

21. Dorothy Receives the Guests

Next morning Dorothy's breakfast was served in her own pretty sitting room, and she sent to invite Polly and the shaggy man to join her and Button-Bright at the meal. They came gladly, and Toto also had breakfast with them, so that the little party that had traveled together to Oz was once more reunited.

No sooner had they finished eating than they heard the distant blast of many trumpets, and the sound of a brass band playing martial music; so they all went out upon the balcony. This was at the front of the palace and overlooked the streets of the City, being higher than the wall that shut in the palace grounds. They saw approaching down the street a band of musicians, playing as hard and loud as they could, while the people of the Emerald City crowded the sidewalks and cheered so lustily that they almost drowned the noise of the drums and horns.

Dorothy looked to see what they were cheering at, and discovered that behind the band was the famous Scarecrow, riding proudly upon the back of a wooden Saw-Horse which pranced along the street almost as gracefully as if it had been made of flesh. Its hoofs, or rather the ends of its wooden legs, were shod with plates of solid gold, and the saddle strapped to the wooden body was richly embroidered and glistened with jewels.

As he reached the palace the Scarecrow looked up and saw Dorothy, and at once waved his peaked hat at her in greeting. He rode up to the front door and dismounted, and the band stopped playing and went away and the crowds of people returned to their dwellings.

By the time Dorothy and her friends had re-entered her room, the Scarecrow was there, and he gave the girl a hearty embrace and shook the hands of the others with his own squashy hands, which were white gloves filled with straw.

The shaggy man, Button-Bright, and Polychrome stared hard at this celebrated person, who was acknowledged to be the most popular and most beloved man in all the Land of Oz.

"Why, your face has been newly painted!" exclaimed Dorothy, when the first greetings were over.

"I had it touched up a bit by the Munchkin farmer who first made me," answered the Scarecrow, pleasantly. "My complexion had become a bit grey and faded, you know, and the paint had peeled off one end of my mouth, so I couldn't talk quite straight. Now I feel like myself again, and I may say without immodesty that my body is stuffed with the loveliest oat-straw in all Oz." He pushed against his chest. "Hear me crunkle?" he asked.

"Yes," said Dorothy; "you sound fine."

Button-Bright was wonderfully attracted by the strawman, and so was Polly. The shaggy man treated him with great respect, because he was so queerly made.

Jellia Jamb now came to say that Ozma wanted Princess Dorothy to receive the invited guests in the Throne-Room, as they arrived. The Ruler was herself busy ordering the preparations for the morrow's festivities, so she wished her friend to act in her place.

Dorothy willingly agreed, being the only other Princess in the Emerald City; so she went to the great Throne-Room and sat in Ozma's seat, placing Polly on one side of her and Button-Bright on the other. The Scarecrow stood at the left of the throne and the Tin Woodman at the right, while the Wonderful Wizard and the shaggy man stood behind.

The Cowardly Lion and the Hungry Tiger came in, with bright new bows of ribbon on their collars and tails. After greeting Dorothy affectionately the huge beasts lay down at the foot of the throne.

While they waited, the Scarecrow, who was near the little boy, asked:

"Why are you called Button-Bright?"

"Don't know," was the answer.

"Oh yes, you do, dear," said Dorothy. "Tell the Scarecrow how you got your name."

"Papa always said I was bright as a button, so mama always called me Button-Bright," announced the boy.

"Where is your mama?" asked the Scarecrow.

"Don't know," said Button-Bright.

"Where is your home?" asked the Scarecrow.

"Don't know," said Button-Bright.

"Don't you want to find your mama again?" asked the Scarecrow.

"Don't know," said Button-Bright, calmly.

The Scarecrow looked thoughtful.

"Your papa may have been right," he observed; "but there are many kinds of buttons, you see. There are silver and gold buttons, which are highly polished and glitter brightly. There are pearl and rubber buttons, and other kinds, with surfaces more or less bright. But there is still another sort of button which is covered with dull cloth, and that must be the sort your papa meant when he said you were bright as a button. Don't you think so?"

"Don't know," said Button-Bright.

Jack Pumpkinhead arrived, wearing a pair of new, white kid gloves; and he brought a birthday present for Ozma consisting of a necklace of pumpkin-seeds. In each seed was set a sparkling carolite, which is considered the rarest and most beautiful gem that exists. The necklace was in a plush case and Jellia Jamb put it on a table with the Princess Ozma's other presents.

Next came a tall, beautiful woman clothed in a splendid trailing gown, trimmed with exquisite lace as fine as cobweb. This was the important Sorceress known as Glinda the Good, who had been of great assistance to both Ozma and Dorothy. There was no humbug about her magic, you may be sure, and Glinda was as kind as she was powerful. She greeted Dorothy most lovingly, and kissed Button-Bright and Polly, and smiled upon the shaggy man, after which Jellia Jamb led the Sorceress to one of the most magnificent rooms of the royal palace and appointed fifty servants to wait upon her.

The next arrival was Mr. H. M. Woggle-Bug, T.E.; the "H. M." meaning Highly Magnified and the "T.E." meaning Thoroughly Educated. The Woggle-Bug was head professor at the Royal College of Oz, and he had composed a fine Ode in honor of Ozma's birthday. This he wanted to read to them; but the Scarecrow wouldn't let him.

Soon they heard a clucking sound and a chorus of "cheep! cheep!" and a servant threw open the door to allow Billina and her ten fluffy chicks to enter the Throne-Room. As the Yellow Hen marched proudly at the head of her family, Dorothy cried, "Oh, you lovely things!" and ran down from her seat to pet the little yellow downy balls. Billina wore a pearl necklace, and around

the neck of each chicken was a tiny gold chain holding a locket with the letter "D" engraved upon the outside.

"Open the lockets, Dorothy," said Billina. The girl obeyed and found a picture of herself in each locket. "They were named after you, my dear," continued the Yellow Hen, "so I wanted all my chickens to wear your picture. Cluck--cluck! come here, Dorothy--this minute!" she cried, for the chickens were scattered and wandering all around the big room.

They obeyed the call at once, and came running as fast as they could, fluttering their fluffy wings in a laughable way.

It was lucky that Billina gathered the little ones under her soft breast just then, for Tik-tok came in and tramped up to the throne on his flat copper feet.

"I am all wound up and work-ing fine-ly," said the clock-work man to Dorothy.

"I can hear him tick," declared Button-Bright.

"You are quite the polished gentleman," said the Tin Woodman. "Stand up here beside the shaggy man, Tik-tok, and help receive the company."

Dorothy placed soft cushions in a corner for Billina and her chicks, and had just returned to the Throne and seated herself when the playing of the royal band outside the palace announced the approach of distinguished guests.

And my, how they did stare when the High Chamberlain threw open the doors and the visitors entered the Throne-Room!

First walked a gingerbread man neatly formed and baked to a lovely brown tint. He wore a silk hat and carried a candy cane prettily striped with red and yellow. His shirt-front and cuffs were white frosting, and the buttons on his coat were licorice drops.

Behind the gingerbread man came a child with flaxen hair and merry blue eyes, dressed in white pajamas, with sandals on the soles of its pretty bare feet. The child looked around smiling and thrust its hands into the pockets of the pajamas. Close after it came a big rubber bear, walking erect on its hind feet. The bear had twinkling black eyes, and its body looked as if it had been pumped full of air.

Following these curious visitors were two tall, thin men and two short, fat men, all four dressed in gorgeous uniforms.

Ozma's High Chamberlain now hurried forward to announce the names of the new arrivals, calling out in a loud voice:

"His Gracious and Most Edible Majesty, King Dough the First, Ruler of the Two Kingdoms of Hiland and Loland. Also the Head Boolywag of his Majesty, known as Chick the Cherub, and their faithful friend Para Bruin, the rubber bear."

These great personages bowed low as their names were called, and Dorothy hastened to introduce them to the assembled company. They were the first foreign arrivals, and the friends of Princess Ozma were polite to them and tried to make them feel that they were welcome.

Chick the Cherub shook hands with every one, including Billina, and was so joyous and frank and full of good spirits that John Dough's Head Booleywag at once became a prime favorite.

"Is it a boy or a girl?" whispered Dorothy.

"Don't know," said Button-Bright.

"Goodness me! what a queer lot of people you are," exclaimed the rubber bear, looking at the assembled company.

"So're you," said Button-Bright, gravely. "Is King Dough good to eat?"

"He's too good to eat," laughed Chick the Cherub.

"I hope none of you are fond of gingerbread," said the King, rather anxiously.

"We should never think of eating our visitors, if we were," declared the Scarecrow; "so please do not worry, for you will be perfectly safe while you remain in Oz."

"Why do they call you Chick?" the Yellow Hen asked the child.

"Because I'm an Incubator Baby, and never had any parents," replied the Head Booleywag.

"My chicks have a parent, and I'm it," said Billina.

"I'm glad of that," answered the Cherub, "because they'll have more fun worrying you than if they were brought up in an Incubator. The Incubator never worries, you know."

King John Dough had brought for Ozma's birthday present a lovely gingerbread crown, with rows of small pearls around it and a fine big pearl in each of its five points. After this had been received by Dorothy with proper thanks and placed on the table with the other presents, the visitors from Hiland and Loland were escorted to their rooms by the High Chamberlain.

They had no sooner departed than the band before the palace began to play again, announcing more arrivals, and as these were doubtless from foreign parts the High Chamberlain hurried back to receive them in his most official manner.