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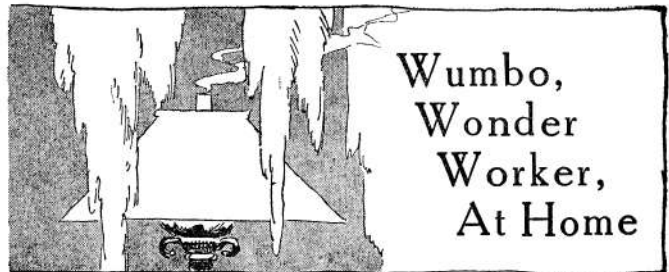
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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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# The Gnome King of Oz: Wumbo, Wonder Worker, At Home (15/20)

The Gillikin Country of Oz has always been a favorite retreat for witches, wizards and sorcerers. Since the practice of magic has been forbidden for everyone except Glinda, the Good Sorceress of the South, and the Wizard of Oz, a great many of the lesser wizards and magic workers have retired to the mountains of the north to practice in secret or study for their own satisfaction the ancient art of wizardry.



In a crystal cavern on the western slope of Zamagoochie lived Wumbo, the Wonder Worker. In his youth, Wumbo had studied in the best schools of sorcery and was not only an accomplished magician, but a lovable and loyal citizen of Oz. Therefore, when Ozma passed a law against the practice of magic, Wumbo withdrew to his favorite cave and quietly and harmlessly continued his studies. Now, of all studies sorcery is the most profitable. Being able to grant most of his own wishes, Wumbo lived in the utmost comfort and

contentment, his cavern being almost as magnificent and luxurious as Ozma's castle. From preference, Wumbo lived by himself, but was seldom lonely, for when you can conjure up a company of acrobats from a handful of pebbles, or an orchestra from a few sticks and dried peas, you are always sure of entertainment. Long after ordinary Oz folk were in their beds, Wumbo, in his crystal study, would pore over his musty books of magic, trying out new spells and charms for his own satisfaction and amusement.

He was especially fond of his book of Chants and Enchantments and, on the evening I am writing of, sat beside his great crystal lamp, turning over its leaves and humming cheerfully to himself.

"I think," mused Wumbo at last, "I shall use the speech-giving chant, to-night. It's been a long time since I've talked with my furniture and no doubt it has a lot to tell me!" Rubbing his hands gleefully, Wumbo turned to page ninety-seven and, after reading the chant several times to himself, walked over to his foot-stool and, touching it gently, droned:

"Ooney, mooney, nooney nill,

Tell me foot-stool what you will."



"I need re-covering," creaked the foot-stool promptly. "And next time you trip over me, I trust you will crack both shins."

"Ho! Ho!" roared the wizard, bending backward and forward with mirth, "that's nice of you. Anything else?" As the foot-stool made no further remark, he walked to the mantel and touched the clock.

"Ooney, mooney, nooney nill,  
Tell me, old clock, what you will."

"Your wig's on crooked," ticked the clock critically, "and there's a smudge on the end of your nose." Looking in the glass, Wumbo saw that the clock, as usual, was telling the truth. Straightening his wig, he went next to his favorite chair.

"Ooney, mooney, nooney nill,  
Tell me, arm-chair, what you will!"

chanted Wumbo, putting both hands in his pockets.

"Somebody's sitting on me," complained the chair in a stuffy voice.

"Somebody's sitting on you," gasped Wumbo in astonishment. "Why, I don't see anybody!"

"Then feel 'em," whispered the chair hoarsely. Putting out his hand cautiously, Wumbo touched a long wispy beard and immediately jumped back with a cry of alarm.

"Fold your arms! Fold your arms!" spluttered the Wonder Worker, rushing back to the Book of Enchantments. The chair lost no time in obeying this order. Instead of ordinary arms, Wumbo's chair had real ones and it clasped them about the invisible sitter, so that he could neither move, scream nor scarcely breathe. Meanwhile, with trembling fingers, Wumbo fluttered over the pages

of the Chant Book, till he found the exact one he was searching for—the chant to render visible the invisible. “Ominey, hominey, dominey deer, I command you invisible one to appear!”

mumbled Wumbo, straightening his specs excitedly, for he had had no visitors for seven years. Instantly the figure of a gray gnome appeared in the arm-chair, kicking, struggling and sputtering with fright and fury. As Wumbo continued to stare at him, the chair lowered one of its arms, and Ruggedo, for, of course, it was the old Gnome King, jerked up his head and roared loudly: “Take me to the Emerald City! Take me to the Emerald City!”

“Are you addressing me?” asked Wumbo, dropping into a chair opposite the gnome and regarding him attentively. “If you are, you may as well save your breath. I have never practiced long-distance magic and could not send you to the Emerald City, even if I wanted to.”

“Who wants your old magic,” sneered Ruggedo. “I’ve magic of my own. Take me to the Emerald City. Take me to the Emerald City!” he screeched, trying in vain to squirm out of the clutching arms of Wumbo’s chair.

“You are evidently unfamiliar with one of the first and simplest of magic laws,” observed the wizard reprovingly. “I see now that you are wearing an invisible cloak, but two magic charms cannot work at the same time and as I spoke first you will have to wait till my chant wears off.”

"Who are you? Where am I? How dare you keep me here!" panted Ruggedo furiously.

"You are in the Zamagoochie Country, in the humble cave of Wumbo the Wonder Worker," answered the old gentleman quite amiably. "And as you came here yourself, why blame me for trying to entertain you as I see best?"

"I knew it! I knew it!" raged the Gnome King. "This is Peter's doing. When I catch that boy I'll turn him to a peach basket and jump on him! And you, I suppose, are the father of that meddling Kuma Party?"

"Why, yes," said Wumbo in surprise. "Have you met my son?" Ruggedo gave a spiteful nod, and began to struggle anew with the arms of the chair.

"I command you to let me go," puffed the Gnome King. "I've important business in the Emerald City and must reach there to-night."

"I'm afraid that will be impossible," sighed Wumbo softly.

"When my chair takes a fancy to a person, it sometimes hangs on to him for days and days. Why not sit still and rest yourself," he suggested, folding his arms comfortably. Seeing that for the present he was perfectly powerless, Ruggedo lay back and glared at the old wizard, his red eyes snapping with rage and resentment.

"I'll report you to Ozma," threatened the Gnome King darkly. "You know perfectly well that you are breaking the law, having all this magic furniture and stuff."

"Take your feet off my rounds," ordered the chair sharply, giving Ruggedo a good squeeze.

"How about your magic cloak?" said Wumbo, smiling a little as Ruggedo hastened to take his heels off the rungs of the chair, "and how about turning a boy to a peach basket? That sounds like pretty bad magic to me. Who is this boy? And why are you wearing a cloak of invisibility?"

"That's my business," muttered the gnome, looking uneasily around. "Are you going to let me go or not?"

"That depends on where you are going and what you are going to do," answered Wumbo, clapping his hands three times. A box of chocolates instantly appeared and tilted invitingly toward the wizard. Helping himself, Wumbo offered a chocolate to Ruggedo, but the gnome shook his head impatiently, so Wumbo clapped his hands again and the chocolates disappeared.

"I am going to the Emerald City to report the discovery of a treasure ship," explained the Gnome King after a short silence. "I am going to have Ozma transport the jewels and gold pieces to her own castle. I'm making her a present of them," finished Ruggedo virtuously. Wumbo said nothing but, rising slowly, went over and stared into a great crystal ball on his desk. "That, of course, is not true," said Wumbo, coming back to sit in his chair. "My crystal ball tells me that much and my own eyes tell me that you are wicked and untrustworthy. Therefore I shall keep you here until I find some way to warn Ozma of your coming."

At these words Ruggedo was simply beside himself. Kicking and screaming and threatening Wumbo with every sort of death and destruction, he writhed about

in the chair. But Wumbo was not easily frightened and, picking up the Book of Enchantments, began to read it to himself, while the arm chair, indignant at the Gnome King's bounces and screeches, hugged him till he was forced to keep quiet. But sitting there in the firelight, he did a lot of thinking, and as it grew later and later and quieter and quieter in the great crystal cavern, the Gnome King's spirits began to rise. For Ruggedo was beginning to remember some of his magic.



"If he doesn't try any more chants, the present ones will wear off in four hours," thought the old gnome craftily. "Four hours, and then for the magic cloak!" Wumbo, himself, fully intended to keep a strict watch over his visitor, but the heat from the fire and the drowsy chants in the old book made him sleepier and sleepier. Besides, he had the utmost confidence in his arm-chair and, not



realizing that Ruggedo knew the length of time the magic chants would take to run out, he felt sure the old gnome would not try again to use his cloak. So he read on and on and, while he was searching for the chant to force a person to tell the truth, the book slipped from his knees and a loud snore issued from his lips.



“Wake up, Master! Wake up!” buzzed the clock, tilting forward in alarm.

“Wake up! Wake up!” scolded the arm-chair and foot-stool both together. But before they could arouse the wizard, Ruggedo had vanished. Four hours had passed to the very minute, the magic of the wizard’s chant had worn entirely away and at a whispered command from the Gnome King, the magic cloak had lifted him out of the imprisoning arms of Wumbo’s chair and whirled him off and away. Over mountains, hills and valleys flew the gnome in his invisible cloak, through the chilly mists of early morning till, far below, he saw the flashing spires of the Emerald City of Oz.

