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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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The Gnome King of Oz: Duties Of the Quilty Queen (3/20)

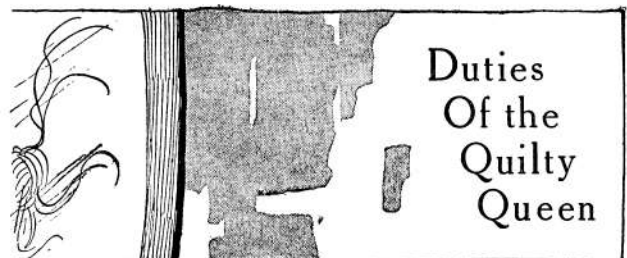
Hungry from their long fast, for they had eaten nothing the day before, and wearied by their long quest, the two Quilty statesmen arose early next morning. "High time to instruct her Highness in the duties of her office," yawned Scrapper, ruffling up his hair.

"I hope she has breakfast ready," muttered Piecer, groaning a little as he straightened his knees and stretched out his arms. "And I hope this Queen lasts a long time, Scrapper, for another day like yesterday would be the end of me.

Come on, let's see what she's doing."

Not requiring any sleep, Scraps had spent the first half of the night

wondering how she had come to be Queen. Then, giving it up, she spent the other half dancing and singing and composing long speeches to deliver to her subjects. As Piecer and Scrapper stepped into the main hall of the palace, she was arranging her yarn hair before a long mirror. Catching sight of them in the glass, she spun gaily round and clapping her crown on sideways cried haughtily:



"Vassals, fetch my rolling chair
Your Queen desires to take the air!"

"Stuff and Nonsense!" sputtered Scrapper, amazed at the Patchwork Girl's audacious verse. "Don't you know the coronation is over and it's time to get to work?"

"Work?" shrilled Scraps, catching hold of a patched portiere to steady herself. "Queens are not supposed to work. Where are the servants?"

"There are no servants," answered Scrapper calmly. "The Queen does all the work here. Just read off the list of her Majesty's duties, Piecer, old fellow."

Putting on his specs, Piecer drew a long sheet of paper from his patched pocket and began: "The Queen of Patch, on arising, shall prepare the breakfast of her two chief advisers (meaning us)," explained Piecer, looking severely at the Patchwork Girl over his spectacles. "She shall make the beds," he continued complacently, his voice growing higher with each item, "sweep the floors, dust the furniture, scrub the steps, wash the windows, sort the patches, count the cotton spools, separate the old clothes for mending, feed the Scissor Bird, help pick tomato pin-cushions, scold the Patch-workers—and—"

"Stop!" commanded Scraps, flinging up her arm imperiously.

"But I'm not nearly finished," objected Piecer, rattling the paper impatiently.

"Well, I am!" The Patchwork Girl's suspender buttons glittered angrily behind the steel spectacles. "Get some

one else to be your sovereign," she cried. "You don't want a Queen, you want a cook, a housekeeper and a Grandma!" Snatching the work basket from her head, she dashed it to the floor and jumping on it with both feet shouted defiantly:

"Eeejee, weejee, squeejee, squb!

I will not sweep, I will not scrub!

I will not scrub! I will not dust!

So let those dust and scrub who must!"

"Better save your strength for your work," advised Piecer, stepping back a few paces. "You're Chief Scrapper," he whispered hurriedly to his companion. "You settle her while I fetch the Scissor Bird."

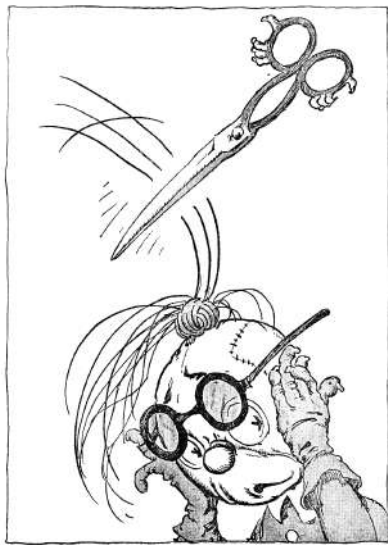
As the door slammed upon Piecer, the Chief Scrapper faced the Patchwork Girl. "Go on, get as mad as you please," he urged cheerfully. "The madder you are the better we like you. The crosser you grow the better queen you'll make for Patch, our Queens must be good scolders," he chuckled, rubbing his hands gleefully together.

"I'm not your queen," screamed Scraps, stamping one foot and then the other. "Take me back to the Emerald City, you miserable ragamuffin. I am a free subject of Ozma of Oz."

"Oh, no! You're Queen of Patch, now," corrected Scrapper, picking up the waste basket and jamming it down upon her cotton forehead. "You were chosen by the royal Spool of Succession to be our ruler!"

While Scraps listened in amazement, he explained how the former queen had gone to pieces and how the golden spool had led them to the Emerald City.

"And you think, just because your silly spool tagged me, that I'm going to stay and do all your work?" exclaimed Scraps, snapping her cotton fingers under Scrapper's nose. "Kazupp-kazick, you make me sick!"



Rushing to the door, she jerked it open, bumped against Piecer, on his way in, and sat down with a thud.

"What a pretty creature," chirped the Scissor Bird, who had flown over Piecer's head. "Is this the new Queen?"

Scrapper nodded.

"She knows almost as many cross words as the last one," he chuckled

admiringly. "But she refuses to work."

"Oh, I think she'll work now," smiled Piecer. With a significant wink at his companion, he thrust a broom into Scraps' hands and, turning to the Scissor Bird, said quietly: "If her Majesty refuses to clean the castle, just cut off her head!"

"Nothing would give me more pleasure," chortled the bird, and snapping his scissor bill hungrily, he swooped down upon Scraps and snipped an inch off her yarn hair.

"Help!" screamed the Patchwork Girl. "Help! Help!" But there was no one to help her and, as the Scissor Bird

took another snip at her yarn, she seized the broom and fell to sweeping for dear life.

"When you finish sweeping, you may wash the windows," said the Chief Scrapper and, taking the arm of the Prime Piecer, passed pompously out into the garden. All day, pursued relentlessly by the Scissor Bird, Scraps flew from one task to another. Being made of cotton she did not grow tired, but as she had never in her whole life done anything she did not wish to do, you can imagine how furiously angry she became.

"Wait till Ozma hears of this!" she raged, shaking her scrubbing brush under the Scissor Bird's bill. "Just wait!"

"I'll wait!" yawned the Scissor Bird, "but you'll have to wait too, and while we're waiting suppose you go on with the scrubbing."

Poor Scraps, she could have wept with anger, but she had not been constructed for crying and having not a tear in her cotton constitution was forced to express her indignation in groans, shouts and threatening verses. To these the Scissor Bird paid no attention whatsoever and by night-fall Scraps had not even energy enough to make verses. After complaining bitterly about their dinner, and it must be confessed that Scraps, having had no experience, proved a poor cook, the two Quiltie Ministers locked her securely in the palace sitting-room and went off to tell their fellow townsmen about the Emerald City. They took the Scissor Bird with them and, left to her own devices at last, the Patchwork Girl sank into a broken chair and began to rock to and fro.

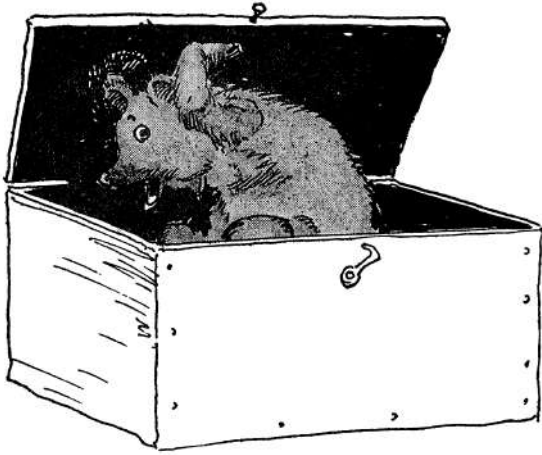
"No wonder the Queens go to pieces so fast," groaned Scraps, anxiously examining a rip in her cotton finger. She had caught it on a nail while scrubbing the castle steps.

"Kazupp Kazoo, what shall I do?
Stay here and go to pieces, too? Never!"

Springing up, she took the candle the Quilties had placed on the center table and ran from one window to the other. But the windows were all locked and barred and, after rattling the door knobs and pounding on the walls, she sat dejectedly down in the rocking chair again. There was nothing in the room to amuse her. All the books in the bookcase were needle-books, all the cushions were pin-cushions and the wall was simply covered with cross stitched mottoes.

"A stitch in time saves nine!" sniffed Scraps, scornfully reading the one nearest her. "Well, who wants to save nine? Why should nine be saved any more than six or seven?"

There was no one to argue it with, so after a little silence she murmured: "I wonder what's in that chest?" Except for a few rickety chairs and the sewing-table, the chest was the only other piece of furniture in the room. Taking the candle, Scraps walked over to the chest, and dropping on her knees, cautiously lifted the lid. At first she thought it was empty, but, as three or four drops of hot candle grease dripped inside, a low growl rumbled out of the darkness. In some alarm Scraps jumped back.



"Go away!" roared a gruff voice. "Do your own scolding, I'm sleepy! Shut that lid, I tell you!"

"Shut it yourself!" cried the Patchwork Girl, who was extremely tired of being ordered about. Besides she

was a little frightened. At this, there was a short pause, followed by a surprised grunt, and presently a rumpled head appeared above the edge of the chest. It was a small brown bear. Blinking at Scraps, it grumbled crossly, "Where's the Queen? Who in scratch are you?" "I'm the Queen, who in Patch are you?" answered the Patchwork Girl saucily. The bear regarded her attentively for some time before he answered. Then putting his head on one side he explained calmly, "Why, I'm a pet of the late Queen Cross Patch. Has she gone to pieces?"

Scraps nodded. "I don't see why she wanted a bear for a pet," she added frankly.

"You look bright, but I'm afraid you're quite dumb," sniffed the bear, climbing out of the chest. "Why shouldn't she have a bear for a pet? Isn't a bear about the crossiest pet one could find? I helped Cross Patch with the grumbling and growling when she was tired. I'll help you if you wish, though it will be a little harder. Just looking at you makes me want to laugh."

"Well, why don't you?" asked Scraps, seating herself in the rocker again.

"Sh—hh! Do you want me to lose my position?" breathed the little bear, looking around anxiously. "I mustn't laugh. Don't you know a bear is supposed to be cross? You have to be pretty cross to keep your place in this country!"

"Well, I don't intend to stay in this country," announced Scraps, rocking vigorously backward and forward. "I was kidnapped and crowned Queen against my will and I intend to run away as soon as I can. Princess Ozma may send for me any minute, too. All she has to do is to look in the Magic Picture." This was quite true, for in Ozma's palace hangs an enchanted picture, showing a country landscape. If the little fairy ruler wishes to locate any of her subjects, she has but to command them to appear and the Magic Picture immediately shows where they are and what they are doing. All of this, and a bit about Ozma and the Emerald City, Scraps explained to the cross little bear and he listened most earnestly, wiggling his buttony nose with interest.

"What's your name?" asked Scraps presently.

"Grumpy!" answered the bear gruffly. "What's yours?"

"Scraps!" said the Patchwork Girl, kicking her heels against the rocker.

Now, one of the delightful things about Oz is that all the animals and birds can talk; and as talk of any kind interested Scraps she began to feel quite cheerful and like herself.

"You mean Queen Scraps," corrected the little bear, eyeing the work-basket on her head with great respect.

"Not if I can help it!" cried the Patchwork Girl, springing out of her seat and rattling the crown jewels

defiantly. "The country is all right, but who ever heard of a Queen doing all the work? It's ridiculous."

"Queen Cross Patch liked to work," muttered Grumpy. Then, sitting down thoughtlessly on a pin-cushion, he arose with a loud roar.

"Well, I don't," said Scraps, while Grumpy, growling furiously, pulled two needles from his fur. "So I hope Ozma looks in the Magic Picture soon, but whether she does or not I shall run off first chance I get—

"Back to the city of sun and song,
Back to the city where I belong!"

"It'll be a long time before they let you," observed Grumpy thoughtfully, "and if you try to escape the Scissor Bird will cut off your head. What would you do then?"

"Have it sewed on again," declared Scraps stoutly, but she shivered a little at the prospect and in a slightly shaky voice inquired, "Don't you know any games or riddles? No one's around now and we might as well have some fun."

Grumpy shook his head, then brightening up a little he slid out of his chair. "Cross Patch and I always cuffed each other a bit after dinner," he said casually.

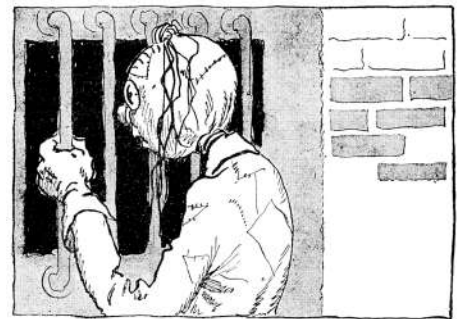
"Cuffed each other!" gasped Scraps. "What for?"

"For practice," explained Grumpy solemnly. "You have no idea how many new cross words we learned that way. It's simply astonishing what cross words you can think of when someone thumps you on the ear. Come on—let's try it. You'll need to know a lot of cross words." Drawing

back his fuzzy arm, Grumpy gave the Patchwork Girl a cuff that sent her flying into the corner.

"What a pleasant pastime!" puffed Scraps, picking herself up with a flounce. "Do you call that fun?" she demanded, shaking the dust scornfully out of her skirts. "Well, what do you want to do then?" mumbled the little bear sullenly. "That's the only game I know. Say, someone's at the door! Listen!"

Someone certainly was. First, the bell rang long and clangingly. Then came such a series of thumps, kicks and slams that all the cross stitched mottoes fell sideways. "Oh!" shrieked the Patchwork Girl, flinging up her arms joyously, "I know. Ozma has sent someone to rescue me. Come on Grumpy, we'll let them in."



"How do you know it's rescuers?" shivered the little bear anxiously. "They sound like robbers to me!"

"Get out!" cried Scraps, running over to the door.

"We can't get out," Grumpy reminded her patiently, "for we're locked in good and tight."

"That's so," sighed the Patchwork Girl, pressing her cotton nose to the window bars. "They'll have to break down the door."

"Sounds as if they had," sputtered the little bear, as a terrible crash sounded from the hallway. "Here they come!" Jumping head first into the chest Grumpy pulled down the lid.