

## Chapter Eight - Button-Bright is Lost and Found Again

"Wake up--wake up!" called the voice of the Bumpy Man. "Didn't I tell you winter was coming? I could hear it coming with my left ear, and the proof is that it is now snowing hard outside."

"Is it?" said Trot, rubbing her eyes and creeping out of her blanket. "Where I live, in California, I have never seen snow, except far away on the tops of high mountains."

"Well, this is the top of a high mountain," returned the bumpy one, "and for that reason we get our heaviest snowfalls right here."

The little girl went to the window and looked out. The air was filled with falling white flakes, so large in size and so queer in form that she was puzzled.

"Are you certain this is snow?" she asked.

"To be sure. I must get my snow-shovel and turn out to shovel a path. Would you like to come with me?"

"Yes," she said, and followed the Bumpy Man out when he opened the door. Then she exclaimed: "Why, it isn't cold a bit!"

"Of course not," replied the man. "It was cold last night, before the snowstorm; but snow, when it falls, is always crisp and warm."

Trot gathered a handful of it.

"Why, it's popcorn?" she cried.

"Certainly; all snow is popcorn. What did you expect it to be?"

"Popcorn is not snow in my country."

"Well, it is the only snow we have in the Land of Mo, so you may as well make the best of it," said he, a little impatiently. "I'm not responsible for the absurd things that happen in your country, and when you're in Mo you must do as the Momen do. Eat some of our snow, and you will find it is good. The only fault I find with our snow is that we get too much of it at times."

With this the Bumpy Man set to work shoveling a path and he was so quick and industrious that he piled up the popcorn in great banks on either side of the trail that led to the mountain-top from the plains below. While he worked,

Trot ate popcorn and found it crisp and slightly warm, as well as nicely salted and buttered. Presently Cap'n Bill came out of the house and joined her.

"What's this?" he asked.

"Mo snow," said she. "But it isn't real snow, although it falls from the sky. It's popcorn."

Cap'n Bill tasted it; then he sat down in the path and began to eat. The Ork came out and pecked away with its bill as fast as it could. They all liked popcorn and they all were hungry this morning.

Meantime the flakes of "Mo snow" came down so fast that the number of them almost darkened the air. The Bumpy Man was now shoveling quite a distance down the mountain-side, while the path behind him rapidly filled up with fresh-fallen popcorn. Suddenly Trot heard him call out:

"Goodness gracious--mince pie and pancakes!--here is some one buried in the snow."

She ran toward him at once and the others followed, wading through the corn and crunching it underneath their feet. The Mo snow was pretty deep where the Bumpy Man was shoveling and from beneath a great bank of it he had uncovered a pair of feet.

"Dear me! Someone has been lost in the storm," said Cap'n Bill. "I hope he is still alive. Let's pull him out and see."

He took hold of one foot and the Bumpy Man took hold of the other. Then they both pulled and out from the heap of popcorn came a little boy. He was dressed in a brown velvet jacket and knickerbockers, with brown stockings, buckled shoes and a blue shirt-waist that had frills down its front. When drawn from the heap the boy was chewing a mouthful of popcorn and both his hands were full of it. So at first he couldn't speak to his rescuers but lay quite still and eyed them calmly until he had swallowed his mouthful. Then he said:

"Get my cap," and stuffed more popcorn into his mouth.

While the Bumpy Man began shoveling into the corn-bank to find the boy's cap, Trot was laughing joyfully and Cap'n Bill had a broad grin on his face. The Ork looked from one to another and asked:

"Who is this stranger?"

"Why, it's Button-Bright, of course," answered Trot. "If anyone ever finds a lost boy, he can make up his mind it's Button-Bright. But how he ever came to be lost in this far-away country is more'n I can make out."

"Where does he belong?" inquired the Ork.

"His home used to be in Philadelphia, I think; but I'm quite sure Button-Bright doesn't belong anywhere."

"That's right," said the boy, nodding his head as he swallowed the second mouthful.

"Everyone belongs somewhere," remarked the Ork.

"Not me," insisted Button-Bright. "I'm half way round the world from Philadelphia, and I've lost my Magic Umbrella, that used to carry me anywhere. Stands to reason that if I can't get back I haven't any home. But I don't care much. This is a pretty good country, Trot. I've had lots of fun here."

By this time the Mountain Ear had secured the boy's cap and was listening to the conversation with much interest.

"It seems you know this poor, snow-covered cast-away," he said.

"Yes, indeed," answered Trot. "We made a journey together to Sky Island, once, and were good friends."

"Well, then I'm glad I saved his life," said the Bumpy Man.

"Much obliged, Mr. Knobs," said Button-Bright, sitting up and staring at him, "but I don't believe you've saved anything except some popcorn that I might have eaten had you not disturbed me. It was nice and warm in that bank of popcorn, and there was plenty to eat. What made you dig me out? And what makes you so bumpy everywhere?"

"As for the bumps," replied the man, looking at himself with much pride, "I was born with them and I suspect they were a gift from the fairies. They make me look rugged and big, like the mountain I serve."

"All right," said Button-Bright and began eating popcorn again.

It had stopped snowing, now, and great flocks of birds were gathering around the mountain-side, eating the popcorn with much eagerness and scarcely noticing the people at all. There were birds of every size and color, most of them having gorgeous feathers and plumes.

"Just look at them!" exclaimed the Ork scornfully. "Aren't they dreadful creatures, all covered with feathers?"

"I think they're beautiful," said Trot, and this made the Ork so indignant that he went back into the house and sulked.

Button-Bright reached out his hand and caught a big bird by the leg. At once it rose into the air and it was so strong that it nearly carried the little boy with it. He let go the leg in a hurry and the bird flew down again and began to eat of the popcorn, not being frightened in the least.

This gave Cap'n Bill an idea. He felt in his pocket and drew out several pieces of stout string. Moving very quietly, so as to not alarm the birds, he crept up to several of the biggest ones and tied cords around their legs, thus making them prisoners. The birds were so intent on their eating that they did not notice what had happened to them, and when about twenty had been captured in this manner Cap'n Bill tied the ends of all the strings together and fastened them to a huge stone, so they could not escape.

The Bumpy Man watched the old sailor's actions with much curiosity.

"The birds will be quiet until they've eaten up all the snow," he said, "but then they will want to fly away to their homes. Tell me, sir, what will the poor things do when they find they can't fly?"

"It may worry 'em a little," replied Cap'n Bill, "but they're not going to be hurt if they take it easy and behave themselves."

Our friends had all made a good breakfast of the delicious popcorn and now they walked toward the house again. Button-Bright walked beside Trot and held her hand in his, because they were old friends and he liked the little girl very much. The boy was not so old as Trot, and small as she was he was half a head shorter in height. The most remarkable thing about Button-Bright was that he was always quiet and composed, whatever happened, and nothing was ever able to astonish him. Trot liked him because he was not rude and never tried to plague her. Cap'n Bill liked him because he had found the boy cheerful and brave at all times, and willing to do anything he was asked to do.

When they came to the house Trot sniffed the air and asked "Don't I smell perfume?"

"I think you do," said the Bumpy Man. "You smell violets, and that proves there is a breeze springing up from the south. All our winds and breezes are

perfumed and for that reason we are glad to have them blow in our direction. The south breeze always has a violet odor; the north breeze has the fragrance of wild roses; the east breeze is perfumed with lilies-of-the-valley and the west wind with lilac blossoms. So we need no weathervane to tell us which way the wind is blowing. We have only to smell the perfume and it informs us at once."

Inside the house they found the Ork, and Button-Bright regarded the strange, birdlike creature with curious interest. After examining it closely for a time he asked:

"Which way does your tail whirl?"

"Either way," said the Ork.

Button-Bright put out his hand and tried to spin it.

"Don't do that!" exclaimed the Ork.

"Why not?" inquired the boy.

"Because it happens to be my tail, and I reserve the right to whirl it myself," explained the Ork.

"Let's go out and fly somewhere," proposed Button-Bright. "I want to see how the tail works."

"Not now," said the Ork. "I appreciate your interest in me, which I fully deserve; but I only fly when I am going somewhere, and if I got started I might not stop."

"That reminds me," remarked Cap'n Bill, "to ask you, friend Ork, how we are going to get away from here?"

"Get away!" exclaimed the Bumpy Man. "Why don't you stay here? You won't find any nicer place than Mo."

"Have you been anywhere else, sir?"

"No; I can't say that I have," admitted the Mountain Ear.

"Then permit me to say you're no judge," declared Cap'n Bill. "But you haven't answered my question, friend Ork. How are we to get away from this mountain?"

The Ork reflected a while before he answered.

"I might carry one of you--the boy or the girl--upon my back," said he, "but three big people are more than I can manage, although I have carried two of you for a short distance. You ought not to have eaten those purple berries so soon."

"P'r'aps we did make a mistake," Cap'n Bill acknowledged.

"Or we might have brought some of those lavender berries with us, instead of so many purple ones," suggested Trot regretfully.

Cap'n Bill made no reply to this statement, which showed he did not fully agree with the little girl; but he fell into deep thought, with wrinkled brows, and finally he said:

"If those purple berries would make anything grow bigger, whether it'd eaten the lavender ones or not, I could find a way out of our troubles."

They did not understand this speech and looked at the old sailor as if expecting him to explain what he meant. But just then a chorus of shrill cries rose from outside.

"Here! Let me go--let me go!" the voices seemed to say. "Why are we insulted in this way? Mountain Ear, come and help us!"

Trot ran to the window and looked out.

"It's the birds you caught, Cap'n," she said. "I didn't know they could talk."

"Oh, yes; all the birds in Mo are educated to talk," said the Bumpy Man. Then he looked at Cap'n Bill uneasily and added: "Won't you let the poor things go?"

"I'll see," replied the sailor, and walked out to where the birds were fluttering and complaining because the strings would not allow them to fly away.

"Listen to me!" he cried, and at once they became still. "We three people who are strangers in your land want to go to some other country, and we want three of you birds to carry us there. We know we are asking a great favor, but it's the only way we can think of--excep' walkin', an' I'm not much good at that because I've a wooden leg. Besides, Trot an' Button-Bright are too small to undertake a long and tiresome journey. Now, tell me: Which three of you birds will consent to carry us?"

The birds looked at one another as if greatly astonished. Then one of them replied: "You must be crazy, old man. Not one of us is big enough to fly with even the smallest of your party."

"I'll fix the matter of size," promised Cap'n Bill. "If three of you will agree to carry us, I'll make you big an' strong enough to do it, so it won't worry you a bit."

The birds considered this gravely. Living in a magic country, they had no doubt but that the strange one-legged man could do what he said. After a little, one of them asked:

"If you make us big, would we stay big always?"

"I think so," replied Cap'n Bill.

They chattered a while among themselves and then the bird that had first spoken said: "I'll go, for one."

"So will I," said another; and after a pause a third said: "I'll go, too."

Perhaps more would have volunteered, for it seemed that for some reason they all longed to be bigger than they were; but three were enough for Cap'n Bill's purpose and so he promptly released all the others, who immediately flew away.

The three that remained were cousins, and all were of the same brilliant plumage and in size about as large as eagles. When Trot questioned them she found they were quite young, having only abandoned their nests a few weeks before. They were strong young birds, with clear, brave eyes, and the little girl decided they were the most beautiful of all the feathered creatures she had ever seen.

Cap'n Bill now took from his pocket the wooden box with the sliding cover and removed the three purple berries, which were still in good condition.

"Eat these," he said, and gave one to each of the birds. They obeyed, finding the fruit very pleasant to taste. In a few seconds they began to grow in size and grew so fast that Trot feared they would never stop. But they finally did stop growing, and then they were much larger than the Ork, and nearly the size of full-grown ostriches.

Cap'n Bill was much pleased by this result.

"You can carry us now, all right," said he.

The birds strutted around with pride, highly pleased with their immense size.

"I don't see, though," said Trot doubtfully, "how we're going to ride on their backs without falling off."

"We're not going to ride on their backs," answered Cap'n Bill. "I'm going to make swings for us to ride in."

He then asked the Bumpy Man for some rope, but the man had no rope. He had, however, an old suit of gray clothes which he gladly presented to Cap'n Bill, who cut the cloth into strips and twisted it so that it was almost as strong as rope. With this material he attached to each bird a swing that dangled below its feet, and Button-Bright made a trial flight in one of them to prove that it was safe and comfortable. When all this had been arranged one of the birds asked:

"Where do you wish us to take you?"

"Why, just follow the Ork," said Cap'n Bill. "He will be our leader, and wherever the Ork flies you are to fly, and wherever the Ork lands you are to land. Is that satisfactory?"

The birds declared it was quite satisfactory, so Cap'n Bill took counsel with the Ork.

"On our way here," said that peculiar creature, "I noticed a broad, sandy desert at the left of me, on which was no living thing."

"Then we'd better keep away from it," replied the sailor.

"Not so," insisted the Ork. "I have found, on my travels, that the most pleasant countries often lie in the midst of deserts; so I think it would be wise for us to fly over this desert and discover what lies beyond it. For in the direction we came from lies the ocean, as we well know, and beyond here is this strange Land of Mo, which we do not care to explore. On one side, as we can see from this mountain, is a broad expanse of plain, and on the other the desert. For my part, I vote for the desert."

"What do you say, Trot?" inquired Cap'n Bill.

"It's all the same to me," she replied.



No one thought of asking Button-Bright's opinion, so it was decided to fly over the desert. They bade good-bye to the Bumpy Man and thanked him for his kindness and hospitality. Then they seated themselves in the swings--one for each bird--and told the Ork to start away and they would follow.

The whirl of the Ork's tail astonished the birds at first, but after he had gone a short distance they rose in the air, carrying their passengers easily, and flew with strong, regular strokes of their great wings in the wake of their leader.