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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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Ozoplaning with the Wizard of Oz: Latest Invention of the Wizard of Oz (3/20)

"Ooooooh! A conservatory!" murmured Jellia, blinking at the shining glass structure that occupied the entire treeless space.

"A barn, if you ask me!" guessed the Scarecrow. "But why build it of glass, Mr. Wiz?"

"Because glass is the latest and lightest building material known. But this is no barn, as you'll soon discover." Handing his flashlight to Dorothy, the Wizard slid back the vast doors, switched



on the lights and stood back, his hands in his pockets, as the little group in silence and astonishment viewed the two shining planes housed as snugly as giant butterflies in a glass cocoon.

"Airplanes!" exclaimed Dorothy, when she found her voice at last.

"No, Ozoplanes," corrected the Wizard, trying to keep the excitement out of his voice. "Somewhat like the planes in America, but more powerful, for remember, my dear, I had not only the scientific knowledge of aeronautics available to mortals, but the scientific knowledge of magic to help me as well!"

"Well!" echoed the Tin Woodman, gazing approvingly at the Wizard's planes, which, except for their silver wings, might have been huge, silver-and-glass torpedoes.

"Not for the army, I hope," exclaimed the Soldier, clutching his whiskers nervously. Being the entire army himself, and quite old-fashioned and set in his ways, the Soldier felt sure he never could pilot these gleaming airplanes.

"Oh, No! No! NO!" The Wizard frowned at the mere thought of war. "These are pleasure planes for travelling and exploring the unknown regions of the upper air. As soon as Ozma returns from the South, I plan to present them both to our illustrious young Ruler and arrange for her to make the first triumphant flight."

"But there are two," said Dorothy a little wistfully. She had hoped to make the first flight with the Wizard, herself.

"Of course, of course!" he answered in a matter-of-fact way. "Most experimental flights fail because they depend on one ship. We shall have two!"

"We?" Dorothy brightened up considerably at the Wizard's plural.

"Yes, we," repeated the Wizard, turning round to smile at the little girl. "Counting Ozma and those of us here, there will be eight passengers—four for each plane."

"Now please don't bother about me!" begged the Cowardly Lion, his tail dragging on the ground at the very thought of flying. "I'd not think of troubling you. Besides, I'm much too heavy for flying."



"Not at all, not at all," the Wizard reassured him with a wink. "I have made exact calculations about weight, old fellow, and you and the Scarecrow balance each other nicely. So don't worry about that."

"Oh, I'm not worrying about that!" rumbled the lion, rearing up on his hind legs to read the names outlined in emeralds on the luminous sides of the Wizard's ships. "Ozpril and Oztober!" The lion spoke in a slightly trembling roar. "Mmmn! Mmmnnnnmn! Kerumph!"

"Why, those are beautiful names," exclaimed Dorothy, tilting back her head to spell them out for herself.

"I thought they were rather neat," said the Wizard complacently. "Suitable too, one to rise and one to fall!" Expressively he lifted an arm and let it fall limply to his side.

"To—to fall?" quavered the lion, dropping to all fours.

"Oh, just in a figurative way, of course." The Wizard shrugged his shoulders. "You will observe," he went on

enthusiastically, "that these planes need no runway or special track to take off. They really are balloonplanes. Note those round packets on the top of the fusilage." The lion blinked rapidly, for he had no idea that fusilage meant the body of the plane, but the others nodded quite knowingly. "Well those," declared the inventor proudly "are my own, patented, balloon attachments. At the touch of a button, the wings are depressed and the balloon inflated with a magic gas, lighter than helium, that carries the ship as high and as far as desired. Then the balloon can be deflated and the Ozoplane can continue under its own power. But you will readily see how my ship, with its balloon attachment, has twice the altitude possibilities of an ordinary airplane. Hah! We shall fly higher than higher!" boasted the little Wizard, happily.

"Oh, quite!" agreed the Tin Woodman, mounting the ladder of the Oztober, the Soldier with Green Whiskers pressing nervously at his heels.

"But how will you move them out of here?" inquired the Scarecrow, taking off his hat and scratching his cotton head.

"Oh, as to that—" The Wizard pulled a switch just behind him, whereupon the top of the glass airdrome lifted, like the lid of an enormous jewel box.

"Hm-mm! I see!" The Scarecrow slapped his knee and grinned with appreciation. "Off with the roof! Up with the planes!"

"Exactly!" Seizing the Straw Man's arm, the Wizard urged him toward the ladder of the Ozpril, Dorothy

skipping cheerfully behind them. After Dorothy plodded the Cowardly Lion, talking to himself in anxious whispers and growls.

"Be sure not to touch anything over there," called the Wizard, as Nick and the Soldier with Green Whiskers disappeared into the cabin of the other plane.

"I'll keep an eye on them," promised Jellia, tripping up the ladder as lightly as a feather. "Don't give us a thought, Wiz, dear."



"Jellia's so funny!" laughed Dorothy.

"Sensible, too," added the Wizard, helping the little girl over the high door sill and into the plane.

While he and the Scarecrow went forward to examine the steering gear, Dorothy looked delightedly 'round the snug little cabin. There were four seats upholstered in pale, green leather, along one side. The whole top was of thick glass, through which she could distinctly see the moon and stars winking down at her. The side walls of the Ozpril were of a silvery grey, with all trimmings in green. At the back was a small dinette, with chairs and table locked to the floors as they are on sea-going vessels. A cabinet full of china, a wall full of charts, a book case full of books and a tiny kitchen and dressing room, completed the equipment.

"It's just as cozy as a little house," sighed Dorothy contentedly, as the Cowardly Lion, having glanced round in a discouraged way, seated himself in one of the

green chairs and pressed his nose against the round window pane. "Won't we have fun, Liony, when we really get off?"

"Getting off will be the best fun of all," sniffed the lion, glancing briefly at the door. The Lion, as you probably have guessed, felt no enthusiasm for the trip. Once, much against his will, he had been carried to an island in the sky, and that experience had been more than enough. In his own mind he already had decided not to accompany the Wizard on his proposed flight. Yessir, when the party assembled for the trip he would just turn up missing and manage to stay behind. Immensely relieved by this secret decision, he ambled forward.

"You will notice," the Wizard was pointing out briskly, "that I have done away with all controls and levers. On this board are all the buttons necessary to operate the ship."

"Looks like an organ," observed Dorothy, squinting at the bright array of buttons set in the top of the table within easy reach of the first seat. "Must you play all those stops and starters to guide the plane?"



"Not quite all," smiled the Wizard, "but if we wished to start, I'd first press this green button to depress the wings and inflate our balloon. Next, I'd push the button marked 'up' and, if I decided to go North, this 'North'

button, as well. Then I'd use the wheel to hold her steady, and if I preferred to go up in a gradual way, I'd push this button marked 'zig.'"

"And I suppose if you saw something interesting, or wished to dodge a mountain, you'd 'zag,'" suggested the Scarecrow, indicating the "zag" button with his pudgy finger. "Or you could 'spin,' 'spiral' or 'level-off'—"

"Stop! Stop!" panted the Cowardly Lion, clapping his paw to one eye, "all this up-zig and down-zig makes me positively giddy!"

"It does seem a little complicated," said Dorothy, looking dubiously at the Wizard's button-board.

"Why, it's perfectly simple!" the Wizard assured her brightly. "All you have to do is touch the right buttons at the right time!"

"But—"



The Scarecrow, who had been about to ask another question, whirled round on one heel, and flopped on his back in the aisle. The Cowardly Lion skidded rapidly past, to wedge under the little dining table while Dorothy and the Wizard clung to the steering board to keep from falling. For—a terrific roar like the tearing of a gigantic sheet had

made the Ozpril tremble like a leaf. There came a sudden flash of silver smoke, and the gradual dying away of all sound. Then—a complete and ominous silence.

"WHAT? WHAT!!! Why, it's gone!" shouted the Wizard, racing over to the door and staring amazedly at the empty space occupied a moment before by the Oztober. Then he glanced up into the starlit expanse of sky.

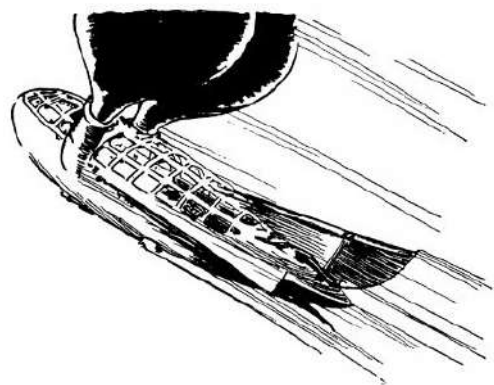
"Gone?" Creeping on hands and knees, the Scarecrow peered out to see for himself. "Why, what right have they to go off like that?" he demanded, pulling himself up by the door jam. "April comes before October and goes before October, too. Fall before spring—why, that's ridiculous! The Ozpril should have led off!"

"Oh, what will become of them?" cried Dorothy in distress, clasping her hands anxiously. "I'm sure it was a dreadful mistake."

"Mistake!" moaned the Wizard, pushing back his high hat. "Worse than that, Dorothy! Why, everything is ruined! Here they've gone off before I even had a chance to show the plane to Ozma. They have no directions, no supplies; they'll crash, smash or wreck themselves. I intended to teach Nick Chopper to navigate the plane before we started!"

"But can't we stop them? Can't we go after them?" exclaimed Dorothy, clutching the Wizard's coat tails.

"Go after them?—Yes! that's the idea, go after them! Of course!" panted the Wizard, falling over the Cowardly Lion who was making a stream-lion for the door.



"I was just going back for my over-shoes," wheezed the lion, slinking rather guiltily into his seat at the Wizard's reproachful glance.

"Stay where you are!" the Wizard directed sharply.

"Now then, steady—everybody steady! Shut that door, Scarecrow, we are about to ascend." The Wizard bent over the steering board to touch the green button that would inflate the Ozpril's balloon. "But I never expected to go without my black bag of magic, an extra vest, or even my bottle of hair tonic."

"Haven't you any magic at all?" called Dorothy, as the Ozpril began to vibrate and tremble from the rush of gas into its balloon.

"A little, a little," confessed the Wizard, pressing the buttons marked "Up" and "South". "Here, Dorothy, take the tell-all-escape and see if you can catch a glimpse of the Oztober when we are aloft." Grasping the wheel, the Wizard settled grimly into the pilot's seat. Dorothy had just time to clutch the tell-all-escape before the Ozpril rose straight into the air. Lifted and borne by its buoyant gas bag, the graceful ship pointed toward the stars.