

16. The Glass Cat Finds the Black Bag

When the six monkeys were transformed by Kiki Aru into six giant soldiers fifty feet tall, their heads came above the top of the trees, which in this part of the forest were not so high as in some other parts; and, although the trees were somewhat scattered, the bodies of the giant soldiers were so big that they quite filled the spaces in which they stood and the branches pressed them on every side.

Of course, Kiki was foolish to have made his soldiers so big, for now they could not get out of the forest. Indeed, they could not stir a step, but were imprisoned by the trees. Even had they been in the little clearing they could not have made their way out of it, but they were a little beyond the clearing. At first, the other monkeys who had not been enchanted were afraid of the soldiers, and hastily quitted the place; but soon finding that the great men stood stock still, although grunting indignantly at their transformation, the band of monkeys returned to the spot and looked at them curiously, not guessing that they were really monkeys and their own friends.

The soldiers couldn't see them, their heads being above the trees; they could not even raise their arms or draw their sharp swords, so closely were they held by the leafy branches. So the monkeys, finding the giants helpless, began climbing up their bodies, and presently all the band were perched on the shoulders of the giants and peering into their faces.

"I'm Ebu, your father," cried one soldier to a monkey who had perched upon his left ear, "but some cruel person has enchanted me."

"I'm your Uncle Peeker," said another soldier to another monkey.

So, very soon all the monkeys knew the truth and were sorry for their friends and relations and angry at the person--whoever it was--who had transformed them. There was a great chattering among the tree-tops, and the noise attracted other monkeys, so that the clearing and all the trees around were full of them.

Rango the Gray Ape, who was the Chief of all the monkey tribes of the forest, heard the uproar and came to see what was wrong with his people. And Rango, being wiser and more experienced, at once knew that the strange magician who looked like a mixed-up beast was responsible for the transformations. He realized that the six giant soldiers were helpless

prisoners, because of their size, and knew he was powerless to release them. So, although he feared to meet the terrible magician, he hurried away to the Great Clearing to tell Gugu the King what had happened and to try to find the Wizard of Oz and get him to save his six enchanted subjects.

Rango darted into the Great Clearing just as the Wizard had restored all the enchanted ones around him to their proper shapes, and the Gray Ape was glad to hear that the wicked magician-beast had been conquered.

"But now, O mighty Wizard, you must come with me to where six of my people are transformed into six great giant men," he said, "for if they are allowed to remain there, their happiness and their future lives will be ruined."

The Wizard did not reply at once, for he was thinking this a good opportunity to win Rango's consent to his taking some monkeys to the Emerald City for Ozma's birthday cake.

"It is a great thing you ask of me, O Rango the Gray Ape," said he, "for the bigger the giants are the more powerful their enchantment, and the more difficult it will be to restore them to their natural forms. However, I will think it over."

Then the Wizard went to another part of the clearing and sat on a log and appeared to be in deep thought.

The Glass Cat had been greatly interested in the Gray Ape's story and was curious to see what the giant soldiers looked like. Hearing that their heads extended above the tree-tops, the Glass Cat decided that if it climbed the tall avocado tree that stood at the side of the clearing, it might be able to see the giants' heads. So, without mentioning her errand, the crystal creature went to the tree and, by sticking her sharp glass claws in the bark, easily climbed the tree to its very top and, looking over the forest, saw the six giant heads, although they were now a long way off. It was, indeed, a remarkable sight, for the huge heads had immense soldier caps on them, with red and yellow plumes and looked very fierce and terrible, although the monkey hearts of the giants were at that moment filled with fear.

Having satisfied her curiosity, the Glass Cat began to climb down from the tree more slowly. Suddenly she discerned the Wizard's black bag hanging from a limb of the tree. She grasped the black bag in her glass teeth, and although it was rather heavy for so small an animal, managed to get it free and to carry it safely down to the ground. Then she looked around for the

Wizard and seeing him seated upon the stump she hid the black bag among some leaves and then went over to where the Wizard sat.

"I forgot to tell you," said the Glass Cat, "that Trot and Cap'n Bill are in trouble, and I came here to hunt you up and get you to go and rescue them."

"Good gracious, Cat! Why didn't you tell me before?" exclaimed the Wizard.

"For the reason that I found so much excitement here that I forgot Trot and Cap'n Bill."

"What's wrong with them?" asked the Wizard.

Then the Glass Cat explained how they had gone to get the Magic Flower for Ozma's birthday gift and had been trapped by the magic of the queer island. The Wizard was really alarmed, but he shook his head and said sadly:

"I'm afraid I can't help my dear friends, because I've lost my black bag."

"If I find it, will you go to them?" asked the creature.

"Of course," replied the Wizard. "But I do not think that a Glass Cat with nothing but pink brains can succeed when all the rest of us have failed."

"Don't you admire my pink brains?" demanded the Cat.

"They're pretty," admitted the Wizard, "but they're not regular brains, you know, and so we don't expect them to amount to much."

"But if I find your black bag--and find it inside of five minutes--will you admit my pink brains are better than your common human brains?"

"Well, I'll admit they're better HUNTERS," said the Wizard, reluctantly, "but you can't do it. We've searched everywhere, and the black bag isn't to be found."

"That shows how much you know!" retorted the Glass Cat, scornfully. "Watch my brains a minute, and see them whirl around."

The Wizard watched, for he was anxious to regain his black bag, and the pink brains really did whirl around in a remarkable manner.

"Now, come with me," commanded the Glass Cat, and led the Wizard straight to the spot where it had covered the bag with leaves. "According to my brains," said the creature, "your black bag ought to be here."

Then it scratched at the leaves and uncovered the bag, which the Wizard promptly seized with a cry of delight. Now that he had regained his Magic Tools, he felt confident he could rescue Trot and Cap'n Bill.

Rango the Gray Ape was getting impatient. He now approached the Wizard and said:

"Well, what do you intend to do about those poor enchanted monkeys?"

"I'll make a bargain with you, Rango," replied the little man. "If you will let me take a dozen of your monkeys to the Emerald City, and keep them until after Ozma's birthday, I'll break the enchantment of the six Giant Soldiers and return them to their natural forms."

But the Gray Ape shook his head.

"I can't do it," he declared. "The monkeys would be very lonesome and unhappy in the Emerald City and your people would tease them and throw stones at them, which would cause them to fight and bite."

"The people won't see them till Ozma's birthday dinner," promised the Wizard. "I'll make them very small--about four inches high, and I'll keep them in a pretty cage in my own room, where they will be safe from harm. I'll feed them the nicest kind of food, train them to do some clever tricks, and on Ozma's birthday I'll hide the twelve little monkeys inside a cake. When Ozma cuts the cake the monkeys will jump out on to the table and do their tricks. The next day I will bring them back to the forest and make them big as ever, and they'll have some exciting stories to tell their friends. What do you say, Rango?"

"I say no!" answered the Gray Ape. "I won't have my monkeys enchanted and made to do tricks for the Oz people."

"Very well," said the Wizard calmly; "then I'll go. Come, Dorothy," he called to the little girl, "let's start on our journey."

"Aren't you going to save those six monkeys who are giant soldiers?" asked Rango, anxiously.

"Why should I?" returned the Wizard. "If you will not do me the favor I ask, you cannot expect me to favor you."

"Wait a minute," said the Gray Ape. "I've changed my mind. If you will treat the twelve monkeys nicely and bring them safely back to the forest, I'll let you take them."

"Thank you," replied the Wizard, cheerfully. "We'll go at once and save those giant soldiers."

So all the party left the clearing and proceeded to the place where the giants still stood among the trees. Hundreds of monkeys, apes, baboons and orangoutangs had gathered round, and their wild chatter could be heard a mile away. But the Gray Ape soon hushed the babel of sounds, and the Wizard lost no time in breaking the enchantments. First one and then another giant soldier disappeared and became an ordinary monkey again, and the six were shortly returned to their friends in their proper forms.

This action made the Wizard very popular with the great army of monkeys, and when the Gray Ape announced that the Wizard wanted to borrow twelve monkeys to take to the Emerald City for a couple of weeks, and asked for volunteers, nearly a hundred offered to go, so great was their confidence in the little man who had saved their comrades.

The Wizard selected a dozen that seemed intelligent and good-tempered, and then he opened his black bag and took out a queerly shaped dish that was silver on the outside and gold on the inside. Into this dish he poured a powder and set fire to it. It made a thick smoke that quite enveloped the twelve monkeys, as well as the form of the Wizard, but when the smoke cleared away the dish had been changed to a golden cage with silver bars, and the twelve monkeys had become about three inches high and were all seated comfortably inside the cage.

The thousands of hairy animals who had witnessed this act of magic were much astonished and applauded the Wizard by barking aloud and shaking the limbs of the trees in which they sat. Dorothy said: "That was a fine trick, Wizard!" and the Gray Ape remarked: "You are certainly the most wonderful magician in all the Land of Oz!"

"Oh, no," modestly replied the little man. "Glinda's magic is better than mine, but mine seems good enough to use on ordinary occasions. And now, Rango, we will say good-bye, and I promise to return your monkeys as happy and safe as they are now."

The Wizard rode on the back of the Hungry Tiger and carried the cage of monkeys very carefully, so as not to joggle them. Dorothy rode on the back of the Cowardly Lion, and the Glass Cat trotted, as before, to show them the way.

Gugu the King crouched upon a log and watched them go, but as he bade them farewell, the enormous Leopard said:

"I know now that you are the friends of beasts and that the forest people may trust you. Whenever the Wizard of Oz and Princess Dorothy enter the Forest of Gugu hereafter, they will be as welcome and as safe with us as ever they are in the Emerald City."