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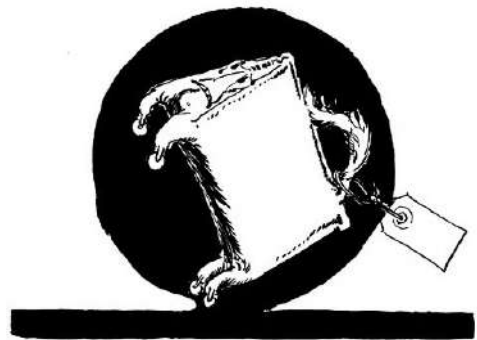
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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Ozoplaning with the Wizard of Oz: Jellia in a Frightful Jam (9/20)

For a long time after the departure of the Tin Woodman and of Strut and his legions, Jellia sat forlornly on the Star Throne, trying to stem the tears that coursed slowly down her cheeks. To be stranded on this high and dangerous airosphere was bad enough, but the thought of Strut flying off to destroy Ozma and steal all her treasures was more frightening still.



"What on airth shall we do?" questioned Jellia with a rueful smile, of the Soldier with Green Whiskers who was tramping morosely up and down the pavilion. Halting in his march, Wantowin shook his head dubiously.



"That I cannot say!" he murmured, taking off his cap and staring gloomily inside. "I have no standing in this country at all! But you, Jellia, are a Starina. Therefore you must decide what is to be done. And

whatever your Majesty's orders may be, I will carry them out to the letter. To the letter!" declared Wantowin, standing up very straight and tall.

"Oh, bother 'my Majesty!" scolded Jellia. "You know perfectly well I didn't ask to be a Starina of this terrible place!"

"It is not what you want but what you are, that counts!" insisted the Soldier, stubbornly. "And there's no getting round it, Jellia, you are a Starina! So while you are deciding what is to be done, I'll just do a bit of reconnoitering. It might be well to know the lay of the air!"

"Wait!" cried Jellia as Wantowin started smartly down the steps. "Whatever you do, Wanny—don't run!" she implored earnestly. "You might easily run off the edge and then where'd you be? So do please be careful, and if anything frightens you run straight back here! Do you promise?"

"Nothing ever frightens me!" said the Soldier in an offended voice. Marching sternly down the steps he was off at a double-quick, without even a glance over his shoulder. Feeling more alone than ever, Jellia sighed and folded her hands in her lap. But Wantowin's words, foolish as they were, had done her good. After all she was a Starina, for the time being anyway. So, straightening her crown, and drying her tears, Jellia tried to think how she should act under such bewildering circumstances. How would Ozma act, for instance, if she were sitting on the throne of this singular airtry? Even thinking of the gentle and

dignified little Girl Ruler of Oz, steadied Jellia. Holding her head very high, she stepped down from the dais and began pacing slowly up and down the pavilion, switching her green skirts in such a regal manner that the two messengers who had returned quietly to their posts, stared at her with new interest and admiration.



"Is there anything we might bring your Strajesty?" asked Junnenrump, bowing from the waist and clicking his heels smartly together. At his question Jellia paused and eyed the two, speculatively. "Why, yes," she decided after a moment's thought. "You, Junnenrump, may send some one to amuse me, and you, Hippenscop, may bring me two of those winged staffs. It is neither safe nor proper for a Starina and her Army to be without them!" "But, your Skyness!" Hippenscop leaped into the air and spun round and round in an agony of embarrassment. "There are no extra staffs!" he blurted, finally coming to a stop before her. The little fellow looked so distressed, Jellia was on the point of letting him off. Then, remembering just in time that she was bound to be obeyed, she raised her arm. "Go!" she commanded haughtily. "And do not return without two winged staffs!" Junnenrump already had started, and at Jellia's stern command Hippenscop

backed dejectedly down the steps, his eyes bulging with dismay and consternation.

"If Wanny and I had flying sticks, we'd at least be as well off as the rest of these Airlanders," reasoned Jellia, resuming her walk. "But what funny names," she mused, as the messengers disappeared in two different directions and at two different speeds. "They make me think of—" here Jellia took a little run and jump, following it with a skip and a hop. "I suppose" she continued, talking conversationally to herself, "that is what their names really mean, everything is so mixed up here." Regaining her throne in one long slide, Jellia brought up with a slight start. This, she decided, was no way for a Starina to act. Smoothing down her dress, she walked sedately to Strut's throne and reached underneath. The real reason she had got rid of the messengers, of course, was so she could recover the kit-bag and have a chance to examine its contents without being observed. The cheer gas had saved them on one occasion, and perhaps there was magic powerful



enough to enable her and the Soldier to escape from the airoisphere before Strut returned. The bag was still there and snatching it up in her arms, Jellia climbed back on the throne. But just as she was

about to zip it open, Junnenrump bounded up the steps of the pavilion, dragging a lean old Skylander by the hand.

"His Majesty's Piper!" announced Junnenrump, giving the Piper a shove forward and seating himself expectantly on the messenger's bench. Jellia was annoyed to have Junnenrump return so soon. But since she had sent for someone to amuse her, she could not very well object. So, resting her chin in her hand she looked curiously at the royal Piper. The old Skylander was tremendously tall and thin. His tunic was short and plaited, and under his arms he carried a pair of enormous bag pipes. Jellia never had cared for bag pipes, but on an airosphere she supposed wind instruments such as this naturally would be popular. The Piper, however, did not immediately play on his pipes. Instead he struck a few light and pleasant chords on the top buttons of his tunic.

"Shall I do a buck and wing, or a little Skyland fling? Shall I sing a little sing, for you, Dear?"

bawled the Piper cheerfully. He looked so funny that Jellia burst out laughing. Thus encouraged, the Piper proceeded to sing, punctuating his song with extraordinary leaps and toe tappings.

"When we Skylanders feel low, we just
Dance the stratispho;
Step it high, kick and fly, toss the
Partner up ski-high. High HO!

"Would you care to try it?" he asked politely, holding out his hand to Jellia.

"No, No! Not today!" gasped the Oz maid, backing as far as the star throne would allow. "But I've really enjoyed watching you very much, and your singing is lovely," she added, generously.

"Ah, but wait until you hear me play," puffed the Piper. Raising his pipes he blew forth such a hurricane of whistles, squeals and fierce thunderings that poor Jellia clapped both hands to her ears. "Tell him to go away," she screamed above the awful din, wildly motioning to Junnenrump who was tapping his foot in time to the pipes and looking highly diverted. "Tell him to come back tomorrow." The fierce music of the bag pipes had brought airlanders running from every direction.

Crowding round the pavilion they waved and bowed to the new Starina. Realizing she never would have any privacy under the Imperial Canopy, Jellia slipped off her throne. The messenger had the Piper by the tunic tails and was easing him gently down the steps. Jellia waited till they reached the bottom, then, as all the airlanders began to run after the still furiously pumping piper, Jellia started in the opposite direction. Surely somewhere, she thought, clutching the kit-bag close to her, somewhere she could find a quiet corner or cave or clump of bushes where she could examine the contents of the Wizard's bag without interruption.



So anxious was Jellia to be by herself, she broke into a run. Failing to notice a crystal bar stretched across the path, she tripped and fell violently up a tune tree. Falling down is bad enough, but falling up is worse still. Jellia not only had barked her shins on the crystal bar, but had bounced into the air so high she lost her breath and plunged down so abruptly among the top branches of the tune tree that she was somewhat scratched and shaken. She knew it must be a tune tree because plump black notes grew in clusters like cherries between the leaves. Several, dislodged by her fall, broke into gay little arias and chords. At any other time Jellia would have been quite interested, but now she was too agitated and upset to care.

"Such a country—or airtry!" groaned the Oz maid, rubbing her left ankle and her right knee. "One can't even fall down in their own way!" Parting the branches the ruffled little girl looked crossly out. It was quite a long way to the ground, but nevertheless Jellia decided to climb down. But suddenly it occurred to her that the top of the tune tree was as good a place as any, to open the kit-bag. Easing herself to a larger limb, she balanced the bag carefully in her lap and stretched out her hand to pull the tail. Then a piercing scream and the thump of a hundred footsteps made her draw it back in a hurry. Parting the branches of the tree for a second time, she saw Wantowin Battles running toward her like the wind.

"Help! Help! Save me!" yelled the Soldier with Green Whiskers. And he had reason to yell for just two leaps

behind him panted Kabebe, waving an enormous crystal rolling-pin. After the Queen pounded the three big Blowmen, and after the Blowmen came nearly a hundred men, women, and children. Before Jellia had time even to guess why they were chasing the Army, Wantowin tripped over the same crystal bar that had caused her upfall, and landed with a terrific grunt in the branches beside her, scattering half and quarter-notes in every direction. The Airlanders stopped short and watched with breathless interest as the Soldier disappeared into the thick foliage of the tune tree.



"What's the matter? What happened?" whispered Jellia reaching out to steady the soldier who was bouncing wildly up and down on a nearby limb.

"YOU?" gasped Wantowin, almost losing his balance at the shock of seeing her. "Oh, Jellia! We must leave at once! At ONCE! As I was passing the cooking caves, Kabebe rushed out and grabbed me. She has decided to blow us away most any minute now. She has persuaded the Airlanders that Strut is lost and never will return. Oh why, WHY, did we ever fly to this terrible place?" "Be quiet!" hissed Jellia, frightened almost out of her wits at this new turn of affairs. "How can I think with you making all that noise?"

"Come down! Come down!" bawled Kabebe. "Come down before I shake you down!" Grasping the trunk of the tune tree she gave it a playful shake.

Rolling his eyes up, the Soldier glanced desperately at Jellia, and Jellia, as desperately, glanced back.

"You might as well go down," she whispered resignedly, as the Queen gave the tree a tremendous shake that nearly dislodged them both.

"Not without you," shivered Wantowin, hugging his branch for dear life.

"Oh, well—let's get it over with," said Jellia despairingly.

"Blowing away may not be so bad, and I'd rather do anything than stay up here." Tucking the kit-bag under one arm, Jellia swung herself down by the other and dropped lightly to the ground.

"What is the meaning of this outrageous behavior?" she demanded, as Wantowin dropped fearfully beside her.

"His Majesty shall hear of this, I promise you!"

Kabebe, astonished to see Jellia as well as the Soldier with Green Whiskers drop out of the tree, took a hasty step backward. Jellia quickly followed up her advantage.

"I'm amazed!" she said sternly. "I thought you knew that I was to help you rule while King Strut is away!"

At this bold speech, Wantowin looked at Jellia in round-eyed admiration. Though her cheeks were scratched and her crown slightly askew, the little Waiting Maid looked every inch a ruler's helper, if not a ruler. Even the Blowmen began to shift uneasily from one foot to the other, their mouths falling open at Jellia's indignation.

But Kabebe raised both arms and fairly screeched at the little Oz Maid.

"How dare you speak to me like that?" she shrieked.

"King Strut is lost and never will return! I am Queen here—and I don't need your help! Blowmen! Seize this impudent pair, march them to the edge of the cliffs and blow them away." The crowd of Stratovanians looked uncertainly from Kabebe to Jellia.

"His Highness left you here to protect me!" Jellia reminded them sternly. But even as she spoke, she knew they had decided to obey Kabebe. She was flashing her star eyes so threateningly, and waving her winged stick so close to their heads, that the Blowmen were afraid to defy her.

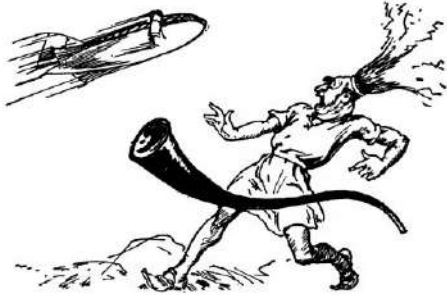


"Come along, now," grumbled the first Blowman, taking Jellia roughly by the arm.

"You've made enough trouble here!"

The other two Blowmen seized the trembling Soldier and began marching sternly toward the edge of Strut's Skyland. Jellia pulled back with all her strength, as also did Wantowin, but, hustled along by the huge Skylanders, they could do little to help themselves. Relentlessly, with the jeering citizens of Stratovania running along after them, the unfortunate Oz pair was dragged on.

"Just wait till your Master hears about this," sobbed Jellia, as the Blowmen shoved them as near to the edge of the cliffs as they dared go themselves. Then they stepped back to lift their horns. Jellia had managed to retain her hold on the Wizard's kit-bag, but even so she felt that their last moment had come.



Jellia gave a final sad little wave to the Soldier, who really was quite brave now that his doom had arrived. The Blowmen pointed

their horns straight at them, but before they even could inflate their cheeks, a fierce roar and splutter from the clouds caused every head to turn upwards.

"The ship—the ship! The flying ship!" cried the First Blowman, letting his horn fall disregarded to the ground.

"It's Strut!" screamed the Stratovanians, treading on one another's toes in their sudden frenzy to be out of sight of their Master when he landed.

"'Tis the Master himself!" cried the first Blowman, yanking Jellia and the Soldier back from the edge of the Skyland. Pulling Kabebe along with them, the Blowmen ran as never before, closely followed by Strut's scurrying subjects. One moment later there was



not a single airbody in sight. Convinced that their cruel and brilliant ruler had returned, they ran like rabbits. Some even flew, helping themselves along with their winged staffs, while Jellia, sinking on a large, crystal boulder, stared dazedly at the silver-bodied plane dropping rapidly toward them.

"It can't be the Oztober!" cried Jellia, delightedly. "It couldn't have come back so soon!"

"It's not!" cried Wantowin Battles, tossing up his cap and waving his arms exuberantly. "It's the other one, the Ozpril, and that means—" In his extreme excitement, the Soldier tripped over a balloon bush and fell seven feet into the air. "It means the Wizard himself has come to help us," sputtered Wantowin, blinking rapidly as he landed hard on the rock beside the young Oz maid. "Three cheers, Jellia! The Wizard of Oz has saved us!"