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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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The Tin Woodman Of Oz: Woot the Wanderer (1/24)

The Tin Woodman sat on his glittering tin throne in the handsome tin hall of his splendid tin castle in the Winkie Country of the Land of Oz. Beside him, in a chair of woven straw, sat his best friend, the Scarecrow of Oz. At times they spoke to one another of curious things they had seen and strange adventures they had known since first they two had met and become comrades. But at times they were silent, for these things had been talked over many times between them, and they found themselves contented in merely being together, speaking now and then a brief sentence to prove they were wide awake and attentive. But then, these two quaint persons never slept. Why should they sleep, when they never tired?

And now, as the brilliant sun sank low over the Winkie Country of Oz, tinting the glistening tin towers and tin minarets of the tin castle with glorious sunset hues, there approached along a winding pathway Woot the Wanderer, who met at the castle entrance a Winkie servant.

The servants of the Tin Woodman all wore tin helmets and tin breastplates and uniforms covered with tiny tin discs sewed closely together on silver cloth, so that their bodies sparkled as beautifully as did the tin castle

—and almost as beautifully as did the Tin Woodman himself.

Woot the Wanderer looked at the man servant—all bright and glittering—and at the magnificent castle—all bright and glittering—and as he looked his eyes grew big with wonder. For Woot was not very big and not very old and, wanderer though he was, this proved the most gorgeous sight that had ever met his boyish gaze.

"Who lives here?" he asked.

"The Emperor of the Winkies, who is the famous Tin Woodman of Oz," replied the servant, who had been trained to treat all strangers with courtesy.

"A Tin Woodman? How queer!" exclaimed the little wanderer.

"Well, perhaps our Emperor is queer," admitted the servant; "but he is a kind master and as honest and true as good tin can make him; so we, who gladly serve him, are apt to forget that he is not like other people."

"May I see him?" asked Woot the Wanderer, after a moment's thought.

"If it please you to wait a moment, I will go and ask him," said the servant, and then he went into the hall where the Tin Woodman sat with his friend the Scarecrow. Both were glad to learn that a stranger had arrived at the castle, for this would give them something new to talk about, so the servant was asked to admit the boy at once.

By the time Woot the Wanderer had passed through the grand corridors—all lined with ornamental tin—and under stately tin archways and through the many tin

rooms all set with beautiful tin furniture, his eyes had grown bigger than ever and his whole little body thrilled with amazement. But, astonished though he was, he was able to make a polite bow before the throne and to say in a respectful voice: "I salute your Illustrious Majesty and offer you my humble services." "Very good!" answered the Tin Woodman in his accustomed cheerful manner. "Tell me who you are, and whence you come."

"I am known as Woot the Wanderer," answered the boy, "and I have come, through many travels and by roundabout ways, from my former home in a far corner of the Gillikin Country of Oz."

"To wander from one's home," remarked the Scarecrow, "is to encounter dangers and hardships, especially if one is made of meat and bone. Had you no friends in that corner of the Gillikin Country? Was it not homelike and comfortable?"

To hear a man stuffed with straw speak, and speak so well, quite startled Woot, and perhaps he stared a bit rudely at the Scarecrow. But after a moment he replied:

"I had home and friends, your Honorable Strawness, but they were so quiet and happy and comfortable that I found them dimly stupid. Nothing in that corner of Oz interested me, but I believed that in other parts of the country I would find strange people and see new sights, and so I set out upon my wandering journey. I have been a wanderer for nearly a full year, and now

my wanderings have brought me to this splendid castle."

"I suppose," said the Tin Woodman, "that in this year you have seen so much that you have become very wise."

"No," replied Woot, thoughtfully, "I am not at all wise, I beg to assure your Majesty. The more I wander the less I find that I know, for in the Land of Oz much wisdom and many things may be learned."

"To learn is simple. Don't you ask questions?" inquired the Scarecrow.

"Yes; I ask as many questions as I dare; but some people refuse to answer questions."

"That is not kind of them," declared the Tin Woodman.

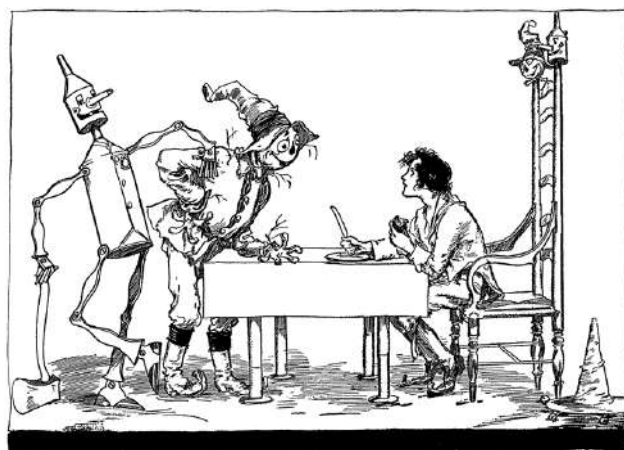
"If one does not ask for information he seldom receives it; so I, for my part, make it a rule to answer any civil question that is asked me."

"So do I," added the Scarecrow, nodding.

"I am glad to hear this," said the Wanderer, "for it makes me bold to ask for something to eat."

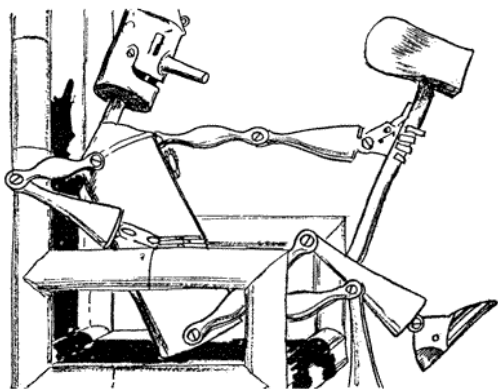
"Bless the boy!" cried the Emperor of the Winkies;

"how careless of me not to remember that wanderers are usually hungry. I will have food brought you at once."



Saying this he blew upon a tin whistle that was suspended from his tin neck, and at the summons a servant appeared and bowed low. The Tin Woodman ordered food for the stranger, and in a few minutes the servant brought in a tin tray heaped with a choice array of good things to eat, all neatly displayed on tin dishes that were polished till they shone like mirrors. The tray was set upon a tin table drawn before the throne, and the servant placed a tin chair before the table for the boy to seat himself.

"Eat, friend Wanderer," said the Emperor cordially, "and I trust the feast will be to your liking. I, myself, do not eat, being made in such manner that I require no food to keep me alive. Neither does my friend the Scarecrow. But all my Winkie people eat, being formed of flesh, as you are, and so my tin cupboard is never bare, and strangers are always welcome to whatever it contains." The boy ate in silence for a time, being really hungry, but after his appetite was somewhat satisfied, he said:



"How happened your Majesty to be made of tin, and still be alive?"

"That," replied the tin man, "is a long story."

"The longer the better," said the boy. "Won't you please tell me the story?"

"If you desire it," promised the Tin Woodman, leaning back in his tin throne and crossing his tin legs. "I

haven't related my history in a long while, because everyone here knows it nearly as well as I do. But you, being a stranger, are no doubt curious to learn how I became so beautiful and prosperous, so I will recite for your benefit my strange adventures."

"Thank you," said Woot the Wanderer, still eating.

"I was not always made of tin," began the Emperor,

"for in the beginning I was a man of flesh and bone and blood and lived in the Munchkin Country of Oz.

There I was, by trade, a woodchopper, and contributed my share to the comfort of the Oz people by chopping up the trees of the forest to make firewood, with which the women would cook their meals while the children warmed themselves about the fires. For my home I had a little hut by the edge of the forest, and my life was one of much content until I fell in love with a beautiful Munchkin girl who lived not far away."

"What was the Munchkin girl's name?" asked Woot.

"Nimmie Amee. This girl, so fair that the sunsets blushed when their rays fell upon her, lived with a powerful witch who wore silver shoes and who had made the poor child her slave. Nimmie Amee was obliged to work from morning till night for the old Witch of the East, scrubbing and sweeping her hut and cooking her meals and washing her dishes. She had to cut firewood, too, until I found her one day in the forest and fell in love with her. After that, I always brought plenty of firewood to Nimmie Amee and we became very friendly. Finally I asked her to marry me, and she agreed to do so, but the Witch happened to

overhear our conversation and it made her very angry, for she did not wish her slave to be taken away from her. The Witch commanded me never to come near Nimmie Amee again, but I told her I was my own master and would do as I pleased, not realizing that this was a careless way to speak to a Witch.

"The next day, as I was cutting wood in the forest, the cruel Witch enchanted my axe, so that it slipped and cut off my right leg."

"How dreadful!" cried Woot the Wanderer.

"Yes, it was a seeming misfortune," agreed the Tin Man, "for a one-legged woodchopper is of little use in his trade. But I would not allow the Witch to conquer me so easily. I knew a very skillful mechanic at the other side of the forest, who was my friend, so I hopped on one leg to him and asked him to help me. He soon made me a new leg out of tin and fastened it cleverly to my meat body. It had joints at the knee and at the ankle and was almost as comfortable as the leg I had lost."

"Your friend must have been a wonderful workman!" exclaimed Woot.

"He was, indeed," admitted the Emperor. "He was a tinsmith by trade and could make anything out of tin. When I returned to Nimmie Amee, the girl was delighted and threw her arms around my neck and kissed me, declaring she was proud of me. The Witch saw the kiss and was more angry than before. When I went to work in the forest, next day, my axe, being still enchanted, slipped and cut off my other leg. Again I hopped—on my tin leg—to my friend the tinsmith, who

kindly made me another tin leg and fastened it to my body. So I returned joyfully to Nimmie Amee, who was much pleased with my glittering legs and promised that when we were wed she would always keep them oiled and polished. But the Witch was more furious than ever, and as soon as I raised my axe to chop, it twisted around and cut off one of my arms. The tinsmith made me a tin arm and I was not much worried, because Nimmie Amee declared she still loved me."

