

L. FRANK BAUM



QUEEN
ZIXI OF IX

ILLUSTRATED EDITION

Queen Zixi of Ix

Or The Story of the Magic Cloak

L. Frank Baum

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Queen Zixi of Ix

Chapter 1 - The Weaving Of The Magic Cloak

The fairies assembled one moonlit night in a pretty clearing of the ancient forest of Burzee. The clearing was in the form of a circle, and all around stood giant oak and fir

trees, while in the center the grass grew green and soft as velvet. If any mortal had ever penetrated so far into the great forest and could have looked upon the fairy circle by daylight, he might perhaps have seen a tiny path worn in the grass by the feet of the dancing elves. For here, during the full of the moon, the famous fairy band ruled by good Queen Lulea loved to dance and make merry while the silvery rays flooded the clearing and caused their gauzy wings to sparkle with every color of the rainbow.

On this especial night, however, they were not dancing. For the queen had seated herself upon a little green mound, and while her band clustered about her, she began to address the fairies in a tone of discontent. "I am tired of dancing, my dears," said she. "Every evening since the moon grew big and round we have come here to frisk about and laugh and disport ourselves; and although those are good things to keep the heart light, one may grow weary even of merrymaking. So I ask you to suggest some new way to divert both me and yourselves during this night."

"That is a hard task," answered one pretty sprite, opening and folding her wings slowly - as a lady toys with her fan. "We have lived through so many ages that we long ago exhausted everything that might be considered a novelty, and of all of recreations nothing gives us such continued pleasure as dancing."

"But I do not care to dance tonight," replied Lulea with a little frown.

"We might create something by virtue of our fairy powers," suggested one who reclined at the foot of the queen.

"Ah, that is just the idea!" exclaimed the dainty Lulea with brightening countenance. "Let us create something. But

what?"

"I have heard," remarked another member of the band, "of a thinking-cap having been made by some fairies in America. And whatever mortal wore this thinking-cap was able to conceive the most noble and beautiful thoughts."

"That was indeed a worthy creation," cried the little queen. "What became of the cap?"

"The man who received it was so afraid someone else would get it and be able to think the same exquisite thoughts as himself that he hid it safely away - so safely that he himself never could think afterward where he had placed it."

"How unfortunate! But we must not make another thinking-cap, lest it meet a like fate. Cannot you suggest something else?"

"I have heard," said another, "of certain fairies who created a pair of enchanted boots which would always carry their mortal wearer away from danger and never into it."

"What a great boon to those blundering mortals!" cried the queen. "And whatever became of the boots?"

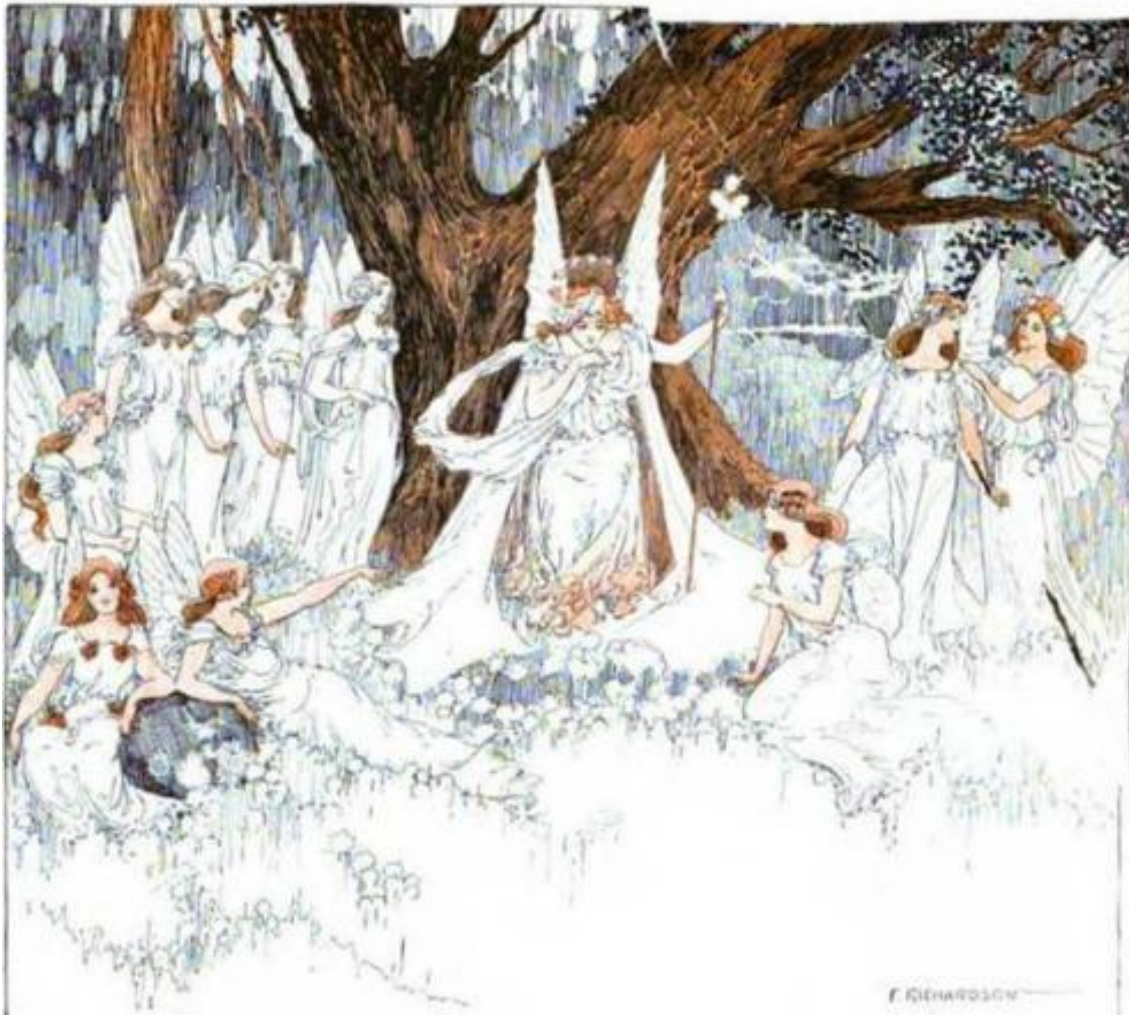
"They came at last into the possession of a great general who did not know their powers. So he wore them into battle one day, and immediately ran away, followed by all his men, and the fight was won by the enemy."

"But did not the general escape danger?"

"Yes, at the expense of his reputation. So he retired to a farm and wore out the boots tramping up and down a

country road and trying to decide why he had suddenly become such a coward."

"The boots were worn by the wrong man, surely," said the queen, "and that is why they proved a curse rather than a blessing. But we want no enchanted boots. Think of something else."



"Suppose we weave a magic cloak," proposed Espa, a sweet little fairy who had not before spoken.

"A cloak? Indeed, we might easily weave that," returned the queen. "But what sort of magic powers must it possess?"

"Let its wearer have any wish instantly fulfilled," said Espa brightly. But at this there arose quite a murmur of protest on all sides, which the queen immediately silenced with a wave of her royal hand.

"Our sister did not think of the probable consequences of what she suggested," declared Lulea, smiling into the downcast face of little Espa, who seemed to feel rebuked by the disapproval of the others. "An instant's reflection would enable her to see that such power would give the cloak's mortal wearer as many privileges as we ourselves possess. And I suppose you intended the magic cloak for a mortal wearer?" she inquired.

"Yes," answered Espa shyly, "that was my intention."

"But the idea is good nevertheless," continued the queen, "and I propose we devote this evening to weaving the magic cloak. Only its magic shall give to the wearer the fulfillment of but one wish; and I am quite sure that even that should prove a great boon to the helpless mortals."

"Suppose more than one person wears the cloak," one of the band said. "Which then shall have the one wish fulfilled?"

The queen devoted a moment to thought, and then replied, "Each possessor of the magic cloak may have one wish granted, provided the cloak is not stolen from its last wearer. In that case, the magic power will not be exercised on behalf of the thief."

"But should there not be a limit to the number of the cloak's wearers?" asked the fairy lying at the queen's feet.

"I think not. If used properly, our gift will prove of great value to mortals. And if we find it is misused, we can at any time take back the cloak and revoke the magic power. So now, if we are all agreed upon this novel amusement, let us set to work."

At these words the fairies sprang up eagerly; and their queen, smiling upon them, waved her wand toward the center of the clearing. At once a beautiful fairy loom appeared in the space. It was not such a loom as mortals use. It consisted of a large and a small ring of gold supported by a tall pole of jasper. The entire band danced around it thrice, the fairies carrying in each hand a silver shuttle wound with glossy filaments finer than the finest silk. And the threads on each shuttle appeared a different hue from those of all the other shuttles.

At a sign from the queen, they one and all approached the golden loom and fastened an end of thread in its warp. Next moment they were gleefully dancing hither and thither, while the silver shuttles flew swiftly from hand to hand and the gossamer-like web began to grow upon the loom. Presently the queen herself took part in the sport, and the thread she wove into the fabric was the magical one which was destined to give the cloak its wondrous power.

Long and swiftly the fairy band worked beneath the old moon's rays, while their feet tripped gracefully over the grass and their joyous laughter tinkled like silver bells and awoke the echoes of the grim forest surrounding them. And at last they paused and threw themselves upon the green with little sighs of content. For the shuttles and loom had

vanished; the work was complete, and Queen Lulea stood upon the mound holding in her hand the magic cloak.

The garment was as beautiful as it was marvelous - each and every hue of the rainbow glinted and sparkled from the soft folds; and while it was light in weight as swan's down, its strength was so great that the fabric was well-nigh indestructible.

The fairy band regarded it with great satisfaction, for everyone had assisted in its manufacture and could admire with pardonable pride its glossy folds. "It is very lovely indeed!" cried little Espa. "But to whom shall we present it?"

The question aroused a dozen suggestions, each fairy seeming to favor a different mortal. Every member of this band, as you doubtless know, was the unseen guardian of some man or woman or child in the great world beyond the forest, and it was but natural that each should wish her own ward to have the magic cloak.

While they thus disputed, another fairy joined them and pressed to the side of the queen. "Welcome, Ereol," said Lulea. "You are late."

The newcomer was very lovely in appearance, and with her fluffy golden hair and clear blue eyes was marvelously fair to look upon. In a low, grave voice she answered the queen:



"Yes, your Majesty, I am late. But I could not help it. The old King of Noland whose guardian I have been since his birth has passed away this evening, and I could not bear to leave him until the end came."

"So the old king is dead at last!" said the queen thoughtfully. "He was a good man, but woefully uninteresting, and he must have wearied you greatly at times, my sweet Ereol."

"All mortals are, I think, wearisome," returned the fairy with a sigh.

"And who is the new King of Noland?" asked Lulea.

"There is none," answered Ereol. "The old king died without a single relative to succeed to his throne, and his five high counselors were in great dilemma when I came away."

"Well, my dear, you may rest and enjoy yourself for a period in order to regain your old lightsome spirits. By and by I will appoint you guardian to some newly born babe, that your duties may be less arduous. But I am sorry you were not with us tonight, for we have had rare sport. See! We have woven a magic cloak."

Ereol examined the garment with pleasure. "And who is to wear it?" she asked.

There again arose the good-natured dispute as to which mortal in all the world should possess the magic cloak. Finally the queen, laughing at the arguments of her band, said to them, "Come! Let us leave the decision to the Man in the Moon. He has been watching us with a great deal of amusement, and once, I am sure, I caught him winking at us in quite a roguish way."

At this every head was turned toward the moon, and then a man's face, full-bearded and wrinkled, but with a jolly look upon the rough features, appeared sharply defined upon the moon's broad surface.

"So I'm to decide another dispute, eh?" said he in a clear voice. "Well, my dears, what is it this time?"

"We wish you to say what mortal shall wear the magic cloak which I and the ladies of my court have woven," replied Queen Lulea.



"Give it to the first unhappy person you meet," said the Man in the Moon. "The happy mortals have no need of magic cloaks." And with this advice the friendly face of the Man in the Moon faded away until only the outlines remained visible against the silver disk.

The queen clapped her hands delightedly. "Our Man in the Moon is very wise," she declared, "and we shall follow his suggestion. Go, Ereol, since you are free for a time, and carry the magic cloak to Noland. And the first person you meet who is really unhappy, be it man, woman or child, shall receive from you the cloak as a gift from our fairy band."

Ereol bowed and folded the cloak over her arm. "Come, my children," continued Lulea, "the moon is hiding behind the treetops, and it is time for us to depart."

A moment later the fairies had disappeared, and the clearing wherein they had danced and woven the magic cloak lay shrouded in deepest gloom.

Chapter 2 - The Book Of Laws

On this same night great confusion and excitement prevailed among the five high counselors of the kingdom of Noland. The old king was dead, and there was none to succeed him as ruler of the country. He had outlived every one of his relatives, and since the crown had been in this one family for generations, it puzzled the high counselors to decide upon a fitting successor.

These five high counselors were very important men. It was said that they ruled the kingdom while the king ruled them;

which made it quite easy for the king and rather difficult for the people. The chief counselor was named Tullydub. He was old and very pompous, and had a great respect for the laws of the land. The next in rank was Tollydob, the lord high general of the king's army. The third was Tillydib, the lord high pursebearer. The fourth was Tallydab, the lord high steward. And the fifth and last of the high counselors was Tellydeb, the lord high executioner.

These five had been careful not to tell the people when the old king had become ill, for they feared being annoyed by many foolish questions. They sat in a big room next the bedchamber of the king, in the royal palace of Nole - which is the capital city of Noland - and kept everyone out except the king's physician, who was half blind and wholly dumb and could not gossip with outsiders had he wanted to. And while the high counselors sat and waited for the king to recover or die, as he might choose, Jikki waited upon them and brought them their meals.



Jikki was the king's valet and principal servant. He was as old as any of the five high counselors; but they were all fat, whereas Jikki was wonderfully lean and thin, and the counselors were solemn and dignified, whereas Jikki was terribly nervous and very talkative. "Beg pardon, my

masters," he would say every few minutes, "but do you think his Majesty will get well?" And then, before any of the high counselors could collect themselves to answer, he continued: "Beg pardon, but do you think his Majesty will die?" And the next moment he would say: "Beg pardon, but do you think his Majesty is any better or any worse?"

And all this was so annoying to the high counselors that several times one of them took up some object in the room with the intention of hurling it at Jikki's head, but before he could throw it, the old servant had nervously turned away and left the room.

Tellydeb, the lord high executioner, would often sigh, "I wish there were some law that would permit me to chop off Jikki's head." But then Tullydub, the chief counselor, would say gloomily, "There is no law but the king's will, and he insists that Jikki be allowed to live."

So they were forced to bear with Jikki as best they could, but after the king breathed his last breath the old servant became more nervous and annoying than ever. Hearing that the king was dead, Jikki made a rush for the door of the bell tower, but tripped over the foot of Tollydob and fell upon the marble floor so violently that his bones rattled, and he picked himself up half dazed by the fall.



"Where are you going?" asked Tollydob.

"To toll the bell for the king's death," answered Jikki.

"Well, remain here until we give you permission to go," commanded the lord high general.

"But the bell ought to be tolled!" said Jikki.

"Be silent!" growled the lord high pursebearer. "We know what ought to be done and what ought not to be done."

But this was not strictly true. In fact, the five high counselors did not know what ought to be done under these strange circumstances. If they told the people the king was dead and did not immediately appoint his successor, then the whole population would lose faith in them and fall to fighting and quarreling among themselves as to who should become king, and that would never in the world do.

No, it was evident that a new king must be chosen before they told the people that the old king was dead. But whom should they choose for the new king? That was the important question. While they talked of these matters, the ever-active Jikki kept rushing in and saying, "Hadn't I better toll the bell?"

"No!" they would shout in a chorus, and then Jikki would rush out again. So they sat and thought and counseled together during the whole long night, and by morning they were no nearer a solution of the problem than before. At daybreak Jikki stuck his head into the room and said, "Hadn't I better -"

"No!" they all shouted in a breath.

"Very well," returned Jikki. "I was only going to ask if I hadn't better get you some breakfast."

"Yes!" they cried again in one breath.

"And shall I toll the bell?"

"No!" they screamed, and the lord high steward threw an inkstand that hit the door several seconds after Jikki had closed it and disappeared. While they were at breakfast they again discussed their future action in the choice of a

king, and finally the chief counselor had a thought that caused him to start so suddenly that he nearly choked.

"The book!" he gasped, staring at his brother counselors in a rather wild manner.

"What book?" asked the lord high general.

"The book of laws," answered the chief counselor.

"I never knew there was such a thing," remarked the lord high executioner, looking puzzled. "I always thought the king's will was the law."

"So it was! So it was when we had a king," answered Tullydub excitedly. "But this book of laws was written years ago and was meant to be used when the king was absent or ill or asleep."

For a moment there was silence. "Have you ever read the book?" then asked Tillydib.

"No, but I will fetch it at once, and we shall see if there is not a law to help us out of our difficulty."



So the chief counselor brought the book - a huge old volume that had a musty smell to it and was locked together with a silver padlock. Then the key had to be found, which was no easy task; but finally the great book of laws lay open upon the table, and all the five periwigs of the five fat counselors were bent over it at once.

Long and earnestly they searched the pages, but it was not until after noon that Tullydub suddenly placed his broad thumb upon a passage and shouted, "I have it! I have it!"



"What is it? Read it! Read it aloud!" cried the others.

Just then Jikki rushed into the room and asked, "Shall I toll the bell?"

"No!" they yelled, glaring at him; so Jikki ran out, shaking his head dolefully.

Then Tullydub adjusted his spectacles and leaned over the book, reading aloud the following words: "In case the king dies and there is no one to succeed him, the chief counselor of the kingdom shall go at sunrise to the eastward gate of the city of Nole and count the persons who enter through such gate as soon as it is opened by the guards. And the forty-seventh person that so enters, be it man, woman or child, rich or poor, humble or noble, shall immediately be proclaimed king or queen, as the case may be, and shall rule all the kingdom of Noland forever after, so long as he or she may live. And if anyone in all the kingdom of Nole shall refuse to obey the slightest wish of the new ruler, such person shall at once be put to death. This is the law."

Then all the five high counselors heaved a deep sigh of relief and repeated together the words, "This is the law."

"But it's a strange law, nevertheless," remarked the lord high pursebearer. "I wish I knew who will be the forty-seventh person to enter the east gate tomorrow at sunrise."

"We must wait and see," answered the lord high general. "And I will have my army assembled and marshaled at the gateway that the new ruler of Noland may be welcomed in a truly kingly manner, as well as to keep the people in order when they hear the strange news."

"Beg pardon!" exclaimed Jikki, looking in at the doorway, "But shall I toll the bell?"

"No, you numskull!" retorted Tullydub angrily. "If the bell is tolled, the people will be told, and they must not know that the old king is dead until the forty-seventh person enters the east gateway tomorrow morning!"

Chapter 3 - The Gift Of The Magic Cloak

Nearly two days journey from the city of Nole, yet still within the borders of the great kingdom of Noland, was a little village lying at the edge of a broad river. It consisted of a cluster of houses of the humblest description, for the people of this village were all poor and lived in simple fashion. Yet one house appeared to be somewhat better than the others, for it stood on the riverbank and had been built by the ferryman whose business it was to carry all travelers across the river. And as many traveled that way, the ferryman was able in time to erect a very comfortable cottage and to buy good furniture for it, and to clothe warmly and neatly his two children.

One of these children was a little girl named Margaret, who was called "Meg" by the villagers and "Fluff" by the ferryman her father, because her hair was so soft and fluffy. Her brother, who was two years younger, was named Timothy, but Margaret had always called him "Bud" because she could not say "brother" more plainly when first she began to talk; so nearly everyone who knew Timothy called him Bud as little Meg did.

These children had lost their mother when very young, and the ferryman had tried to be both mother and father to them and had reared them very gently and lovingly. They were good children and were liked by everyone in the village.