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Chapter 7 - His Majesty the Scarecrow

I suppose every reader of this book knows what a scarecrow is; but Jack Pumpkinhead, never having seen such a creation, was more surprised at meeting the remarkable King of the Emerald City than by any other one experience of his brief life.

His Majesty the Scarecrow was dressed in a suit of faded blue clothes, and his head was merely a small sack stuffed with straw, upon which eyes, ears, a nose and a mouth had been rudely painted to represent a face. The clothes were also stuffed with straw, and that so unevenly or carelessly that his Majesty's legs and arms seemed more bumpy than was necessary. Upon his hands were gloves with long fingers, and these were padded with cotton. Wisps of straw stuck out from the monarch's coat and also from his neck and boot-tops. Upon his head he wore a heavy golden crown set thick with sparkling jewels, and the weight of this crown caused his brow to sag in wrinkles, giving a thoughtful expression to the painted face. Indeed, the crown alone betokened majesty; in all else the, Scarecrow King was but a simple scarecrow -- flimsy, awkward, and unsubstantial.

But if the strange appearance of his Majesty the Scarecrow seemed startling to Jack, no less wonderful was the form of the Pumpkinhead to the Scarecrow. The purple trousers and pink waistcoat and red shirt hung loosely over the wooden joints Tip had manufactured, and the carved face on the pumpkin grinned perpetually, as if its wearer considered life the jolliest thing imaginable.

At first, indeed, His Majesty thought his queer visitor was laughing at him, and was inclined to resent such a liberty; but it was not without reason that the Scarecrow had attained the reputation of being the wisest personage in the Land of Oz. He made a more careful examination of his visitor, and soon discovered that Jack's features were carved into a smile and that he could not look grave if he wished to.

The King was the first to speak. After regarding Jack for some minutes he said, in a tone of wonder:

"Where on earth did you come from, and how do you happen to be alive?"

"I beg your Majesty's pardon," returned the Pumpkinhead; "but I do not understand you."

"What don't you understand?" asked the Scarecrow.

"Why, I don't understand your language. You see, I came from the Country of the Gillikins, so that I am a foreigner."

"Ah, to be sure!" exclaimed the Scarecrow. "I myself speak the language of the Munchkins, which is also the language of the Emerald City. But you, I suppose, speak the language of the Pumpkinheads?"

"Exactly so, your Majesty" replied the other, bowing; "so it will be impossible for us to understand one another."

"That is unfortunate, certainly," said the Scarecrow, thoughtfully. "We must have an interpreter."

"What is an interpreter?" asked Jack.

"A person who understands both my language and your own. When I say anything, the interpreter can tell you what I mean; and when you say anything the interpreter can tell me what you mean. For the interpreter can speak both languages as well as understand them."

"That is certainly clever," said Jack, greatly pleased at finding so simple a way out of the difficulty.

So the Scarecrow commanded the Soldier with the Green Whiskers to search among his people

until he found one who understood the language of the Gillikins as well as the language of the Emerald City, and to bring that person to him at once.

When the Soldier had departed the Scarecrow said:

"Won't you take a chair while we are waiting?"

"Your Majesty forgets that I cannot understand you," replied the Pumpkinhead. "If you wish me to sit down you must make a sign for me to do so." The Scarecrow came down from his throne and rolled an armchair to a position behind the Pumpkinhead. Then he gave Jack a sudden push that sent him sprawling upon the cushions in so awkward a fashion that he doubled up like a jackknife, and had hard work to untangle himself.

"Did you understand that sign?" asked His Majesty, politely.

"Perfectly," declared Jack, reaching up his arms to turn his head to the front, the pumpkin having twisted around upon the stick that supported it.

"You seem hastily made," remarked the Scarecrow, watching Jack's efforts to straighten himself.

"Not more so than your Majesty," was the frank reply.

"There is this difference between us," said the Scarecrow, "that whereas I will bend, but not break, you will break, but not bend."

At this moment the soldier leading a young girl by the hand. She seemed very sweet and modest, having a pretty face and beautiful green eyes and hair. A dainty green silk skirt reached to her knees, showing silk stockings embroidered with pea-pods, and green satin slippers with bunches of lettuce for decorations instead of bows or buckles. Upon her silken waist clover leaves were embroidered, and she wore a jaunty little jacket trimmed with sparkling emeralds of a uniform size.

"Why, it's little Jellia Jamb!" exclaimed the Scarecrow, as the green maiden bowed her pretty head before him. "Do you understand the language of the Gillikins, my dear?"

"Yes, your Majesty, she answered, "for I was born in the North Country."

"Then you shall be our interpreter," said the Scarecrow, "and explain to this Pumpkinhead all that I say, and also explain to me all that he says. Is this arrangement satisfactory?" he asked, turning toward his guest.

"Very satisfactory indeed," was the reply.

"Then ask him, to begin with," resumed the Scarecrow, turning to Jellia, "what brought him to the Emerald City"

But instead of this the girl, who had been staring at Jack, said to him:

"You are certainly a wonderful creature. Who made you?"

"A boy named Tip," answered Jack.

"What does he say?" inquired the Scarecrow. "My ears must have deceived me. What did he say?"

"He says that your Majesty's brains seem to have come loose," replied the girl, demurely.

The Scarecrow moved uneasily upon his throne, and felt of his head with his left hand.

"What a fine thing it is to understand two different languages," he said, with a perplexed sigh. "Ask him, my dear, if he has any objection to being put in jail for insulting the ruler of the Emerald City."

"I didn't insult you!" protested Jack, indignantly.

"Tut -- tut!" cautioned the Scarecrow "wait, until Jellia translates my speech. What have we got an interpreter for, if you break out in this rash way?"

"All right, I'll wait," replied the Pumpkinhead, in a surly tone -- although his face smiled as genially as ever. "Translate the speech, young woman."

"His Majesty inquires if you are hungry, said Jellia.

"Oh, not at all!" answered Jack, more pleasantly, "for it is impossible for me to eat."

"It's the same way with me," remarked the Scarecrow. "What did he say, Jellia, my dear?"

"He asked if you were aware that one of your eyes is painted larger than the other," said the girl, mischievously.

"Don't you believe her, your Majesty, cried Jack.

"Oh, I don't," answered the Scarecrow, calmly. Then, casting a sharp look at the girl, he asked:

"Are you quite certain you understand the languages of both the Gillikins and the Munchkins?"

"Quite certain, your Majesty," said Jellia Jamb, trying hard not to laugh in the face of royalty.

"Then how is it that I seem to understand them myself?" inquired the Scarecrow.

"Because they are one and the same!" declared the girl, now laughing merrily. "Does not your Majesty know that in all the land of Oz but one language is spoken?"

"Is it indeed so?" cried the Scarecrow, much relieved to hear this; "then I might easily have been my own interpreter!"

"It was all my fault, your Majesty," said Jack, looking rather foolish, "I thought we must surely speak different languages, since we came from different countries."

"This should be a warning to you never to think," returned the Scarecrow, severely. "For unless one can think wisely it is better to remain a dummy -- which you most certainly are."

"I am! -- I surely am!" agreed the Pumpkinhead.

"It seems to me," continued the Scarecrow, more mildly, "that your manufacturer spoiled some good pies to create an indifferent man."

"I assure your Majesty that I did not ask to be created," answered Jack.

"Ah! It was the same in my case," said the King, pleasantly. And so, as we differ from all ordinary people, let us become friends."

"With all my heart!" exclaimed Jack.

"What! Have you a heart?" asked the Scarecrow, surprised.

"No; that was only imaginative -- I might say, a figure of speech," said the other.

"Well, your most prominent figure seems to be a figure of wood; so I must beg you to restrain an imagination which, having no brains, you have no right to exercise."

suggested the Scarecrow, warningly.

"To be sure!" said Jack, without in the least comprehending.

His Majesty then dismissed Jellia Jamb and the Soldier with the Green Whiskers, and when they were gone he took his new friend by the arm and led him into the courtyard to play a game of quoits.