

❧ DOROTHY AND THE WIZARD IN OZ ❧

Chapter Seventeen: The Nine Tiny Piglets

After breakfast Ozma announced that she had ordered a holiday to be observed throughout the Emerald City, in honor of her visitors. The people had learned that their old Wizard had returned to them and all were anxious to see him again, for he had always been a rare favorite. So first there was to be a grand procession through the streets, after which the little old man was requested to perform some of his wizardries in the great Throne Room of the palace. In the afternoon there were to be games and races.

The procession was very imposing. First came the Imperial Cornet Band of Oz, dressed in emerald velvet uniforms with slashes of pea-green satin and buttons of immense cut emeralds. They played the National air called “The Oz Spangled Banner,” and behind them were the standard bearers with the Royal flag. This flag was divided into four quarters, one being colored sky-blue, another pink, a third lavender and a fourth white. In the center was a large emerald-green star, and all over the four quarters were sewn spangles that glittered beautifully in the sunshine. The colors represented the four countries of Oz, and the green star the Emerald City.

Just behind the royal standard-bearers came the Princess Ozma in her royal chariot, which was of gold encrusted with emeralds and diamonds set in exquisite designs. The chariot was drawn on this occasion by the Cowardly Lion and the Hungry Tiger, who were decorated with immense pink and blue bows. In the chariot rode Ozma and Dorothy, the former in splendid raiment and wearing her royal coronet, while the little Kansas girl wore around her waist the Magic Belt she had once captured from the Nome King.

Following the chariot came the Scarecrow mounted on the Sawhorse, and the people cheered him almost as loudly as they did their lovely Ruler. Behind him stalked with regular, jerky steps, the famous machine-man called Tik-tok, who had been wound up by Dorothy for the occasion. Tik-tok moved by clockwork, and was made all of burnished copper. He really belonged to the Kansas girl, who had much respect for his thoughts after they had been properly wound and set going; but as the copper man would be useless in any place but a fairy country Dorothy had left him in charge of Ozma, who saw that he was suitably cared for.

There followed another band after this, which was called the Royal Court Band, because the members all lived in the palace. They wore white uniforms with real diamond buttons and played “What is Oz without Ozma” very sweetly.

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Then came Professor Woggle-Bug, with a group of students from the Royal College of Scientific Athletics. The boys wore long hair and striped sweaters and yelled their college yell every other step they took, to the great satisfaction of the populace, which was glad to have this evidence that their lungs were in good condition.

The brilliantly polished Tin Woodman marched next, at the head of the Royal Army of Oz which consisted of twenty-eight officers, from Generals down to Captains. There were no privates in the army because all were so courageous and skillful that they had been promoted one by one until there were no privates left. Jim and the buggy followed, the old cab-horse being driven by Zeb while the Wizard stood up on the seat and bowed his bald head right and left in answer to the cheers of the people, who crowded thick about him.

Taken altogether the procession was a grand success, and when it had returned to the palace the citizens crowded into the great Throne Room to see the Wizard perform his tricks.

The first thing the little humbug did was to produce a tiny white piglet from underneath his hat and pretend to pull it apart, making two. This act he repeated until all of the nine tiny piglets were visible, and they were so glad to get out of his pocket that they ran around in a very lively manner. The pretty little creatures would have been a novelty anywhere, so the people were as amazed and delighted at their appearance as even the Wizard could have desired. When he had made them all disappear again Ozma declared she was sorry they were gone, for she wanted one of them to pet and play with. So the Wizard pretended to take one of the piglets out of the hair of the Princess (while really he slyly took it from his inside pocket) and Ozma smiled joyously as the creature nestled in her arms, and she promised to have an emerald collar made for its fat neck and to keep the little squealer always at hand to amuse her.

Afterward it was noticed that the Wizard always performed his famous trick with eight piglets, but it seemed to please the people just as well as if there had been nine of them.

In his little room back of the Throne Room the Wizard had found a lot of things he had left behind him when he went away in the balloon, for no one had occupied the apartment in his absence. There was enough material there to enable him to prepare several new tricks which he had learned from some of the jugglers in the circus, and he had passed part of the night in getting them ready. So he followed the trick of the nine tiny piglets with several other wonderful feats that greatly delighted his audience and the people did not seem to care a bit whether the little man was a humbug Wizard or not, so long as he succeeded in amusing them. They applauded all his tricks and at the end of the performance begged him earnestly not to go away again and leave them.

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“In that case,” said the little man, gravely, “I will cancel all of my engagements before the crowned heads of Europe and America and devote myself to the people of Oz, for I love you all so well that I can deny you nothing.”

After the people had been dismissed with this promise our friends joined Princess Ozma at an elaborate luncheon in the palace, where even the Tiger and the Lion were sumptuously fed and Jim the Cab-horse ate his oatmeal out of a golden bowl with seven rows of rubies, sapphires and diamonds set around the rim of it.

In the afternoon they all went to a great field outside the city gates where the games were to be held. There was a beautiful canopy for Ozma and her guests to sit under and watch the people run races and jump and wrestle. You may be sure the folks of Oz did their best with such a distinguished company watching them, and finally Zeb offered to wrestle with a little Munchkin who seemed to be the champion. In appearance he was twice as old as Zeb, for he had long pointed whiskers and wore a peaked hat with little bells all around the brim of it, which tinkled gaily as he moved. But although the Munchkin was hardly tall enough to come to Zeb’s shoulder he was so strong and clever that he laid the boy three times on his back with apparent ease.

Zeb was greatly astonished at his defeat, and when the pretty Princess joined her people in laughing at him he proposed a boxing-match with the Munchkin, to which the little Ozite readily agreed. But the first time that Zeb managed to give him a sharp box on the ears the Munchkin sat down upon the ground and cried until the tears ran down his whiskers, because he had been hurt. This made Zeb laugh, in turn, and the boy felt comforted to find that Ozma laughed as merrily at her weeping subject as she had at him.

Just then the Scarecrow proposed a race between the Sawhorse and the Cab-horse; and although all the others were delighted at the suggestion the Sawhorse drew back, saying:

“Such a race would not be fair.”

“Of course not,” added Jim, with a touch of scorn; “those little wooden legs of yours are not half as long as my own.”

“It isn’t that,” said the Sawhorse, modestly; “but I never tire, and you do.”

“Bah!” cried Jim, looking with great disdain at the other; “do you imagine for an instant that such a shabby imitation of a horse as you are can run as fast as I?”

“I don’t know, I’m sure,” replied the Sawhorse.

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“That is what we are trying to find out,” remarked the Scarecrow. “The object of a race is to see who can win it—or at least that is what my excellent brains think.”

“Once, when I was young,” said Jim, “I was a race horse, and defeated all who dared run against me. I was born in Kentucky, you know, where all the best and most aristocratic horses come from.”

“But you’re old, now, Jim,” suggested Zeb.

“Old! Why, I feel like a colt today,” replied Jim. “I only wish there was a real horse here for me to race with. I’d show the people a fine sight, I can tell you.”

“Then why not race with the Sawhorse?” enquired the Scarecrow.

“He’s afraid,” said Jim.

“Oh, no,” answered the Sawhorse. “I merely said it wasn’t fair. But if my friend the Real Horse is willing to undertake the race I am quite ready.”

So they unharnessed Jim and took the saddle off the Sawhorse, and the two strangely matched animals were stood side by side for the start.

“When I say ‘Go!’” Zeb called to them, “you must dig out and race until you reach those three trees you see over yonder. Then circle ‘round them and come back again. The first one that passes the place where the Princess sits shall be named the winner. Are you ready?”

“I suppose I ought to give the wooden dummy a good start of me,” growled Jim.

“Never mind that,” said the Sawhorse. “I’ll do the best I can.”

“Go!” cried Zeb; and at the word the two horses leaped forward and the race was begun.

Jim’s big hoofs pounded away at a great rate, and although he did not look very graceful he ran in a way to do credit to his Kentucky breeding. But the Sawhorse was swifter than the wind. Its wooden legs moved so fast that their twinkling could scarcely be seen, and although so much smaller than the cab-horse it covered the ground much faster. Before they had reached the trees the Sawhorse was far ahead, and the wooden animal returned to the starting place and was being lustily cheered by the Ozites before Jim came panting up to the canopy where the Princess and her friends were seated.

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I am sorry to record the fact that Jim was not only ashamed of his defeat but for a moment lost control of his temper. As he looked at the comical face of the Sawhorse he imagined that the creature was laughing at him; so in a fit of unreasonable anger he turned around and made a vicious kick that sent his rival tumbling head over heels upon the ground, and broke off one of its legs and its left ear.

An instant later the Tiger crouched and launched its huge body through the air swift and resistless as a ball from a cannon. The beast struck Jim full on his shoulder and sent the astonished cab-horse rolling over and over, amid shouts of delight from the spectators, who had been horrified by the ungracious act he had been guilty of.

When Jim came to himself and sat upon his haunches he found the Cowardly Lion crouched on one side of him and the Hungry Tiger on the other, and their eyes were glowing like balls of fire.

“I beg your pardon, I’m sure,” said Jim, meekly. “I was wrong to kick the Sawhorse, and I am sorry I became angry at him. He has won the race, and won it fairly; but what can a horse of flesh do against a tireless beast of wood?”

Hearing this apology the Tiger and the Lion stopped lashing their tails and retreated with dignified steps to the side of the Princess.

“No one must injure one of our friends in our presence,” growled the Lion; and Zeb ran to Jim and whispered that unless he controlled his temper in the future he would probably be torn to pieces.

Then the Tin Woodman cut a straight and strong limb from a tree with his gleaming axe and made a new leg and a new ear for the Sawhorse; and when they had been securely fastened in place Princess Ozma took the coronet from her own head and placed it upon that of the winner of the race. Said she:

“My friend, I reward you for your swiftness by proclaiming you Prince of Horses, whether of wood or of flesh; and hereafter all other horses—in the Land of Oz, at least—must be considered imitations, and you the real Champion of your race.”

There was more applause at this, and then Ozma had the jeweled saddle replaced upon the Sawhorse and herself rode the victor back to the city at the head of the grand procession.

“I ought to be a fairy,” grumbled Jim, as he slowly drew the buggy home; “for to be just

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an ordinary horse in a fairy country is to be of no account whatever. It's no place for us, Zeb."

"It's lucky we got here, though," said the boy; and Jim thought of the dark cave, and agreed with him.