managed to free himself, and they were about to make their escape when Dorothy and her party had fallen into the throne room. The Comfortable Camel and Doubtful Dromedary listened politely at first, but worn out by their exciting adventures, fell asleep in the middle of the story.

Nothing could have exceeded Dorothy's dismay to learn that the jolly Scarecrow of Oz, whom she had discovered herself, was in reality Chang Wang Woe, Emperor of Silver Island.

"Oh, this spoils everything!" wailed the little girl. (The thought of Oz without the Scarecrow was unthinkable.) "It spoils everything! We were going to adopt you and be your truly family. Weren't we?"

The Cowardly Lion nodded. "I was going to be your cousin," he mumbled in a choked voice, "but now that you have a family of your own--" The lion miserably slunk down beside Dorothy.

Sir Hokus looked fierce and rattled his sword, but he could think of nothing that would help them out of their trouble.

"To-morrow there won't be any Scarecrow in Oz!" wailed Dorothy. "Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" And the little girl began to cry as if her heart would break.

"Stop! Stop!" begged the Scarecrow, while Sir Hokus awkwardly patted Dorothy on the back. "I'd rather have you for my family any day. I don't care a Kinkajou for being Emperor, and as for my sons, they are unnatural villains who make my life miserable by telling me how old I am!"

"Just like a poem I once read," said Dorothy, brightening up:

"You are old, Father William," the young man said, "And your hair has become very white, And yet you incessantly stand on your head! Do you think, at your age, it is right?"

"That's it, that's it exactly!" exclaimed the Scarecrow as Dorothy finished repeating the verse. "'You are old, Father Scarecrow!' That's all I hear. I did stand on my head, too. And Dorothy, I can't seem to get used to being a grandparent," added the Scarecrow in a melancholy voice. "It's turning my straws gray." He plucked several from his chest and held them out to her. "Why, those little villains don't even believe in Oz! 'It's not on the map, old Grandpapapapah!'" he mumbled, imitating the tones of his little grandsons so cleverly that Dorothy laughed in spite of herself.

"This is what becomes of pride!" The Scarecrow extended his hands expressively. "Most people who hunt up their family trees are in for a fall, and I've had mine."

"But who do you want to be?" asked the Knight gravely. "A Scarecrow in Oz-- or the--er--Emperor that you were?"

"I don't care who I were!" In his excitement, the Scarecrow lost his grammar completely. "I want to be who I am. I want to be myself."

"But which one?" asked the Cowardly Lion, who was still a bit confused.

"Why, my best self, of course," said the Scarecrow with a bright smile. The sight of his old friends had quite restored his cheerfulness. "I've been here long enough to know that I am a better Scarecrow than an Emperor."

"Why, how simple it is!" sighed Dorothy contentedly. "Professor Wogglebug was all wrong. It's not what you were, but what you are-- it's being yourself that counts."

"By my Halidom, the little maid is right!" said Sir Hokus, slapping his knee in delight. "Let your Gheewizard but try his transformations! Out on him! But what says yon honest henchman?" Happy Toko, although he understood no word of the conversation, had been watching the discussion with great interest. He had been trying to attract the Scarecrow's attention for some time, but the Knight was the only one who had noticed him.

"What is it, Tappy?" asked the Scarecrow, dropping easily back into Silver Islandish.

"Honored Master, the dawn approaches and with it the Royal Princes and the Grand Gheewizard--and your bride!" Happy paused significantly. The Scarecrow shuddered.

"Let's go back to Oz!" said the Cowardly Lion uneasily.

The Scarecrow was feeling in the pocket of his old Munchkin suit which he always wore under his robes of state. "Here!" said he, giving a little pill to Happy Toko. "It's one of Professor Wogglebug's language pills," he exclaimed to Dorothy, "and will enable him to speak and understand Ozish." Happy swallowed the pill gravely.

"Greetings, honorable Ozites!" he said politely as soon as the pill was down. Dorothy clapped her hands in delight, for it was so comfortable to have him speak their own language.

"I could never have stood it here without Tappy Oko!" The Scarecrow looked fondly at his Imperial Punster.

"Queer name he has," rumbled the Cowardly Lion, looking at Happy Toko as if he had thoughts of eating him.

"Methinks he should be knighted," rumbled Sir Hokus, beaming on the little Silverman. "Rise, Sir Pudding!"

"The sun will do that in a minute or more, and then, then we shall all be thrown into prison!" wailed Happy Toko dismally.

"We were going to escape in a small boat," explained the Scarecrow, "but--" It was not necessary for him to finish. A boat large enough to hold Dorothy, the Cowardly Lion, the Scarecrow, Happy Toko, the camel and the dromedary could not very well be launched in secret.

"Oh, dear!" sighed Dorothy, "If I'd only wished you and all of us back in the Emerald City!"

"You wished very well, Lady Dot," said the Knight. "When I think of what I was going to wish for--"

"What were you going to wish, Hokus?" asked the Cowardly Lion curiously.

"For a dragon!" faltered the Knight, looking terribly ashamed.

"A dragon!" gasped Dorothy. "Why, what good would that have done us?"

"Wait!" interrupted the Scarecrow. "I have thought of something! Why not climb my family tree? It is a long, long way, but at the top lies Oz!"

"Grammercy, a pretty plan!" exclaimed Sir Hokus, peering up at the bean pole.

"Wouldn't that be social climbing?" chuckled Happy Toko, recovering his spirits with a bound. The Cowardly Lion said nothing, but heaved a mighty sigh which no one heard, for they were all running toward the bean pole. It was a good family tree to climb, sure enough, for there were handy little notches in the stalk.

"You go first!" Sir Hokus helped Dorothy up. When she had gone a few steps, the Scarecrow, holding his robes carefully, followed, then honest Happy Toko.

"I'll go last," said Sir Hokus bravely, and had just set his foot on the first notch when a hoarse scream rang through the hall.