

This story is brought to you by Ririro.com for free. Our mission is to give all children in the world free access to a variety of stories. The stories can be read, downloaded and printed online and cover a wide range of topics, including animals, fantasy, science, history, diverse cultures and much more.

Support our mission by sharing our website. We wish you a lot of fun reading!



Ririro

IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

Ririro

Ozoplaning with the Wizard of Oz: The Travellers Return! (19/20)

"I told you not to do that," said Nick, running over to Strut and the Swordsmith. "I warned you! Now see what you've done!"

"But where is it? Where did it go? Where did it BLOW?" screamed the Airlander, his electric hair standing more on end than ever and crackling like summer lightning.



"Ask Ozma! Ask the Wizard!" suggested Nick, folding his arms and surveying the two quite

calmly. "But if you take my advice, you'll hustle right out of this castle before the same thing happens to YOU!"



"Who asked for your advice?" cried Strut, streaking over to the window to see whether the safe had blown into the garden, though how it could have done so

without knocking a hole in the wall or ceiling, he could neither imagine nor understand. Drawing aside the

curtain he gave a great gasp. Nick, who had hurried after him, uttered a loud shout of joy.

"See! I told you!" cried Nick, and unhooking his oil can the Tin Woodman let four drops of oil slide down his neck. "I told you!" Strut made no reply. He just hung on to the curtain as if he were drowning and the flimsy portiere, a life preserver. "See!" shouted Nick again. But it was what Strut didn't see that upset the Airman! What he didn't see was his entire army of nine hundred and ninety-nine splendid fighters! The garden below was as empty and quiet as a park on a rainy Sunday. "Calm yourself, Man! Calm yourself!" advised Nick as Strut, turning from the window and noting the disappearance of his Swordsmith, began running in frenzied circles, overturning chairs and tables and tripping over rugs and foot-stools.

"Quick," he hissed, making a dive for the Tin Woodman. "Fly me back to the Strat. At once! At ONCE! Do you hear?"

"Oh, yes! I hear you—quite well!" said Nick, eluding Strut easily. "But I'll never fly you anywhere again! Besides, don't you realize you cannot fly from magic! You'll have to stay, my good man, and face the music!"



Nick's words seemed to bring the Airlander to his senses. Remembering, even in defeat, that he was a powerful King and Ruler, he straightened up proudly and, with one hand resting on an emerald-topped table, stood looking tensely from Nick Chopper to the door. He did not have long to wait, for in less time than it takes to count ten, nine excited Ozians burst into the Royal Sitting room.

"Oh, Nick! Are you really safe? Is everything all right?" Jellia Jam rushed over to the Tin Woodman and took both of his hands in her own.

"So that's the fellow I was supposed to impersonate!" roared the Cowardly Lion, thrusting his head between Dorothy and the Soldier, "Well, Goosengravy, girls—I'm insulted!"

"And is this really Strut—the high and mighty Stratovanian who has come to conquer us?" Ozma, who was just behind the Soldier, gazed so steadily and sorrowfully at the Airman that he uncomfortably averted his gaze. He was, to tell the truth, astonished at the youth, beauty and regal manner of the young Fairy. He cast a questioning look at the others, crowding through the doorway. He already knew the Soldier with Green Whiskers, but the Scarecrow, the Cowardly Lion, the small, High-Hatted gentleman talking earnestly to a cheerful little girl, the little, red-cloaked Princess and the tall, imposing, red-haired Glinda were all new and bewildering strangers. For the first time since they had met, Nick felt sorry for his discomfited foe, and as each of the celebrities approached, he called out the names.

"Our famous live Scarecrow, His Majesty the Cowardly Lion, Glinda the Good Sorceress, the Wonderful Wizard of Oz, Princess Dorothy of Kansas and the Emerald City and—"

"Azarine, the Red," finished Dorothy, helping him out. For Nick, completely at sea, looked inquiringly at the pretty little Princess in the red cloak. At each introduction Strut bowed stiffly. If he could have reached his flying stick which he had left standing beside the mantel, he would have flown out the window—regardless of the fact that he might never find his way back to the Strat. But as he could not reach the staff, he stood stonily waiting for whatever was to befall.

"How'd you find Jellia and the Soldier? What became of the Ozpril? Where's the Emerald safe?" questioned Nick, leaving Strut's side and hurrying to seize the little Wizard by both lapels, for he could restrain his curiosity no longer.

"Quite a story—quite a story," puffed the Wizard, closing one eye, "Ask me again some long winter evening." Jerking away from Nick, he ran off to fetch his black bag of magic, from which he had been separated far too long.

"I suppose you are quite anxious to return to your own country," said Ozma, addressing herself to the Ruler of the Strat as she seated herself on a small, satin sofa.

"Not without my army," blustered Strut, defiantly. "It is neither fair nor honest for one ruler to destroy by magic the fighting forces of another!"

"Your army is not destroyed," Ozma told him evenly. "It already is in Stratovania, transported there by this magic belt." Lightly, the dark-haired fairy touched the gem-studded girdle she was wearing. "And—speaking of honesty and fairness," she went on seriously, "did you think it honest or fair to come here, take possession of my castle, and try to steal all my treasure and jewels?" Strut had the grace to blush, and as there was no good answer to Ozma's question, he looked haughtily over the heads of the company regarding him so accusingly. "Well, have you anything to say?" inquired Ozma



sternly. "Whether or not you return to your Kingdom depends entirely upon yourself and how you treat Kabebe." At mention of his Queen, Strut started, involuntarily.

"By the way—here's that silly crown you made me wear!" said Jellia, handing over the star-tipped circlet she had been wearing since her visit

to the Strat. "Remember me to the Piper when you see him and to Junnenrump and Hippenscop."

"Are you sure you'd rather not live in the Strat as a Starina, than stay here with us?" asked Ozma, smiling mischievously, as Jellia backed away from the frowning airman.

"Never! Never! NEVER!" cried Jellia, taking a long step backward at each word. "I've had enough of Kings to last me the rest of my life!"

A little ripple of laughter followed Jellia's blunt refusal, and taking pity on the mortified Airlander, Ozma touched her belt and whispered the magic word that would transport him to his own country.

"But can you trust him?" worried Nick Chopper, as the Stratovanian vanished before their eyes. "How do you know he won't blow things up as soon as he returns?"

"Because I've removed all power from his Blowmen's horns," Ozma told him quietly. "He'll be all right, and for the kind of people he rules—Strut probably is the best sort of ruler they could have."

"If you ask me," observed the Cowardly Lion, shaking his mane vigorously, "the worst punishment anyone could have would be to live on wind pudding and air-ade. Woof!"

"Oh, what a shame!" Dorothy ran over to the mantel where the flying stick had been standing. "The winged staff's gone! I rather had hoped we could keep it for Hallow'een or New Year's or something!"

"Haven't you had enough flying?" grinned the Scarecrow, settling on the green sofa beside Ozma.

"By the way, where's the tell-all-escape?"

"Oh, I'm so sorry,"

Dorothy felt ruefully in the pocket of her coat. "I

must have left it in Strut's Royal Pavilion!"



"Never mind! I'll bring it back with the magic belt," smiled Ozma, "and I presume it's all right to bring the safe back, too?" As Glinda nodded in agreement, the Ruler of Oz touched her belt twice, and with two thumps—one louder than the other—the safe and tell-all-escape thumped down on the floor beside the sofa. The tell-all-escape was pointing directly at Ozma, and it immediately began broadcasting her whole history. So the little Fairy, with a chuckle of amusement locked it up in her desk drawer.

While Ozma had been meting out her gentle justice, Jellia had been telling Nick all that had happened since he was forced to fly Strut to Oz. She told him of the arrival of the Ozpril, the escape of the whole party from the angry Kabebe, their fall to Red Top Mountain, their rude treatment by Bustabo, their meeting with Azarine and the red Deer, and their final journey to Glinda's castle.

Spellbound, Nick learned how the Wizard finally had mastered the intricacies of Glinda's zentomatic transporter and brought the safe to her red castle just as Strut was on the point of taking violent measures. With the safe in his possession, it had been an easy matter for the Wizard to open it, take out the magic belt and transport both Glinda and Ozma from Ragbad. After listening to the whole, exciting story Glinda, Ozma and the Wizard had sent the Stratovanian army back to the Strat and returned to the Emerald City to deal with Strut, personally.

"It's certainly handy to have a Fairy around," sighed Dorothy, slipping an arm around Ozma's slim waist. "One little wave of Ozma's wand and we soared right into this castle! Isn't it grand to be home again? Not that I didn't enjoy the trip," she added hastily, as the Wizard came briskly into the room with his black bag. "Oh, Ozma! Just wait till you see the beautiful Ozoplanes our Wizard has built for you!"



"She'll need pretty strong glasses to see the Ozpril," observed the Wizard, looking rather sadly at the ceiling. "I expect it's hanging to the tip of a star

by this time! And I suppose Strut made hash of the Oztober!"

"Hash!" sputtered Nick Chopper, indignantly, "I should say NOT. I've taken splendid care of your ship, Wiz, and you'll find the Oztober below in the garden, as bright and beautiful as the night she was launched!"

"Hurray for Nick," shouted Jellia, waving the duster she already was flipping briskly over pictures and books.

"He should have a medal, your Majesty! No one could have flown that Plane better than the Tin Woodman!"

"He shall have a medal!" promised Ozma, with a special smile for Nick Chopper who was one of her special favorites. "And when he needs a vacation from the

Winkies, he can come here and be our official Pilot answerable only to me and to the Wizard!"

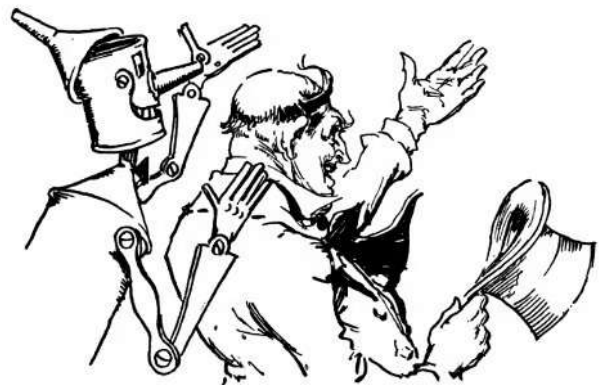
"And I hereby present your Majesty with my two, splendid Ozoplanes—for exploring, for pleasure, or for warfare!" announced the little Wizard, extending both arms, dramatically. "But now you will have to excuse me, as the Tin Woodman and I are leaving at once!"

"Leaving!" wailed Jellia, plumping down on a foot stool.

"But you've only just returned!"

"Can't help it," panted the Wizard, who seemed in a perfect phiz to be off, "I'll show you the Ozoplanes later, Ozma, but now—Goodbye! Goodbye, Dorothy! Goodbye Jellia! Take good care of Azarine till I return!"

"But look—where are we going?" demanded Nick Chopper, as the Wizard seized his arm and marched him rapidly toward the door.



"To find the Ozpril, of course!" explained the Wizard impatiently, as if that should have been

clear to everybody! "To find the Ozpril and bring her back to the Emerald City!"

"But think how high those Blowmen may have blown it?" worried Dorothy. "They may even have blown it to Bitz!"

"Then we'll bring back the pieces," declared the Wizard, firmly. "How about coming along?" With a wink

at Jellia Jam, he paused beside the Lion who was busy licking his front paws.

"WHAT?" roared the Lion, springing up as if someone had shot him. With a thoroughly indignant glance at Ozma's little magician, he bolted through the curtains and was gone.

"Just not a flyer!" mused the Wizard, shaking his head in amusement. "Well, Goodbye, Friends! Farewell—all!" With an energetic nod he stepped through the door, pulling Nick along with him.

"Couldn't you bring the Ozpril back with your magic belt?" questioned Dorothy, hurrying over to the window to watch the plane's take off.

"I suppose so," answered Ozma, thoughtfully. "But they both are so fond of flying, they'd much rather bring it back, themselves! I'm sure of it!"