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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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# The Gnome King of Oz: Tune Town Sings The Wanderers Onward (13/20)

"Now how did this happen!" Sitting exactly where she had fallen, Scraps folded her arms dramatically.

"Opening chords!" boomed a deep voice, and out from a niche in the wall sprang a handsome person in a bandmaster's uniform. "The gates of Tune Town are locked with piano keys," he explained graciously, "so when you struck the opening chords, of course you fell in."

"Very good," murmured Ozwold. "But now that we are in, how do we get out?"

"Out of tune?" exclaimed the bandmaster in a shocked voice. "Don't get out of tune, I beg of you, besides it's against the law. May I call your attention to our principle laws here?"

Raising his baton he pointed to a large poster on the wall and much to his astonishment, Peter read:

"No talking allowed, sing!  
No walking permitted, dance!"



"But you're talking," said Peter, shifting the oztrich egg from one knee to the other.

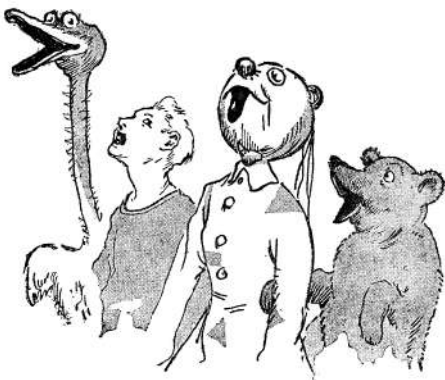
"Ah, but this is the intermission. In a moment the music will begin and you must keep time, keep step and keep moving. We do everything to music here. Quick now, which would you rather do, sing and dance or play in the band? That bear ought to be in the band, he has such bandy legs? Would you care to be in the band, creature?"

Grumpy slid down from the oztrich and shook his head bashfully. "Let's stick together," he rumbled under his breath to Peter. "Tell him we're a quartet."

"This is very awkward," sighed Ozwold, who always clipped off his words when he was annoyed. "I am a bird but I cannot sing a single note."

"Then keep quiet and dance," advised the bandmaster.

"But look here!" put in Peter impatiently. "We don't want to sing and dance, we just want to go through your town. We're in an awful hurry and haven't time to be in a show."



"Say 'Ah!'" commanded the bandmaster, giving no attention to Peter's remarks. Striking a tuning fork on a railing before him, he waited expectantly for

them to begin. Raising one eyebrow Peter looked at Scraps and as Scraps, jumping to her feet, winked her suspender button eyes, they both burst into a loud "ah,"

Grumpy and Ozwold joining in so vigorously that the bandmaster's cap blew off.

"That's fine," he approved, picking his cap up somewhat nervously. "And now you're in tune. When the music starts go where you wish, do what you want, but be sure to keep step and remember to sing, not to speak, or you will be arrested."

"Oompah! Oompah! Who are these strangers?" Dancing down the marble street came a small bobbed-haired Queen, with a very short skirt and a tunic embroidered all over with fiddles and horns. On her head for a crown was a hollowed out drum and by her side was a tom-tom cat, clattering and clanging as he ran along.

"Travellers, my dear Jazzma," answered the bandmaster with a bow. As the Queen stared curiously at the travellers and they as curiously stared back, the loud roll of a drum sounded in the distance. Instantly from every dwelling marched men arrayed in gay uniforms like Oompahs and Tunesters in embroidered tunics like the Queen's, only instead of drums, on their heads they wore bright bandannas.

"It's a play!" murmured Peter, as Oompah placed himself hastily at the head of the band and all the Tunesters stood waiting with toes stiffly pointed. When Oompah raised his baton, the band burst into a lively march and the whole population began dancing in every direction. Some of the women and girls danced toward the markets, singing out their orders in rhyme, others began sweeping the pavements, carrying on long

conversations in song as they swept. Everybody was doing something and doing it to music. It really was quite gay and, fluttering his plumes importantly, the oztrich began strutting along in perfect time to the music. Grumpy watching the Queen, who was just ahead, slid and shuffled along skilfully. As for Scraps, she simply outdid herself. Peter, from his vantage point on the oztrich's back, watched the whole performance with great interest, feeling exactly as if he were in a circus parade. The inhabitants of Tune Town seemed all to live in flats and the walls of their dwellings were covered with lines, notes and scales, while all the streets were marked with musical signs. The trees, instead of leaves, bore musical notes and when the wind swept through them played silvery tunes that mixed not unpleasantly with the music of the band. Song birds fluttered in the branches and, quite forgetting the law against speaking, Peter called out to Grumpy to look at them.

"If you have a word to say,  
Sing it out in rhyme;  
Do you wish to spoil our play  
And throw us out of time?"

warbled the Queen, waving a drum stick at Peter. Peter grew very red and while he was trying to think up a rhymed reply the music started again and Scraps, capering up to Jazzma, chanted gaily:

"You really are a funny nation,  
And must we sing our conversation?"

The Queen, taking three steps to the right and four to the left, nodded vigorously and, looking admiringly at the Patchwork Girl, sang:

"Maiden stay, you are so gay,  
I'd like to look at you all day.  
My maid in waiting you shall be  
And live in rag time harmoniee!"

Peter waited anxiously for Scraps to answer. Tune Town was so jolly, he was almost afraid Scraps would forget their important mission. But Scraps, for all her giddiness, was deeply attached to Ozma and extremely worried about the plans of Ruggedo for her downfall.

So kicking up her heels, she sang out saucily:

"And that your Majesty would mean  
To dance attendance on a Queen;  
A maid of waiting, not for me,  
I'm the Patchwork Girl,  
But I won't work, wheee!"

Turning a cartwheel,  
Scraps walked a few paces on her hands, then coming right side up, danced amiably along

beside Jazzma. Peter chuckled to himself and hoped he would remember all of this nonsense to tell his grandfather. Then, suddenly catching sight of a small



Inn, set back among the tune trees, he reached over and touched Scraps on the shoulder. He was terribly hungry, but not being quick at rhymes could not put his hunger into song. Scraps, however, caught his meaning at once and again turned to address the Queen. She had to sing quite loud for all the Tunesters were warbling about this and that till the confusion was terrible.

"If we stopped at this Inn, would you think us rude?  
Your Majesty, my friends crave food!"  
bawled Scraps not untunefully.

The Queen, who was dancing a fox trot and purchasing a bouquet from a flower girl at the same time, nodded graciously and screamed back:

"Eat if you wish, our Viol Inn  
Is kept by the famous Daddy Linn,  
But eat in time and use your feet,  
Be careful not to drop a beat!"

Scraps sang back to Queen Jazzma:

"Using one's feet to eat's a feat  
We've never tried, nor dropped a beat."

"If anyone drops a beat, I'll eat it," mumbled Grumpy under his breath. Fortunately no one heard him, and in a few moments they reached the Inn. Pausing at the foot of the steps and still marking time to the music, they stared up with great interest. As they did so an old gentleman with a fiddle body and bow legs came skipping out on the porch.

"Before you eat, you must pay me  
In harmonee, sweet harmonee!"

sang the Inn Keeper, accompanying himself upon his fiddle body with one bow leg, while he stood upon the other.

"Does he mean we have to sing?" whispered Peter, sliding off the oztrich and setting the egg down carefully under a tree. Scraps nodded and while Grumpy and the oztrich rolled their eyes at her pleadingly, she clasped her cotton hands and sang with great feeling a song she had made up about Sir Hokus, the Good Knight of Oz.

"As brave as a lion, as bold as a King,  
Is Sir Hokus of Pokes; he can fight, he can sing,  
He can sweep out the castle, but Hokus likes best  
To bag a big giant, or go on a quest,  
And in Oz an adventure is happening each minute  
And whenever one happens, he's sure to be in it!"

"Well, he's not in this one," thought Peter almost as interested in Scraps' song as the Inn Keeper. As Daddy Linn was now bowing and smiling and motioning for them to come up, they started quite cheerfully up the steps. But no sooner had they set foot upon the first one than the whole flight danced off. You see, they were dance steps, all the steps in Tune Town are, but after dancing three polkas and a three-step, they waltzed back to the porch and somewhat dizzily the travellers jumped off.



"Let's run away, let's run away,  
I can't keep dancing here all day,"

puffed Ozwold, proud to have made up a song at last. "Eeney meeney miney mo, first you eat and then you go," answered Scraps. Peter and Grumpy quite agreed with her and, shuffling their feet in time to the music, they waited impatiently for the Inn Keeper to re-appear. When he did come out he had four leather music rolls on a tray and handed them around as if they were the most delicious morsels imaginable.

"Fie! Fie! Have you no pie!" sang Scraps, while Peter and Grumpy shook their heads in disappointment.

Ozwold pecked savagely at one of the rolls, but even he could not eat leather.

"Pie? I have a grand piana,  
How would that suit, Miss Diana?"

The Inn Keeper looked inquiringly at the Patchwork Girl and, when she shook her head, danced crossly into the Inn and slammed the door.

"No wonder they call this a Viol Inn,  
No dinner at all, just a dreadful din!"

mumbled Scraps, who hated to have Peter disappointed. Peter, with a sigh, jumped over the flighty dance steps, picked up the oztrich egg and, with Grumpy shuffling disconsolately after, started back toward the main street.

“Very awkward—when one can’t talk,” wheezed the oztrich, rolling its eyes sadly at Peter.

“Never mind, a way I’ll find, Tunester, will you be so kind—”

Touching a Tunester on the sleeve, Scraps trilled earnestly:

“Mister, will you show us how  
To leave this town? We’re going now.”

“To get out of Tune, get out of Tune!  
You’ll find yourselves out, pretty soon,”

chuckled the singer, waltzing away unconcernedly.

“What do you suppose he means by that?” exclaimed Peter, forgetting that he was breaking the law again. No sooner had he spoken than the music and dancing stopped and this time the whole band rushed toward him with instruments threateningly upraised.

“Scream!” puffed the Patchwork Girl, struck by a sudden idea. “Altogether now, Ah!” Not knowing what else to do, Peter, Grumpy and the Oztrich screamed “Ah” as loudly as they could, Scraps joining in with a will. As each one screamed in a different key, the result was a perfectly dreadful discord. Covering their ears and dropping their horns and drums, the members of the band, Jazzma and her Tunesters fled in every direction. Before the last echoes of that “Ah!” had died away, the four offenders found themselves out of Tune indeed, though how they had gotten over the wall not one of them could have told you.

"Did we blow over?" asked Peter, looking down anxiously at the oztrich egg to see if it was broken.

"No," giggled Scraps, throwing a kiss in the direction of the wall, "we sang out of tune, Peter, and here we are out of Tune. Which road shall we take, boys?" There were three roads leading away from Tune Town and after quite a debate they chose the center one.



"I hope we find something to eat soon," sighed Peter, as Ozwold started briskly down the road. "I'm hungry as a bear!"

"Not as this bear," growled Grumpy, patting his middle sorrowfully.

