



The
TIN WOODMAN of Oz
by L. Frank Baum

CHAPTER 7 - THE LACE APRON



“Now,” said the Canary, in a tone more brisk than before, “we may talk together more freely, as Mrs. Yoop cannot hear us. Perhaps we can figure out a way to escape.”

“Open!” said Woot the Monkey, still facing the door; but his command had no effect and he slowly rejoined the others.

“You cannot open any door or window in this enchanted castle unless you are wearing the Magic Apron,” said the Canary.

“What Magic Apron do you mean?” asked the Tin Owl, in a curious voice.

“The lace one, which the Giantess always wears. I have been her prisoner, in this cage, for several weeks, and she hangs my cage in her bedroom every night, so that she can keep her eye on me,” explained Polychrome the Canary. “Therefore I have discovered that it is the Magic Apron that opens the doors and windows, and nothing else can move them. When she goes to bed, Mrs. Yoop hangs her apron on the bedpost, and one morning she forgot to put it on when she commanded the door to open, and the door would not move. So then she put on the lace apron and the door obeyed her. That was how I learned the magic power of the apron.”

“I see—I see!” said the little Brown Bear, wagging his stuffed head. “Then, if we could get the apron from Mrs. Yoop, we could open the doors and escape from our prison.”

“That is true, and it is the plan I was about to suggest,” replied Polychrome the Canary-Bird. “However, I don’t believe the Owl could steal the apron, or even the Bear, but perhaps the Monkey could hide in her room at night and get the apron while she is asleep.”

“I’ll try it!” cried Woot the Monkey. “I’ll try it this very night, if I can manage to steal into her bedroom.”

“You mustn’t think about it, though,” warned the bird, “for she can read your thoughts whenever she cares to do so. And do not forget, before you escape, to take me with you. Once I am out of the power of the Giantess, I may discover a way to save us all.”

“We won’t forget our fairy friend,” promised the boy; “but perhaps you can tell me how to get into the bedroom.”

“No,” declared Polychrome, “I cannot advise you as to that. You must watch for a chance, and slip in when Mrs. Yoop isn’t looking.”

They talked it over for a while longer and then Mrs. Yoop returned. When she entered, the door opened suddenly, at her command, and closed as soon as her huge form had passed through the doorway. During that day she entered her bedroom several times, on one errand or another, but always she commanded the door to close behind her and her prisoners found not the slightest chance to leave the big hall in which they were confined.

The Green Monkey thought it would be wise to make a friend of the big woman, so as to gain her confidence, so he sat on the back of her chair and chattered to her while she mended her stockings and sewed silver buttons on some golden shoes that were as big as row-boats. This pleased the Giantess and she would pause at times to pat the Monkey's head. The little Brown Bear curled up in a corner and lay still all day. The Owl and the Canary found they could converse together in the bird language, which neither the Giantess nor the Bear nor the Monkey could understand; so at times they twittered away to each other and passed the long, dreary day quite cheerfully.

After dinner Mrs. Yoop took a big fiddle from a big cupboard and played such loud and dreadful music that her prisoners were all thankful when at last she stopped and said she was going to bed.

After cautioning the Monkey and Bear and Owl to behave themselves during the night, she picked up the cage containing the

Canary and, going to the door of her bedroom, commanded it to open. Just then, however, she remembered she had left her fiddle lying upon a table, so she went back for it and put it away in the cupboard, and while her back was turned the Green Monkey slipped through the open door into her bedroom and hid underneath the bed. The Giantess, being sleepy, did not notice this, and entering her room she made the door close behind her and then hung the bird-cage on a peg by the window. Then she began to undress, first taking off the lace apron and laying it over the bedpost, where it was within easy reach of her hand.

As soon as Mrs. Yoop was in bed the lights all went out, and Woot the Monkey crouched under the bed and waited patiently until he heard the Giantess snoring. Then he crept out and in the dark felt around until he got hold of the apron, which he at once tied around his own waist.

Next, Woot tried to find the Canary, and there was just enough moonlight showing through the window to enable him to see where the cage hung; but it was out of his reach. At first he was tempted to leave Polychrome and escape with his other friends, but remembering his promise to the Rainbow's Daughter Woot tried to think how to save her.

A chair stood near the window, and this—showing dimly in the moonlight—gave him an idea. By pushing against it with all his might, he found he could move the gi-

ant chair a few inches at a time. So he pushed and pushed until the chair was beneath the bird-cage, and then he sprang noiselessly upon the seat—for his monkey form enabled him to jump higher than he could do as a boy—and from there to the back of the chair, and so managed to reach the cage and take it off the peg. Then down he sprang to the floor and made his way to the door. “Open!” he commanded, and at once the door obeyed and swung open, but his voice wakened Mrs. Yoop, who gave a wild cry and sprang out of bed with one bound. The Green Monkey dashed through the doorway, carrying the cage with him, and before the Giantess could reach the door it slammed shut and imprisoned her in her own bed-chamber!

The noise she made, pounding upon the door, and her yells of anger and dreadful threats of vengeance, filled all our friends with terror, and Woot the Monkey was so excited that in the dark he could not find the outer door of the hall. But the Tin Owl could see very nicely in the dark, so he guided his friends to the right place and when all were grouped before the door Woot commanded it to open. The Magic Apron proved as powerful as when it had been worn by the Giantess, so a moment later they had rushed through the passage and were standing in the fresh night air outside the castle, free to go wherever they willed.