

CHAPTER 26 - DOROTHY FORGIVES

The gray dove which had once been Ugu the Shoemaker sat on its tree in the far Quadling Country and moped, chirping dismally and brooding over its misfortunes. After a time, the Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman came along and sat beneath the tree, paying no heed to the mutterings of the gray dove. The Tin Woodman took a small oilcan from his tin pocket and carefully oiled his tin joints with it.

While he was thus engaged, the Scarecrow remarked, "I feel much better, dear comrade, since we found that heap of nice, clean straw and you stuffed me anew with it."

"And I feel much better now that my joints are oiled," returned the Tin Woodman with a sigh of pleasure. "You and I, friend Scarecrow, are much more easily cared for than those clumsy meat people, who spend half their time dressing in fine clothes and who must live in splendid dwellings in order to be contented and happy. You and I do not eat, and so we are spared the dreadful bother of getting three meals a day. Nor do we waste half our lives in sleep, a condition that causes the meat people to lose all consciousness and become as thoughtless and helpless as logs of wood."

"You speak truly," responded the Scarecrow, tucking some wisps of straw into his breast with his padded fingers. "I often feel sorry for the meat people, many of whom are my friends. Even the beasts are happier than they, for they require less to make them content. And the birds are the luckiest creatures of all, for they can fly swiftly where they will and find a home at any place they care to perch. Their food consists of seeds and grains they gather from the fields, and their drink is a sip of water from some running brook. If I could not be a Scarecrow or a Tin Woodman, my next choice would be to live as a bird does."

The gray dove had listened carefully to this speech and seemed to find comfort in it, for it hushed its moaning. And just then the Tin Woodman discovered Cayke's dishpan, which was on the ground quite near to him. "Here is a rather pretty utensil," he said, taking it in his tin hand to examine it, "but I would not care to own it. Whoever fashioned it of gold and covered it with diamonds did not add to its usefulness, nor do I consider it as beautiful as the bright dishpans of tin one usually sees. No yellow color is ever so handsome

as the silver sheen of tin," and he turned to look at his tin legs and body with approval.

"I cannot quite agree with you there," replied the Scarecrow. "My straw stuffing has a light yellow color, and it is not only pretty to look at, but it crinkles most delightfully when I move."

"Let us admit that all colors are good in their proper places," said the Tin Woodman, who was too kind-hearted to quarrel, "but you must agree with me that a dishpan that is yellow is unnatural. What shall we do with this one, which we have just found?"

"Let us carry it back to the Emerald City," suggested the Scarecrow. "Some of our friends might like to have it for a foot-bath, and in using it that way, its golden color and sparkling ornaments would not injure its usefulness."

So they went away and took the jeweled dishpan with them. And after wandering through the country for a day or so longer, they learned the news that Ozma had been found. Therefore they straightway returned to the Emerald City and presented the dishpan to Princess Ozma as a token of their joy that she had been restored to them. Ozma promptly gave the diamond-studded gold dishpan to Cayke the Cookie Cook, who was delighted at regaining her lost treasure that she danced up and down in glee and then threw her skinny arms around Ozma's neck and kissed her gratefully. Cayke's mission was now successfully accomplished, but she was having such a good time at the Emerald City that she seemed in no hurry to go back to the Country of the Yips.

It was several weeks after the dishpan had been restored to the Cookie Cook when one day, as Dorothy was seated in the royal gardens with Trot and Betsy beside her, a gray dove came flying down and alighted at the girl's feet.

"I am Ugu the Shoemaker," said the dove in a soft, mourning voice, "and I have come to ask you to forgive me for the great wrong I did in stealing Ozma and the magic that belonged to her and to others."

"Are you sorry, then?" asked Dorothy, looking hard at the bird.

"I am VERY sorry," declared Ugu. "I've been thinking over my misdeeds for a long time, for doves have little else to do but think, and I'm surprised that I was such a wicked man and had so little regard for the rights of others. I am now convinced that even had I succeeded in making myself ruler of all Oz, I

should not have been happy, for many days of quiet thought have shown me that only those things one acquires honestly are able to render one content."

"I guess that's so," said Trot.

"Anyhow," said Betsy, "the bad man seems truly sorry, and if he has now become a good and honest man, we ought to forgive him."

"I fear I cannot become a good MAN again," said Ugu, "for the transformation I am under will always keep me in the form of a dove. But with the kind forgiveness of my former enemies, I hope to become a very good dove and highly respected."

"Wait here till I run for my Magic Belt," said Dorothy, "and I'll transform you back to your reg'lar shape in a jiffy."

"No, don't do that!" pleaded the dove, fluttering its wings in an excited way. "I only want your forgiveness. I don't want to be a man again. As Ugu the Shoemaker I was skinny and old and unlovely. As a dove I am quite pretty to look at. As a man I was ambitious and cruel, while as a dove I can be content with my lot and happy in my simple life. I have learned to love the free and independent life of a bird, and I'd rather not change back."

"Just as you like, Ugu," said Dorothy, resuming her seat. "Perhaps you are right, for you're certainly a better dove than you were a man, and if you should ever backslide an' feel wicked again, you couldn't do much harm as a gray dove."

"Then you forgive me for all the trouble I caused you?" he asked earnestly.

"Of course. Anyone who's sorry just has to be forgiven."

"Thank you," said the gray dove, and flew away again.

THE END