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IMAGINATION OVER KNOWLEDGE

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The Hungry Tiger of Oz: Safe in the Emerald City (20/20)

"Wait! Wait!" begged Ozma, jumping up and hurrying after him. "Atmos Fere, Atmos dear, don't you remember you promised to carry us across the desert and back to Oz?" By this time they had all run out into the garden, but Atmos did not even seem to hear their pleas. With Ippty and Irashi under one arm, he was feverishly kicking off his iron boots.

"These villains," puffed Atmos, holding up his unhappy victims, "are as Carter said, of no use on the earth at all, but they will be very useful to me in the sky. Not as good specimens as I could have wished for, but I will take them back with me, to prove that there are really people at the bottom of the air. After the lecture, I shall drop them on some lonely island where they can do no further mischief," declared Atmos calmly.



"Hurrah!" roared the Hungry Tiger, overjoyed that his secret would now be kept safely.

"After the lecture," gasped Ozma faintly, "But that will be years and years by skytime?"

"Years and years," acknowledged Atmos, with a grin, and freeing himself from one boot soared a hundred feet into the air. "Look out below!" he called warningly, "Here comes the other one."

They had just time to dodge aside when the other iron boot came crashing to earth. "Good-bye!" shouted the airman in a faraway voice, "Good-bye, little Princess, I'll see you again, some time!"

"Good-bye!" called Ozma, sadly. Standing on tiptoe, the whole company strained their eyes to catch a last glimpse of their strange fellow adventurer. But Atmos and the two wicked Rashers had already disappeared above the clouds.

"Oh!" wailed Ozma suddenly, "How are we going to cross the Deadly Desert now?"

"Don't cross it," begged Reddy again, "Stay here. Please, stay here!"

"Maybe Dorothy or the Wizard will look in the Magic Picture," suggested Betsy hopefully. "Watch out Carter, you're taking root again."

With a little exclamation of annoyance, the Vegetable Man jerked himself loose and began to comfort the Princess of Oz.

"It was really the best thing that could have happened," he assured her eagerly. "With Irashi and Ippty out of the way, Reddy can rule his Kingdom in peace, and while those two rogues will not really suffer, they will be kept out of mischief for years to come."

"That's so," mused Ozma, thoughtfully, "and I'm rather glad Atmos has some proof. He was such an old dear, when you got to know him."

"You may have my big wig if you wish," offered Reddy, generously, "but I'm afraid, even as a giant, you could not step across the desert."

"No," sighed Ozma, "I suppose not. Besides, every ruler should have at least one magic possession. With the Rash rubies and the giant's wig you ought to be able to rule for many years without any trouble."

"How about the rubies?" asked Carter. "Wouldn't the ruby that protected us from the Gnome King protect us from the burning sands? Why, maybe it was that ruby that helped us to cross the desert in the first place. I had it then, you know!"

"I thought it was the quick sandals," said Betsy.

"Maybe the ruby would not work on sand Carter and—"

"I have thought of something!" cried Fizzenpop, who was anxious for Reddy to keep all of his magic treasures. "It would be unwise for her Majesty to risk crossing the desert with only the ruby to help her, but with our marvelous canes nothing could harm her at all."

"Canes?" murmured Ozma.

"Hurry canes," smiled the Grand Vizier. "With our patent action, triply guaranteed hurry-canes you can all cross the Deadly Desert and safely return to Oz."

"Oh, Fizzenpop!" exclaimed Reddy, in delight, "Why didn't I think of that?"

The Hungry Tiger rolled up his eyes and shuddered, but the others, who had never ridden a Rash hurry-cane, were charmed with the Grand Vizier's suggestion. That evening, after Reddy had shown Ozma and the others all over his pretty pink Kingdom, and after the populace had given three cheers for the Rescuers of Rash, Fizzenpop took five hurry canes from the umbrella stand. Five, because at the last minute, Reddy insisted upon going to the Emerald City, too.

Giving Fizzenpop the giant wig, but keeping the Rash rubies himself, and promising to return in a month, Reddy mounted his hurry-cane. Then, at a signal from the little Prince, each traveller clapped the head upon his cane and in five furious flashes they were off for Oz, and five minutes later, a little shocked and breathless, dropped down in the Emerald City itself. Knowing that dear delightful place as you do, you can imagine the welcome accorded the travellers. There were feasts and processions and story tellings and parties enough to satisfy even the Hungry Tiger. For days nothing was talked of, but the marvelous adventures of Betsy Bobbin and the little Princess of Oz. Carter Green was so sought after and invited about, he could not have taken root, even had he wanted to. The little Prince Evered has since returned to his own country, but often comes over to spend a pleasant evening in the castle, bringing along his big wig, to entertain the Scarecrow.

As for the Hungry Tiger, he never drops off to sleep without thanking his stars he is not a kitten, and if at

times he looks a little hollow-eyed and wan, he is on the whole happier than ever, for he has learned that it is better to have a stomach-ache than a heart-ache and the heart-aches he had in Rash, missing his friends, cured him forever of the desire to eat a live man.

In the pink palace of Rash the iron boots of Atmos are still shown to visitors, to prove that an airman really visited that country, and on clear nights old Fizzenpop, with a telescope, tries to catch a glimpse of his wicked countrymen.