



The TIN WOODMAN of Oz

by L. Frank Baum

CHAPTER 20 - OVER NIGHT



The Land of the Munchkins is full of surprises, as our travelers had already learned, and although Mount Munch was constantly growing larger as they advanced toward it, they knew it was still a long way off and were not certain, by any means, that they had escaped all danger or encountered their last adventure.

The plain was broad, and as far as the eye could see, there seemed to be a level stretch of country between them and the mountain, but toward evening they came upon a hollow, in which stood a tiny blue Munchkin dwelling with a garden around it and fields of grain filling in all the rest of the hollow.

They did not discover this place until they came close to the edge of it, and they were astonished at the sight that greeted them because they had imagined that this part of the plain had no inhabitants. "It's a very small house," Woot declared. "I wonder who lives there?"

"The way to find out is to knock on the door and ask," replied the Tin Woodman. "Perhaps it is the home of Nimmie Amee."

"Is she a dwarf?" asked the boy.

"No, indeed; Nimmie Amee is a full sized woman."

"Then I'm sure she couldn't live in that little house," said Woot.

"Let's go down," suggested the Scarecrow. "I'm almost sure I can see a straw-stack in the back yard."

They descended the hollow, which was rather steep at the sides, and soon came to the house, which was indeed rather small. Woot knocked upon a door that was not much higher than his waist, but got no reply. He knocked again, but not a sound was heard. "Smoke is coming out of the chimney," announced Polychrome, who was dancing lightly through the garden, where cabbages and beets and turnips and the like were growing finely.

"Then someone surely lives here," said Woot, and knocked again.

Now a window at the side of the house opened and a queer head appeared. It was white and hairy and had a long snout and little round eyes. The ears were hidden by a blue sunbonnet tied under the chin.

"Oh; it's a pig!" exclaimed Woot.

"Pardon me; I am Mrs. Squealina Swyne, wife of Professor Grunter Swyne, and this is our home," said the one in the window. "What do you want?"

"What sort of a Professor is your husband?" inquired the Tin Woodman curiously.

"He is Professor of Cabbage Culture and Corn Perfection. He is very famous in his own family, and would be the wonder of the world if he went abroad," said Mrs. Swyne in a voice that was half proud and half irritable. "I must also inform you intruders that the Professor is a dangerous individual, for he files his teeth every morning until they are sharp as needles. If you are butchers, you'd better run away and avoid trouble."

"We are not butchers," the Tin Woodman assured her.

"Then what are you doing with that axe? And why has the other tin man a sword?"

"They are the only weapons we have to defend our friends from their enemies," explained the Emperor of the Winkies, and Woot added:

"Do not be afraid of us, Mrs. Swyne, for we are harmless travelers. The tin men and the Scarecrow never eat anything and Polychrome feasts only on dewdrops. As for me, I'm rather hungry, but there is plenty of food in your garden to satisfy me."

Professor Swyne now joined his wife at the window, looking rather scared in spite of the boy's assuring speech. He wore a blue Munchkin hat, with pointed crown and broad brim, and big spectacles covered his eyes. He peeked around from behind his wife and after looking hard at the strangers, he said:

"My wisdom assures me that you are merely travelers, as you say, and not butchers.

Butchers have reason to be afraid of me, but you are safe. We cannot invite you in, for you are too big for our house, but the boy who eats is welcome to all the carrots and turnips he wants. Make yourselves at home in the garden and stay all night, if you like; but in the morning you must go away, for we are quiet people and do not care for company."

"May I have some of your straw?" asked the Scarecrow.

"Help yourself," replied Professor Swyne.

"For pigs, they're quite respectable," remarked Woot, as they all went toward the straw-stack.

"I'm glad they didn't invite us in," said Captain Fyter. "I hope I'm not too particular about my associates, but I draw the line at pigs."

The Scarecrow was glad to be rid of his hay, for during the long walk it had sagged down and made him fat and squatty and more bumpy than at first. "I'm not specially proud," he said, "but I love a manly figure, such as only straw stuffing can create. I've not felt like myself since that hungry Hip-po ate my last straw."

Polychrome and Woot set to work removing the hay and then they selected the finest straw, crisp and golden, and with it stuffed the Scarecrow anew. He certainly looked better after the operation, and he was so pleased at being reformed that he tried to dance a little jig, and almost succeeded.

"I shall sleep under the straw-stack tonight," Woot decided, after he had eaten some

of the vegetables from the garden, and in fact he slept very well, with the two tin men and the Scarecrow sitting silently beside him and Polychrome away somewhere in the moonlight dancing her fairy dances.

At daybreak the Tin Woodman and the Tin Soldier took occasion to polish their bodies and oil their joints, for both were exceedingly careful of their personal appearance. They had forgotten the quarrel due to their accidental bumping of one another in the invisible country, and being now good friends the Tin Woodman polished the Tin Soldier's back for him and then the Tin Soldier polished the Tin Woodman's back. For breakfast the Wanderer ate crisp lettuce and radishes, and the Rainbow's Daughter, who had now returned to her friends, sipped the dewdrops that had formed on the petals of the wild-flowers. As they passed the little house to renew their journey, Woot called out:

"Good-bye, Mr. and Mrs. Swyne!" The window opened and the two pigs looked out.

"A pleasant journey," said the Professor.

"Have you any children?" asked the Scarecrow, who was a great friend of children.

"We have nine," answered the Professor; "but they do not live with us, for when they were tiny piglets the Wizard of Oz came here and offered to care for them and to educate them. So we let him have our nine tiny piglets, for he's a good Wizard and can be relied upon to keep his promises."

"I know the Nine Tiny Piglets," said the Tin Woodman.

"So do I," said the Scarecrow. "They still live in the Emerald City, and the Wizard takes good care of them and teaches them to do all sorts of tricks."

"Did they ever grow up?" inquired Mrs. Squealina Swyne, in an anxious voice.

"No," answered the Scarecrow; "like all other children in the Land of Oz, they will always remain children, and in the case of the tiny piglets that is a good thing, because they would not be nearly so cute and cunning if they were bigger."

"But are they happy?" asked Mrs. Swyne.

"Everyone in the Emerald City is happy," said the Tin Woodman. "They can't help it."

Then the travelers said good-bye, and climbed the side of the basin that was toward Mount Munch.