

14. The Wizard Learns the Magic Word

Now, the Goose was the transformation of old Ruggedo, who was at one time King of the Nomes, and he was even more angry at Kiki Aru than were the others whose shapes had been changed. The Nome detested anything in the way of a bird, because birds lay eggs and eggs are feared by all the Nomes more than anything else in the world. A goose is a foolish bird, too, and Ruggedo was dreadfully ashamed of the shape he was forced to wear. And it would make him shudder to reflect that the Goose might lay an egg!

So the Nome was afraid of himself and afraid of everything around him. If an egg touched him he could then be destroyed, and almost any animal he met in the forest might easily conquer him. And that would be the end of old Ruggedo the Nome.

Aside from these fears, however, he was filled with anger against Kiki, whom he had meant to trap by cleverly stealing from him the Magic Word. The boy must have been crazy to spoil everything the way he did, but Ruggedo knew that the arrival of the Wizard had scared Kiki, and he was not sorry the boy had transformed the Wizard and Dorothy and made them helpless. It was his own transformation that annoyed him and made him indignant, so he ran about the forest hunting for Kiki, so that he might get a better shape and coax the boy to follow his plans to conquer the Land of Oz.

Kiki Aru hadn't gone very far away, for he had surprised himself as well as the others by the quick transformations and was puzzled as to what to do next. Ruggedo the Nome was overbearing and tricky, and Kiki knew he was not to be depended on; but the Nome could plan and plot, which the Hyup boy was not wise enough to do, and so, when he looked down through the branches of a tree and saw a Goose waddling along below and heard it cry out, "Kiki Aru! Quack--quack! Kiki Aru!" the boy answered in a low voice, "Here I am," and swung himself down to the lowest limb of the tree.

The Goose looked up and saw him.

"You've bungled things in a dreadful way!" exclaimed the Goose. "Why did you do it?"

"Because I wanted to," answered Kiki. "You acted as if I was your slave, and I wanted to show these forest people that I am more powerful than you."

The Goose hissed softly, but Kiki did not hear that.

Old Ruggedo quickly recovered his wits and muttered to himself: "This boy is the goose, although it is I who wear the goose's shape. I will be gentle with him now, and fierce with him when I have him in my power." Then he said aloud to Kiki:

"Well, hereafter I will be content to acknowledge you the master. You bungled things, as I said, but we can still conquer Oz."

"How?" asked the boy.

"First give me back the shape of the Li-Mon-Eag, and then we can talk together more conveniently," suggested the Nome.

"Wait a moment, then," said Kiki, and climbed higher up the tree. There he whispered the Magic Word and the Goose became a Li-Mon-Eag, as he had been before.

"Good!" said the Nome, well pleased, as Kiki joined him by dropping down from the tree. "Now let us find a quiet place where we can talk without being overheard by the beasts."

So the two started away and crossed the forest until they came to a place where the trees were not so tall nor so close together, and among these scattered trees was another clearing, not so large as the first one, where the meeting of the beasts had been held. Standing on the edge of this clearing and looking across it, they saw the trees on the farther side full of monkeys, who were chattering together at a great rate of the sights they had witnessed at the meeting.

The old Nome whispered to Kiki not to enter the clearing or allow the monkeys to see them.

"Why not?" asked the boy, drawing back.

"Because those monkeys are to be our army--the army which will conquer Oz," said the Nome. "Sit down here with me, Kiki, and keep quiet, and I will explain to you my plan."

Now, neither Kiki Aru nor Ruggedo had noticed that a sly Fox had followed them all the way from the tree where the Goose had been transformed to the Li-Mon-Eag. Indeed, this Fox, who was none other than the Wizard of Oz, had

witnessed the transformation of the Goose and now decided he would keep watch on the conspirators and see what they would do next.

A Fox can move through a forest very softly, without making any noise, and so the Wizard's enemies did not suspect his presence. But when they sat down by the edge of the clearing, to talk, with their backs toward him, the Wizard did not know whether to risk being seen, by creeping closer to hear what they said, or whether it would be better for him to hide himself until they moved on again.

While he considered this question he discovered near him a great tree which had a hollow trunk, and there was a round hole in this tree, about three feet above the ground. The Wizard Fox decided it would be safer for him to hide inside the hollow tree, so he sprang into the hole and crouched down in the hollow, so that his eyes just came to the edge of the hole by which he had entered, and from here he watched the forms of the two Li-Mon-Eags.

"This is my plan," said the Nome to Kiki, speaking so low that the Wizard could only hear the rumble of his voice. "Since you can transform anything into any form you wish, we will transform these monkeys into an army, and with that army we will conquer the Oz people."

"The monkeys won't make much of an army," objected Kiki.

"We need a great army, but not a numerous one," responded the Nome. "You will transform each monkey into a giant man, dressed in a fine uniform and armed with a sharp sword. There are fifty monkeys over there and fifty giants would make as big an army as we need."

"What will they do with the swords?" asked Kiki. "Nothing can kill the Oz people."

"True," said Ruggedo. "The Oz people cannot be killed, but they can be cut into small pieces, and while every piece will still be alive, we can scatter the pieces around so that they will be quite helpless. Therefore, the Oz people will be afraid of the swords of our army, and we will conquer them with ease."

"That seems like a good idea," replied the boy, approvingly. "And in such a case, we need not bother with the other beasts of the forest."

"No; you have frightened the beasts, and they would no longer consent to assist us in conquering Oz. But those monkeys are foolish creatures, and

once they are transformed to Giants, they will do just as we say and obey our commands. Can you transform them all at once?"

"No, I must take one at a time," said Kiki. "But the fifty transformations can be made in an hour or so. Stay here, Ruggedo, and I will change the first monkey--that one at the left, on the end of the limb--into a Giant with a sword."

"Where are you going?" asked the Nome.

"I must not speak the Magic Word in the presence of another person," declared Kiki, who was determined not to allow his treacherous companion to learn his secret, "so I will go where you cannot hear me."

Ruggedo the Nome was disappointed, but he hoped still to catch the boy unawares and surprise the Magic Word. So he merely nodded his lion head, and Kiki got up and went back into the forest a short distance. Here he spied a hollow tree, and by chance it was the same hollow tree in which the Wizard of Oz, now in the form of a Fox, had hidden himself.

As Kiki ran up to the tree the Fox ducked its head, so that it was out of sight in the dark hollow beneath the hole, and then Kiki put his face into the hole and whispered: "I want that monkey on the branch at the left to become a Giant man fifty feet tall, dressed in a uniform and with a sharp sword--Pyrzqxgl!"

Then he ran back to Ruggedo, but the Wizard Fox had heard quite plainly every word that he had said.

The monkey was instantly transformed into the Giant, and the Giant was so big that as he stood on the ground his head was higher than the trees of the forest. The monkeys raised a great chatter but did not seem to understand that the Giant was one of themselves.

"Good!" cried the Nome. "Hurry, Kiki, and transform the others."

So Kiki rushed back to the tree and putting his face to the hollow, whispered:

"I want the next monkey to be just like the first--Pyrzqxgl!"

Again the Wizard Fox heard the Magic Word, and just how it was pronounced. But he sat still in the hollow and waited to hear it again, so it would be impressed on his mind and he would not forget it.

Kiki kept running to the edge of the forest and back to the hollow tree again until he had whispered the Magic Word six times and six monkeys had been changed to six great Giants. Then the Wizard decided he would make an experiment and use the Magic Word himself. So, while Kiki was running back to the Nome, the Fox stuck his head out of the hollow and said softly: "I want that creature who is running to become a hickory-nut--Pyrzqxgl!"

Instantly the Li-Mon-Eag form of Kiki Aru the Hyup disappeared and a small hickory-nut rolled upon the ground a moment and then lay still.

The Wizard was delighted, and leaped from the hollow just as Ruggedo looked around to see what had become of Kiki. The Nome saw the Fox but no Kiki, so he hastily rose to his feet. The Wizard did not know how powerful the queer beast might be, so he resolved to take no chances.

"I want this creature to become a walnut--Pyrzqxgl!" he said aloud. But he did not pronounce the Magic Word in quite the right way, and Ruggedo's form did not change. But the Nome knew at once that "Pyrzqxgl!" was the Magic Word, so he rushed at the Fox and cried:

"I want you to become a Goose--Pyrzqxgl!"

But the Nome did not pronounce the word aright, either, having never heard it spoken but once before, and then with a wrong accent. So the Fox was not transformed, but it had to run away to escape being caught by the angry Nome.

Ruggedo now began pronouncing the Magic Word in every way he could think of, hoping to hit the right one, and the Fox, hiding in a bush, was somewhat troubled by the fear that he might succeed. However, the Wizard, who was used to magic arts, remained calm and soon remembered exactly how Kiki Aru had pronounced the word. So he repeated the sentence he had before uttered and Ruggedo the Nome became an ordinary walnut.

The Wizard now crept out from the bush and said: "I want my own form again--Pyrzqxgl!"

Instantly he was the Wizard of Oz, and after picking up the hickory-nut and the walnut, and carefully placing them in his pocket, he ran back to the big clearing.

Dorothy the Lamb uttered a bleat of delight when she saw her old friend restored to his natural shape. The others were all there, not having found the

Goose. The fat Gillikin woman, the Munchkin boy, the Rabbit and the Glass Cat crowded around the Wizard and asked what had happened.

Before he explained anything of his adventure, he transformed them all--except, of course, the Glass Cat--into their natural shapes, and when their joy permitted them to quiet somewhat, he told how he had by chance surprised the Magician's secret and been able to change the two Li-Mon-Eags into shapes that could not speak, and therefore would be unable to help themselves. And the little Wizard showed his astonished friends the hickory-nut and the walnut to prove that he had spoken the truth.

"But--see here!"--exclaimed Dorothy. "What has become of those Giant Soldiers who used to be monkeys?"

"I forgot all about them!" admitted the Wizard; "but I suppose they are still standing there in the forest."