

12. Kiki Uses His Magic

Then arose a great confusion of sounds as all the animals began talking to their fellows. The monkeys chattered and the bears growled and the voices of the jaguars and lions rumbled, and the wolves yelped and the elephants had to trumpet loudly to make their voices heard. Such a hubbub had never been known in the forest before, and each beast argued with his neighbor until it seemed the noise would never cease.

Ruggedo the Nome waved his arms and fluttered his wings to try to make them listen to him again, but the beasts paid no attention. Some wanted to fight the Oz people, some wanted to be transformed, and some wanted to do nothing at all.

The growling and confusion had grown greater than ever when in a flash silence fell on all the beasts present, the arguments were hushed, and all gazed in astonishment at a strange sight.

For into the circle strode a great Lion--bigger and more powerful than any other lion there--and on his back rode a little girl who smiled fearlessly at the multitude of beasts. And behind the Lion and the little girl came another beast--a monstrous Tiger, who bore upon his back a funny little man carrying a black bag. Right past the rows of wondering beasts the strange animals walked, advancing until they stood just before the rock throne of Gugu.

Then the little girl and the funny little man dismounted, and the great Lion demanded in a loud voice:

"Who is King in this forest?"

"I am!" answered Gugu, looking steadily at the other. "I am Gugu the Leopard, and I am King of this forest."

"Then I greet Your Majesty with great respect," said the Lion. "Perhaps you have heard of me, Gugu. I am called the 'Cowardly Lion,' and I am King of all Beasts, the world over."

Gugu's eyes flashed angrily.

"Yes," said he, "I have heard of you. You have long claimed to be King of Beasts, but no beast who is a coward can be King over me."

"He isn't a coward, Your Majesty," asserted the little girl, "He's just cowardly, that's all."

Gugu looked at her. All the other beasts were looking at her, too.

"Who are you?" asked the King.

"Me? Oh, I'm just Dorothy," she answered.

"How dare you come here?" demanded the King.

"Why, I'm not afraid to go anywhere, if the Cowardly Lion is with me," she said. "I know him pretty well, and so I can trust him. He's always afraid, when we get into trouble, and that's why he's cowardly; but he's a terrible fighter, and that's why he isn't a coward. He doesn't like to fight, you know, but when he HAS to, there isn't any beast living that can conquer him."

Gugu the King looked at the big, powerful form of the Cowardly Lion, and knew she spoke the truth. Also the other Lions of the forest now came forward and bowed low before the strange Lion.

"We welcome Your Majesty," said one. "We have known you many years ago, before you went to live at the Emerald City, and we have seen you fight the terrible Kalidahs and conquer them, so we know you are the King of all Beasts."

"It is true," replied the Cowardly Lion; "but I did not come here to rule the beasts of this forest. Gugu is King here, and I believe he is a good King and just and wise. I come, with my friends, to be the guest of Gugu, and I hope we are welcome."

That pleased the great Leopard, who said very quickly:

"Yes; you, at least, are welcome to my forest. But who are these strangers with you?"

"Dorothy has introduced herself," replied the Lion, "and you are sure to like her when you know her better. This man is the Wizard of Oz, a friend of mine who can do wonderful tricks of magic. And here is my true and tried friend, the Hungry Tiger, who lives with me in the Emerald City."

"Is he ALWAYS hungry?" asked Loo the Unicorn.

"I am," replied the Tiger, answering the question himself. "I am always hungry for fat babies."

"Can't you find any fat babies in Oz to eat?" inquired Loo, the Unicorn.

"There are plenty of them, of course," said the Tiger, "but unfortunately I have such a tender conscience that it won't allow me to eat babies. So I'm always hungry for 'em and never can eat 'em, because my conscience won't let me."

Now of all the surprised beasts in that clearing, not one was so much surprised at the sudden appearance of these four strangers as Ruggedo the Nome. He was frightened, too, for he recognized them as his most powerful enemies; but he also realized that they could not know he was the former King of the Nomes, because of the beast's form he wore, which disguised him so effectually. So he took courage and resolved that the Wizard and Dorothy should not defeat his plans.

It was hard to tell, just yet, what the vast assemblage of beasts thought of the new arrivals. Some glared angrily at them, but more of them seemed to be curious and wondering. All were interested, however, and they kept very quiet and listened carefully to all that was said.

Kiki Aru, who had remained unnoticed in the shadow of the rock, was at first more alarmed by the coming of the strangers than even Ruggedo was, and the boy told himself that unless he acted quickly and without waiting to ask the advice of the old Nome, their conspiracy was likely to be discovered and all their plans to conquer and rule Oz be defeated. Kiki didn't like the way Ruggedo acted either, for the former King of the Nomes wanted to do everything his own way, and made the boy, who alone possessed the power of transformations, obey his orders as if he were a slave.

Another thing that disturbed Kiki Aru was the fact that a real Wizard had arrived, who was said to possess many magical powers, and this Wizard carried his tools in a black bag, and was the friend of the Oz people, and so would probably try to prevent war between the beasts of the forest and the people of Oz.

All these things passed through the mind of the Hyup boy while the Cowardly Lion and Gugu the King were talking together, and that was why he now began to do several strange things.

He had found a place, near to the point where he stood, where there was a deep hollow in the rock, so he put his face into this hollow and whispered softly, so he would not be heard:

"I want the Wizard of Oz to become a fox--Pyrzqxg!!"

The Wizard, who had stood smilingly beside his friends, suddenly felt his form change to that of a fox, and his black bag fell to the ground. Kiki reached out an arm and seized the bag, and the Fox cried as loud as it could:

"Treason! There's a traitor here with magic powers!"

Everyone was startled at this cry, and Dorothy, seeing her old friend's plight, screamed and exclaimed: "Mercy me!"

But the next instant the little girl's form had changed to that of a lamb with fleecy white wool, and Dorothy was too bewildered to do anything but look around her in wonder.

The Cowardly Lion's eyes now flashed fire; he crouched low and lashed the ground with his tail and gazed around to discover who the treacherous magician might be. But Kiki, who had kept his face in the hollow rock, again whispered the magic word, and the great lion disappeared and in his place stood a little boy dressed in Munchkin costume. The little Munchkin boy was as angry as the lion had been, but he was small and helpless.

Ruggedo the Nome saw what was happening and was afraid Kiki would spoil all his plans, so he leaned over the rock and shouted: "Stop, Kiki--stop!"

Kiki would not stop, however. Instead, he transformed the Nome into a goose, to Ruggedo's horror and dismay. But the Hungry Tiger had witnessed all these transformations, and he was watching to see which of those present was to blame for them. When Ruggedo spoke to Kiki, the Hungry Tiger knew that he was the magician, so he made a sudden spring and hurled his great body full upon the form of the Li-Mon-Eag crouching against the rock. Kiki didn't see the Tiger coming because his face was still in the hollow, and the heavy body of the tiger bore him to the earth just as he said "Pyrzqxgl!" for the fifth time.

So now the tiger which was crushing him changed to a rabbit, and relieved of its weight, Kiki sprang up and, spreading his eagle's wings, flew into the branches of a tree, where no beast could easily reach him. He was not an instant too quick in doing this, for Gugu the King had crouched on the rock's edge and was about to spring on the boy.

From his tree Kiki transformed Gugu into a fat Gillikin woman, and laughed aloud to see how the woman pranced with rage, and how astonished all the beasts were at their King's new shape.

The beasts were frightened, too, fearing they would share the fate of Gugu, so a stampede began when Rango the Gray Ape sprang into the forest, and Bru the Bear and Loo the Unicorn followed as quickly as they could. The elephants backed into the forest, and all the other animals, big and little, rushed after them, scattering through the jungles until the clearing was far behind. The monkeys scrambled into the trees and swung themselves from limb to limb, to avoid being trampled upon by the bigger beasts, and they were so quick that they distanced all the rest. A panic of fear seemed to have overtaken the forest people and they got as far away from the terrible Magician as they possibly could.

But the transformed ones stayed in the clearing, being so astonished and bewildered by their new shapes that they could only look at one another in a dazed and helpless fashion, although each one was greatly annoyed at the trick that had been played on him.

"Who are you?" the Munchkin boy asked the Rabbit; and "Who are you?" the Fox asked the Lamb; and "Who are you?" the Rabbit asked the fat Gillikin woman.

"I'm Dorothy," said the woolly Lamb.

"I'm the Wizard," said the Fox.

"I'm the Cowardly Lion," said the Munchkin boy.

"I'm the Hungry Tiger," said the Rabbit.

"I'm Gugu the King," said the fat Woman.

But when they asked the Goose who he was, Ruggedo the Nome would not tell them.

"I'm just a Goose," he replied, "and what I was before, I cannot remember."