

CHAPTER 11 - BUTTON-BRIGHT LOSES HIMSELF

The Patchwork Girl, who never slept and who could see very well in the dark, had wandered among the rocks and bushes all night long, with the result that she was able to tell some good news the next morning. "Over the crest of the hill before us," she said, "is a big grove of trees of many kinds on which all sorts of fruits grow. If you will go there, you will find a nice breakfast awaiting you." This made them eager to start, so as soon as the blankets were folded and strapped to the back of the Sawhorse, they all took their places on the animals and set out for the big grove Scraps had told them of.

As soon as they got over the brow of the hill, they discovered it to be a really immense orchard, extending for miles to the right and left of them. As their way led straight through the trees, they hurried forward as fast as possible. The first trees they came to bore quinces, which they did not like. Then there were rows of citron trees and then crab apples and afterward limes and lemons. But beyond these they found a grove of big, golden oranges, juicy and sweet, and the fruit hung low on the branches so they could pluck it easily.

They helped themselves freely and all ate oranges as they continued on their way. Then, a little farther along, they came to some trees bearing fine, red apples, which they also feasted on, and the Wizard stopped here long enough to tie a lot of the apples in one end of a blanket.

"We do not know what will happen to us after we leave this delightful orchard," he said, "so I think it wise to carry a supply of apples with us. We can't starve as long as we have apples, you know."

Scraps wasn't riding the Woozy just now. She loved to climb the trees and swing herself by the branches from one tree to another. Some of the choicest fruit was gathered by the Patchwork Girl from the very highest limbs and tossed down to the others. Suddenly, Trot asked, "Where's Button-Bright?" and when the others looked for him, they found the boy had disappeared.

"Dear me!" cried Dorothy. "I guess he's lost again, and that will mean our waiting here until we can find him."

"It's a good place to wait," suggested Betsy, who had found a plum tree and was eating some of its fruit.

"How can you wait here and find Button-Bright at one and the same time?" inquired the Patchwork Girl, hanging by her toes on a limb just over the heads of the three mortal girls.

"Perhaps he'll come back here," answered Dorothy.

"If he tries that, he'll prob'ly lose his way," said Trot. "I've known him to do that lots of times. It's losing his way that gets him lost."

"Very true," said the Wizard. "So all the rest of you must stay here while I go look for the boy."

"Won't YOU get lost, too?" asked Betsy.

"I hope not, my dear."

"Let ME go," said Scraps, dropping lightly to the ground. "I can't get lost, and I'm more likely to find Button-Bright than any of you." Without waiting for permission, she darted away through the trees and soon disappeared from their view.

"Dorothy," said Toto, squatting beside his little mistress, "I've lost my growl."

"How did that happen?" she asked.

"I don't know," replied Toto. "Yesterday morning the Woozy nearly stepped on me, and I tried to growl at him and found I couldn't growl a bit."

"Can you bark?" inquired Dorothy.

"Oh, yes indeed."

"Then never mind the growl," said she.

"But what will I do when I get home to the Glass Cat and the Pink Kitten?" asked the little dog in an anxious tone.

"They won't mind if you can't growl at them, I'm sure," said Dorothy. "I'm sorry for you, of course, Toto, for it's just those things we can't do that we want to do most of all; but before we get back, you may find your growl again."

"Do you think the person who stole Ozma stole my growl?"

Dorothy smiled.

"Perhaps, Toto."

"Then he's a scoundrel!" cried the little dog.

"Anyone who would steal Ozma is as bad as bad can be," agreed Dorothy, "and when we remember that our dear friend, the lovely Ruler of Oz, is lost, we ought not to worry over just a growl."

Toto was not entirely satisfied with this remark, for the more he thought upon his lost growl, the more important his misfortune became. When no one was looking, he went away among the trees and tried his best to growl--even a little bit--but could not manage to do so. All he could do was bark, and a bark cannot take the place of a growl, so he sadly returned to the others.

Now Button-Bright had no idea that he was lost at first. He had merely wandered from tree to tree seeking the finest fruit until he discovered he was alone in the great orchard. But that didn't worry him just then, and seeing some apricot trees farther on, he went to them. Then he discovered some cherry trees; just beyond these were some tangerines. "We've found 'most ev'ry kind of fruit but peaches," he said to himself, "so I guess there are peaches here, too, if I can find the trees."

He searched here and there, paying no attention to his way, until he found that the trees surrounding him bore only nuts. He put some walnuts in his pockets and kept on searching, and at last--right among the nut trees--he came upon one solitary peach tree. It was a graceful, beautiful tree, but although it was thickly leaved, it bore no fruit except one large, splendid peach, rosy-cheeked and fuzzy and just right to eat.

In his heart he doubted this statement, for this was a solitary peach tree, while all the other fruits grew upon many trees set close to one another; but that one luscious bite made him unable to resist eating the rest of it, and soon the peach was all gone except the pit. Button-Bright was about to throw this peach pit away when he noticed that it was of pure gold. Of course, this surprised him, but so many things in the Land of Oz were surprising that he did not give much thought to the golden peach pit. He put it in his pocket, however, to show to the girls, and five minutes afterward had forgotten all about it.

For now he realized that he was far separated from his companions, and knowing that this would worry them and delay their journey, he began to shout as loud as he could. His voice did not penetrate very far among all those trees, and after shouting a dozen times and getting no answer, he sat

down on the ground and said, "Well, I'm lost again. It's too bad, but I don't see how it can be helped."

As he leaned his back against a tree, he looked up and saw a Bluefinch fly down from the sky and alight upon a branch just before him. The bird looked and looked at him. First it looked with one bright eye and then turned its head and looked at him with the other eye. Then, fluttering its wings a little, it said, "Oho! So you've eaten the enchanted peach, have you?"

"Was it enchanted?" asked Button-Bright.

"Of course," replied the Bluefinch. "Ugu the Shoemaker did that."

"But why? And how was it enchanted? And what will happen to one who eats it?" questioned the boy.

"Ask Ugu the Shoemaker. He knows," said the bird, preening its feathers with its bill.

"And who is Ugu the Shoemaker?"

"The one who enchanted the peach and placed it here--in the exact center of the Great Orchard--so no one would ever find it. We birds didn't dare to eat it; we are too wise for that. But you are Button-Bright from the Emerald City, and you, YOU, YOU ate the enchanted peach! You must explain to Ugu the Shoemaker why you did that."

And then, before the boy could ask any more questions, the bird flew away and left him alone.

Button-Bright was not much worried to find that the peach he had eaten was enchanted. It certainly had tasted very good, and his stomach didn't ache a bit. So again he began to reflect upon the best way to rejoin his friends.

"Whichever direction I follow is likely to be the wrong one," he said to himself, "so I'd better stay just where I am and let THEM find ME--if they can."

A White Rabbit came hopping through the orchard and paused a little way off to look at him. "Don't be afraid," said Button-Bright. "I won't hurt you."

"Oh, I'm not afraid for myself," returned the White Rabbit. "It's you I'm worried about."

"Yes, I'm lost," said the boy.

"I fear you are, indeed," answered the Rabbit. "Why on earth did you eat the enchanted peach?"

The boy looked at the excited little animal thoughtfully. "There were two reasons," he explained. "One reason was that I like peaches, and the other reason was that I didn't know it was enchanted."

"That won't save you from Ugu the Shoemaker," declared the White Rabbit, and it scurried away before the boy could ask any more questions.

"Rabbits and birds," he thought, "are timid creatures and seem afraid of this shoemaker, whoever he may be. If there was another peach half as good as that other, I'd eat it in spite of a dozen enchantments or a hundred shoemakers!"

Just then, Scraps came dancing along and saw him sitting at the foot of the tree. "Oh, here you are!" she said. "Up to your old tricks, eh? Don't you know it's impolite to get lost and keep everybody waiting for you? Come along, and I'll lead you back to Dorothy and the others."

Button-Bright rose slowly to accompany her.

"That wasn't much of a loss," he said cheerfully. "I haven't been gone half a day, so there's no harm done."

Dorothy, however, when the boy rejoined the party, gave him a good scolding. "When we're doing such an important thing as searching for Ozma," said she, "it's naughty for you to wander away and keep us from getting on. S'pose she's a pris'ner in a dungeon cell! Do you want to keep our dear Ozma there any longer than we can help?"

"If she's in a dungeon cell, how are you going to get her out?" inquired the boy.

"Never you mind. We'll leave that to the Wizard. He's sure to find a way."

The Wizard said nothing, for he realized that without his magic tools he could do no more than any other person. But there was no use reminding his companions of that fact; it might discourage them. "The important thing just now," he remarked, "is to find Ozma, and as our party is again happily reunited, I propose we move on."

As they came to the edge of the Great Orchard, the sun was setting and they knew it would soon be dark. So it was decided to camp under the trees, as another broad plain was before them. The Wizard spread the blankets on a

bed of soft leaves, and presently all of them except Scraps and the Sawhorse were fast asleep. Toto snuggled close to his friend the Lion, and the Woozy snored so loudly that the Patchwork Girl covered his square head with her apron to deaden the sound.