

15. The Emperor's Tin Castle

The grounds around Nick Chopper's new house were laid out in pretty flowerbeds, with fountains of crystal water and statues of tin representing the Emperor's personal friends. Dorothy was astonished and delighted to find a tin statue of herself standing on a tin pedestal at a bend in the avenue leading up to the entrance. It was life-size and showed her in her sunbonnet with her basket on her arm, just as she had first appeared in the Land of Oz.

"Oh, Toto--you're there too!" she exclaimed; and sure enough there was the tin figure of Toto lying at the tin Dorothy's feet.

Also, Dorothy saw figures of the Scarecrow, and the Wizard, and Ozma, and of many others, including Tik-tok. They reached the grand tin entrance to the tin castle, and the Tin Woodman himself came running out of the door to embrace little Dorothy and give her a glad welcome. He welcomed her friends as well, and the Rainbow's Daughter he declared to be the loveliest vision his tin eyes had ever beheld. He patted Button-Bright's curly head tenderly, for he was fond of children, and turned to the shaggy man and shook both his hands at the same time.

Nick Chopper, the Emperor of the Winkies, who was also known throughout the Land of Oz as the Tin Woodman, was certainly a remarkable person. He was neatly made, all of tin, nicely soldered at the joints, and his various limbs were cleverly hinged to his body so that he could use them nearly as well as if they had been common flesh. Once, he told the shaggy man, he had been made all of flesh and bones, as other people are, and then he chopped wood in the forests to earn his living. But the axe slipped so often and cut off parts of him--which he had replaced with tin--that finally there was no flesh left, nothing but tin; so he became a real tin woodman. The wonderful Wizard of Oz had given him an excellent heart to replace his old one, and he didn't at all mind being tin. Every one loved him, he loved every one; and he was therefore as happy as the day was long.

The Emperor was proud of his new tin castle, and showed his visitors through all the rooms. Every bit of the furniture was made of brightly polished tin--the tables, chairs, beds, and all--even the floors and walls were of tin.

"I suppose," said he, "that there are no cleverer tinsmiths in all the world than the Winkies. It would be hard to match this castle in Kansas; wouldn't it, little Dorothy?"

"Very hard," replied the child, gravely.

"It must have cost a lot of money," remarked the shaggy man.

"Money! Money in Oz!" cried the Tin Woodman. "What a queer idea! Did you suppose we are so vulgar as to use money here?"

"Why not?" asked the shaggy man.

"If we used money to buy things with, instead of love and kindness and the desire to please one another, then we should be no better than the rest of the world," declared the Tin Woodman. "Fortunately money is not known in the Land of Oz at all. We have no rich, and no poor; for what one wishes the others all try to give him, in order to make him happy, and no one in all Oz cares to have more than he can use."

"Good!" cried the shaggy man, greatly pleased to hear this. "I also despise money--a man in Butterfield owes me fifteen cents, and I will not take it from him. The Land of Oz is surely the most favored land in all the world, and its people the happiest. I should like to live here always."

The Tin Woodman listened with respectful attention. Already he loved the shaggy man, although he did not yet know of the Love Magnet. So he said:

"If you can prove to the Princess Ozma that you are honest and true and worthy of our friendship, you may indeed live here all your days, and be as happy as we are."

"I'll try to prove that," said the shaggy man, earnestly.

"And now," continued the Emperor, "you must all go to your rooms and prepare for dinner, which will presently be served in the grand tin dining-hall. I am sorry, Shaggy Man, that I can not offer you a change of clothing; but I dress only in tin, myself, and I suppose that would not suit you."

"I care little about dress," said the shaggy man, indifferently.

"So I should imagine," replied the Emperor, with true politeness.

They were shown to their rooms and permitted to make such toilets as they could, and soon they assembled again in the grand tin dining-hall, even Toto

being present. For the Emperor was fond of Dorothy's little dog, and the girl explained to her friends that in Oz all animals were treated with as much consideration as the people--"if they behave themselves," she added.

Toto behaved himself, and sat in a tin high-chair beside Dorothy and ate his dinner from a tin platter.

Indeed, they all ate from tin dishes, but these were of pretty shapes and brightly polished; Dorothy thought they were just as good as silver.

Button-Bright looked curiously at the man who had "no appetite inside him," for the Tin Woodman, although he had prepared so fine a feast for his guests, ate not a mouthful himself, sitting patiently in his place to see that all built so they could eat were well and plentifully served.

What pleased Button-Bright most about the dinner was the tin orchestra that played sweet music while the company ate. The players were not tin, being just ordinary Winkies; but the instruments they played upon were all tin--tin trumpets, tin fiddles, tin drums and cymbals and flutes and horns and all. They played so nicely the "Shining Emperor Waltz," composed expressly in honor of the Tin Woodman by Mr. H. M. Wogglebug, T.E., that Polly could not resist dancing to it. After she had tasted a few dewdrops, freshly gathered for her, she danced gracefully to the music while the others finished their repast; and when she whirled until her fleecy draperies of rainbow hues enveloped her like a cloud, the Tin Woodman was so delighted that he clapped his tin hands until the noise of them drowned the sound of the cymbals.

Altogether it was a merry meal, although Polychrome ate little and the host nothing at all.

"I'm sorry the Rainbow's Daughter missed her mist-cakes," said the Tin Woodman to Dorothy; "but by a mistake Miss Polly's mist-cakes were mislaid and not missed until now. I'll try to have some for her breakfast."

They spent the evening telling stories, and the next morning left the splendid tin castle and set out upon the road to the Emerald City. The Tin Woodman went with them, of course, having by this time been so brightly polished that he sparkled like silver. His axe, which he always carried with him, had a steel blade that was tin plated and a handle covered with tin plate beautifully engraved and set with diamonds.

The Winkies assembled before the castle gates and cheered their Emperor as he marched away, and it was easy to see that they all loved him dearly.