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THE WONDERFUL WIZARD OF OZ

Once upon a time, there was a girl named Dorothy who lived with her uncle, her aunt, and her little dog Toto in a small house in the middle of a wide field. Life there was calm, and most days felt almost the same. Dorothy loved her family very much, but sometimes she imagined new places full of color, surprises, and adventures.

Toto was her best friend. He was small, lively, and always stayed close to her.

—You never leave me alone, Dorothy would say with a smile.

One day, the sky began to grow dark. The wind blew harder and harder, and the clouds moved quickly.

—A cyclone is coming, said her uncle.

—Dorothy, run to the shelter, cried her aunt.

But Toto, frightened, ran through the house. Dorothy hurried after him.

—Toto, come here! she called.

Before she could catch him, the wind lifted the whole house off the ground. It began to spin through the air. Dorothy held Toto tightly while the little house rose among clouds and swirling wind.

—Do not be afraid, she whispered, even though she was frightened too.

After spinning so much, Dorothy fell asleep.

When she opened her eyes, all was quiet. The house was no longer moving. Dorothy opened the door and looked outside. Then she

saw a beautiful and strange place. There were flowers in bright colors, very green trees, and lovely paths.

—Toto, she said in surprise, —this is not our home.

Soon some very small people appeared, dressed in cheerful clothes. With them came a kind and gentle woman.

—Welcome to the Land of Oz, said the woman.

Dorothy looked at her in confusion.

—I only want to go back home.

The woman explained that the house had fallen on the Wicked Witch of the East, and because of that, the people of that land were happy. Then she took a pair of magical shoes that had belonged to the witch and gave them to Dorothy.

—You must take good care of them, she said.

Dorothy put them on and asked:

—How can I return to my home?

The woman answered:

—You must follow the Yellow Brick Road to the Emerald City. There lives the great Wizard of Oz. Perhaps he can help you.

Dorothy looked at the shining yellow road, took a deep breath, and started walking with Toto.

After walking for a while, she found a Scarecrow standing in the middle of a field. He wore an old hat, simple clothes, and had a painted smile on his face.

—Good morning, said the Scarecrow.

Dorothy was very surprised.

—You can talk!

—Yes, he answered. —But I wish I had a brain so I could think better.

Dorothy smiled.

—I am going to see the Wizard of Oz. Perhaps he can help you.

—May I go with you? asked the Scarecrow.

—Of course, Dorothy replied.

She helped him down from his pole, and they continued on their way together.

Farther along, they entered a forest and found a Tin Woodman standing still, with an axe in his hand.

—I think he needs help, said Dorothy.

The man spoke in a weak voice:

—My joints are stuck. Could you please oil me?

Dorothy found an oil can and carefully oiled his neck, arms, and legs. Little by little, the Tin Woodman began to move again.

—Thank you very much, he said with relief. —What I want most is a heart.

—Come with us, said Dorothy. —Perhaps the Wizard of Oz can give you one.

—I would like that very much, he replied.

So they went on, now four with Toto.

A little later, they heard a loud roar. Toto barked at once, and Dorothy became frightened. Out of the trees came a great lion.

—You gave us such a scare! said Dorothy.

The Lion lowered his head.

—I am sorry, he answered. —The truth is that I am not brave. Everyone thinks lions are strong, but I am afraid of many things.

The Scarecrow and the Tin Woodman told him about the Wizard of Oz.

—Perhaps he can give you courage, Dorothy said.

—Really? asked the Lion. —Then I want to come with you.

From that moment on, Dorothy, Toto, the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman, and the Cowardly Lion traveled together.

The road was not easy. They crossed dark places, walked through difficult forests, and faced many dangers. Sometimes one of them felt afraid, but they always helped one another.

—Together it will be easier, Dorothy would say.

—Yes, the Lion would answer. —Everything feels less frightening that way.

After a long journey, they finally saw the Emerald City. It shone with a beautiful green color under the sunlight.

—We are here! Dorothy said with joy.

When they entered, everything seemed strange and wonderful. Many walls were green, many doors were green too, and the people wore clothes of the same color. Soon they were taken to the palace of the great Wizard of Oz.

But when each of them saw him, the Wizard appeared in a different form. To Dorothy he looked like a huge head. To the Scarecrow he looked like a beautiful lady. To the Tin Woodman he looked like a terrible beast. And to the Lion he looked like a great ball of fire.

The Wizard's voice sounded loudly:

—What do you want?

Dorothy answered:

—I want to go back home.

The Scarecrow said:

—I want a brain.

The Tin Woodman added:

—I wish for a heart.

And the Lion said:

—I want courage.

Then the Wizard replied:

—Before I help you, you must do something for me. You must defeat the Wicked Witch of the West.

The friends looked at each other with worry.

—That will be very difficult, said Dorothy.

—I know, answered the voice, —but that is my condition.

Even though they were afraid, they decided to go on.

The Wicked Witch of the West lived in a dark castle. When she saw Dorothy and her friends coming, she became very angry, especially when she noticed Dorothy wearing the magical shoes.

The witch tried to frighten them and capture them, but Dorothy did not give up. One day, in the middle of all the confusion, Dorothy picked up a bucket of water and threw it at the witch.

Then something unexpected happened.

—I am melting! cried the witch. —I am melting!

Little by little, she disappeared until nothing was left of her.

Dorothy looked at the empty bucket in great surprise.

—I did not know that would happen, she said.

—You saved us, the Scarecrow replied.

—Now we must go back to the Wizard, added the Tin Woodman.

When they returned to the Emerald City, they hoped to receive what they had wished for at last. But when they arrived, they discovered a great truth: the frightening Wizard of Oz was not a real wizard. He was only an ordinary man hiding behind a curtain and using tricks to seem powerful.

Dorothy looked at him in surprise.

—So you are not a real wizard?

—No, he answered sadly. —I am only a normal man.

The Lion lowered his ears.

—Then you cannot help us?

The man thought for a moment and said:

—Perhaps I do not have magic, but I can give you something that represents what you seek.

To the Scarecrow he gave a stuffed head, saying it stood for a brain. To the Tin Woodman he gave a small shining heart. And to the Lion he gave a special drink, telling him it was courage.

But Dorothy understood something important.

—Perhaps you already had inside yourselves everything you were looking for.

The Scarecrow had shown many times that he could think. The Tin Woodman was already kind and gentle, like someone with a true heart. And the Lion, even though he was afraid, had been brave more than once.

The three friends smiled.

—I think you are right, said the Scarecrow.

Still, Dorothy wanted to go home. Then the good Witch of the South appeared.

—You could always return, she explained gently. —The magical shoes had that power.

Dorothy opened her eyes wide.

—Then why did no one tell me before?

The witch smiled.

—Because sometimes we need to take a journey to understand what truly matters.

Dorothy hugged her friends with great affection.

—I will never forget you.

—And we will never forget you, said the Tin Woodman.

—You were a wonderful friend, added the Lion.

—We will always remember you, said the Scarecrow.

Then Dorothy tapped the heels of her magical shoes together and wished with all her heart to go home.

In an instant, everything began to spin.

When she opened her eyes, she was back in her little house, beside her uncle, her aunt, and Toto.

—Dorothy! they cried with joy.

Dorothy hugged them tightly.

—I am home, she said with a smile.

And although she never forgot the Land of Oz, the yellow road, and her dear friends, she also understood something very special: there was no place dearer to her than her own home.

THE END

