

The TIN WOODMAN of Oz

by L. Frank Baum

CHAPTER 22 - NIMMIE AMEE



We may be sure that at this moment our friends were all anxious to see the end of the adventure that had caused them so many trials and troubles. Perhaps the Tin Woodman's heart did not beat any faster, because it was made of red velvet and stuffed with sawdust, and the Tin Soldier's heart was made of tin and reposed in his tin bosom without a hint of emotion. However, there is little doubt that they both knew that a critical moment in their lives had arrived, and that Nimmie Amee's decision was destined to influence the future of one or the other.

As they assumed their natural sizes and the rhubarb leaves that had before towered above their heads now barely covered their feet, they looked around the garden and found that no person was visible save themselves. No sound of activity came from the house, either, but they walked to the front door, which had a little porch built before it, and there the two tinmen stood side by side while both knocked upon the door with their tin knuckles.

As no one seemed eager to answer the summons they knocked again; and then again. Finally they heard a stir from within and someone coughed.

"Who's there?" called a girl's voice.

"It's I!" cried the tin twins, together.

"How did you get there?" asked the voice. They hesitated how to reply, so Woot answered for them:

"By means of magic."

"Oh," said the unseen girl. "Are you friends, or foes?"

"Friends!" they all exclaimed. Then they heard footsteps approach the door, which slowly opened and revealed a very pretty Munchkin girl standing in the doorway.

"Nimmie Amee!" cried the tin twins.

"That's my name," replied the girl, looking at them in cold surprise. "But who can you be?"

"Don't you know me, Nimmie?" said the Tin Woodman. "I'm your old sweetheart, Nick Chopper!"

"Don't you know me, my dear?" said the Tin Soldier. "I'm your old sweetheart, Captain Fyter!"

Nimmie Amee smiled at them both. Then she looked beyond them at the rest of the party and smiled again. However, she seemed more amused than pleased. "Come in," she said, leading the way inside. "Even sweethearts

are forgotten after a time, but you and your friends are welcome.”

The room they now entered was cosy and comfortable, being neatly furnished and well swept and dusted. But they found someone there besides Nimmie Amee. A man dressed in the attractive Munchkin costume was lazily reclining in an easy chair, and he sat up and turned his eyes on the visitors with a cold and indifferent stare that was almost insolent. He did not even rise from his seat to greet the strangers, but after glaring at them he looked away with a scowl, as if they were of too little importance to interest him.

The tin men returned this man’s stare with interest, but they did not look away from him because neither of them seemed able to take his eyes off this Munchkin, who was remarkable in having one tin arm quite like their own tin arms.

“Seems to me,” said Captain Fyter, in a voice that sounded harsh and indignant, “that you, sir, are a vile impostor!”

“Gently—gently!” cautioned the Scarecrow; “don’t be rude to strangers, Captain.”

“Rude?” shouted the Tin Soldier, now very much provoked; “why, he’s a scoundrel—a thief! The villain is wearing my own head!”

“Yes,” added the Tin Woodman, “and he’s wearing my right arm! I can recognize it by the two warts on the little finger.”

“Good gracious!” exclaimed Woot. “Then this must be the man whom old Ku-Klip patched together and named Chopfyt.”

The man now turned toward them, still scowling. “Yes, that is my name,” he said in a voice like a growl, “and it is absurd for you tin creatures, or for anyone else, to claim my head, or arm, or any part of me, for they are my personal property.”

“You? You’re a Nobody!” shouted Captain Fyter.

“You’re just a mix-up,” declared the Emperor.

“Now, now, gentlemen,” interrupted Nimmie Amee, “I must ask you to be more respectful to poor Chopfyt. For, being my guests, it is not polite for you to insult my husband.”

“Your husband!” the tin twins exclaimed in dismay.

“Yes,” said she. “I married Chopfyt a long time ago, because my other two sweethearts had deserted me.”

This reproof embarrassed both Nick Chopper and Captain Fyter. They looked down, shamefaced, for a moment, and then the Tin Woodman explained in an earnest voice:

“I rusted.”

“So did I,” said the Tin Soldier.

“I could not know that, of course,” asserted Nimmie Amee. “All I knew was that neither of you came to marry me, as you had promised to do. But men are not scarce in the Land of Oz. After I came here to live, I met Mr. Chopfyt, and he was the more interesting because he reminded me strongly of both of you, as you were before you became tin. He

even had a tin arm, and that reminded me of you the more.”

“No wonder!” remarked the Scarecrow.

“But, listen, Nimmie Amee!” said the astonished Woot; “he really is both of them, for he is made of their cast-off parts.”

“Oh, you’re quite wrong,” declared Polychrome, laughing, for she was greatly enjoying the confusion of the others. “The tin men are still themselves, as they will tell you, and so Chopfyt must be someone else.” They looked at her bewildered, for the facts in the case were too puzzling to be grasped at once.

“It is all the fault of old Ku-Klip,” muttered the Tin Woodman. “He had no right to use our castoff parts to make another man with.”

“It seems he did it, however,” said Nimmie Amee calmly, “and I married him because he resembled you both. I won’t say he is a husband to be proud of, because he has a mixed nature and isn’t always an agreeable companion. There are times when I have to chide him gently, both with my tongue and with my broomstick. But he is my husband, and I must make the best of him.”

“If you don’t like him,” suggested the Tin Woodman, “Captain Fyter and I can chop him up with our axe and sword, and each take such parts of the fellow as belong to him. Then we are willing for you to select one of us as your husband.”

“That is a good idea,” approved Captain Fyter, drawing his sword.

“No,” said Nimmie Amee; “I think I’ll keep the husband I now have. He is now trained to draw the water and carry in the wood and hoe the cabbages and weed the flower-beds and dust the furniture and perform many tasks of a like character. A new husband would have to be scolded—and gently chided—until he learns my ways. So I think it will be better to keep my Chopfyt, and I see no reason why you should object to him. You two gentlemen threw him away when you became tin, because you had no further use for him, so you cannot justly claim him now. I advise you to go back to your own homes and forget me, as I have forgotten you.”

“Good advice!” laughed Polychrome, dancing.

“Are you happy?” asked the Tin Soldier.

“Of course I am,” said Nimmie Amee; “I’m the mistress of all I survey—the queen of my little domain.”

“Wouldn’t you like to be the Empress of the Winkies?” asked the Tin Woodman.

“Mercy, no,” she answered. “That would be a lot of bother. I don’t care for society, or pomp, or posing. All I ask is to be left alone and not to be annoyed by visitors.”

The Scarecrow nudged Woot the Wanderer.

“That sounds to me like a hint,” he said.

“Looks as if we’d had our journey for nothing,” remarked Woot, who was a little ashamed and disappointed because he had proposed the journey.

“I am glad, however,” said the Tin Woodman, “that I have found Nimmie Amee, and

discovered that she is already married and happy. It will relieve me of any further anxiety concerning her.”

“For my part,” said the Tin Soldier, “I am not sorry to be free. The only thing that really annoys me is finding my head upon Chopfyt’s body.”

“As for that, I’m pretty sure it is my body, or a part of it, anyway,” remarked the Emperor of the Winkies. “But never mind, friend Soldier; let us be willing to donate our cast-off members to insure the happiness of Nimmie Amee, and be thankful it is not our fate to hoe cabbages and draw water—and be chided—in the place of this creature Chopfyt.”

“Yes,” agreed the Soldier, “we have much to be thankful for.”

Polychrome, who had wandered outside, now poked her pretty head through an open window and exclaimed in a pleased voice:

“It’s getting cloudy. Perhaps it is going to rain!”