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Chapter 1

"Please, miss," said the shaggy man, "can you tell me the road to Butterfield?"

Dorothy looked him over. Yes, he was shaggy, all right, but there was a twinkle in his eye that seemed pleasant.

"Oh yes," she replied; "I can tell you. But it isn't this road at all."

"No?"

"You cross the ten-acre lot, follow the lane to the highway, go north to the five branches, and take--let me see--"

"To be sure, miss; see as far as Butterfield, if you like," said the shaggy man.

"You take the branch next the willow stump, I b'lieve; or else the branch by the gopher holes; or else--"

"Won't any of 'em do, miss?"

"Course not, Shaggy Man. You must take the right road to get to Butterfield."

"And is that the one by the gopher stump, or--"

"Dear me!" cried Dorothy. "I shall have to show you the way, you're so stupid. Wait a minute till I run in the house and get my sunbonnet."

The shaggy man waited. He had an oat-straw in his mouth, which he chewed slowly as if it tasted good; but it didn't. There was an apple-tree beside the house, and some apples had fallen to the ground. The shaggy man thought they would taste better than the oat-straw, so he walked over to get some. A little black dog with bright brown eyes dashed out of the farm-house and ran madly toward the shaggy man, who had already picked up three apples and put them in one of the big wide pockets of his shaggy coat. The little dog barked and made a dive for the shaggy man's leg; but he grabbed the dog by the neck and put it in his big pocket along with the apples. He took more apples, afterward, for many were on the ground; and each one that he tossed into his pocket hit the little dog somewhere upon the head or back, and made him growl. The little dog's name was Toto, and he was sorry he had been put in the shaggy man's pocket.

Pretty soon Dorothy came out of the house with her sunbonnet, and she called out:

"Come on, Shaggy Man, if you want me to show you the road to Butterfield." She climbed the fence into the ten-acre lot and he followed her, walking slowly and stumbling over the little hillocks in the pasture as if he was thinking of something else and did not notice them.

"My, but you're clumsy!" said the little girl. "Are your feet tired?"

"No, miss; it's my whiskers; they tire very easily in this warm weather," said he. "I wish it would snow, don't you?"

"Course not, Shaggy Man," replied Dorothy, giving him a severe look. "If it snowed in August it would spoil the corn and the oats and the wheat; and then Uncle Henry wouldn't have any crops; and that would make him poor; and--"

"Never mind," said the shaggy man. "It won't snow, I guess. Is this the lane?"

"Yes," replied Dorothy, climbing another fence; "I'll go as far as the highway with you."

"Thankee, miss; you're very kind for your size, I'm sure," said he gratefully.

"It isn't everyone who knows the road to Butterfield," Dorothy remarked as she tripped along the lane; "but I've driven there many a time with Uncle Henry, and so I b'lieve I could find it blindfolded."

"Don't do that, miss," said the shaggy man earnestly; "you might make a mistake."

"I won't," she answered, laughing. "Here's the highway. Now it's the second--no, the third turn to the left--or else it's the fourth. Let's see. The first one is by the elm tree, and the second is by the gopher holes; and then--"

"Then what?" he inquired, putting his hands in his coat pockets. Toto grabbed a finger and bit it; the shaggy man took his hand out of that pocket quickly, and said "Oh!"

Dorothy did not notice. She was shading her eyes from the sun with her arm, looking anxiously down the road.

"Come on," she commanded. "It's only a little way farther, so I may as well show you."

After a while, they came to the place where five roads branched in different directions; Dorothy pointed to one, and said:

"That's it, Shaggy Man."

"I'm much obliged, miss," he said, and started along another road.

"Not that one!" she cried; "you're going wrong."

He stopped.

"I thought you said that other was the road to Butterfield," said he, running his fingers through his shaggy whiskers in a puzzled way.

"So it is."

"But I don't want to go to Butterfield, miss."

"You don't?"

"Of course not. I wanted you to show me the road, so I shouldn't go there by mistake."

"Oh! Where DO you want to go, then?"

"I'm not particular, miss."

This answer astonished the little girl; and it made her provoked, too, to think she had taken all this trouble for nothing.

"There are a good many roads here," observed the shaggy man, turning slowly around, like a human windmill. "Seems to me a person could go 'most anywhere, from this place."

Dorothy turned around too, and gazed in surprise. There WERE a good many roads; more than she had ever seen before. She tried to count them, knowing there ought to be five, but when she had counted seventeen she grew bewildered and stopped, for the roads were as many as the spokes of a wheel and ran in every direction from the place where they stood; so if she kept on counting she was likely to count some of the roads twice.

"Dear me!" she exclaimed. "There used to be only five roads, highway and all. And now--why, where's the highway, Shaggy Man?"

"Can't say, miss," he responded, sitting down upon the ground as if tired with standing. "Wasn't it here a minute ago?"

"I thought so," she answered, greatly perplexed. "And I saw the gopher holes, too, and the dead stump; but they're not here now. These roads are all strange--and what a lot of them there are! Where do you suppose they all go to?"

"Roads," observed the shaggy man, "don't go anywhere. They stay in one place, so folks can walk on them."

He put his hand in his side-pocket and drew out an apple--quick, before Toto could bite him again. The little dog got his head out this time and said "Bow-wow!" so loudly that it made Dorothy jump.

"O, Toto!" she cried; "where did you come from?"

"I brought him along," said the shaggy man.

"What for?" she asked.

"To guard these apples in my pocket, miss, so no one would steal them."

With one hand the shaggy man held the apple, which he began eating, while with the other hand he pulled Toto out of his pocket and dropped him to the ground. Of course Toto made for Dorothy at once, barking joyfully at his release from the dark pocket. When the child had patted his head lovingly, he sat down before her, his red tongue hanging out one side of his mouth, and looked up into her face with his bright brown eyes, as if asking her what they should do next.

Dorothy didn't know. She looked around her anxiously for some familiar landmark; but everything was strange. Between the branches of the many roads were green meadows and a few shrubs and trees, but she couldn't see anywhere the farm-house from which she had just come, or anything she had ever seen before--except the shaggy man and Toto. Besides this, she had turned around and around so many times trying to find out where she was, that now she couldn't even tell which direction the farm-house ought to be in; and this began to worry her and make her feel anxious.

"I'm 'fraid, Shaggy Man," she said, with a sigh, "that we're lost!"

"That's nothing to be afraid of," he replied, throwing away the core of his apple and beginning to eat another one. "Each of these roads must lead somewhere, or it wouldn't be here. So what does it matter?"

"I want to go home again," she said.

"Well, why don't you?" said he.

"I don't know which road to take."

"That is too bad," he said, shaking his shaggy head gravely. "I wish I could help you; but I can't. I'm a stranger in these parts."

"Seems as if I were, too," she said, sitting down beside him. "It's funny. A few minutes ago I was home, and I just came to show you the way to Butterfield--"

"So I shouldn't make a mistake and go there--"

"And now I'm lost myself and don't know how to get home!"

"Have an apple," suggested the shaggy man, handing her one with pretty red cheeks.

"I'm not hungry," said Dorothy, pushing it away.

"But you may be, to-morrow: then you'll be sorry you didn't eat the apple," said he.

"If I am, I'll eat the apple then," promised Dorothy.

"Perhaps there won't be any apple then," he returned, beginning to eat the red-cheeked one himself. "Dogs sometimes can find their way home better than people," he went on; "perhaps your dog can lead you back to the farm."

"Will you, Toto?" asked Dorothy.

Toto wagged his tail vigorously.

"All right," said the girl; "let's go home."

Toto looked around a minute and dashed up one of the roads.

"Good-bye, Shaggy Man," called Dorothy, and ran after Toto. The little dog pranced briskly along for some distance; when he turned around and looked at his mistress questioningly.

"Oh, don't 'spect ME to tell you anything; I don't know the way," she said. "You'll have to find it yourself."

But Toto couldn't. He wagged his tail, and sneezed, and shook his ears, and trotted back where they had left the shaggy man. From here he started along another road; then came back and tried another; but each time he found the way strange and decided it would not take them to the farm-house. Finally, when Dorothy had begun to tire with chasing after him, Toto sat down panting beside the shaggy man and gave up.

Dorothy sat down, too, very thoughtful. The little girl had encountered some queer adventures since she came to live at the farm; but this was the queerest of them all. To get lost in fifteen minutes, so near to her home and in the unromantic State of Kansas, was an experience that fairly bewildered her.

"Will your folks worry?" asked the shaggy man, his eyes twinkling in a pleasant way.

"I s'pose so," answered Dorothy with a sigh. "Uncle Henry says there's ALWAYS something happening to me; but I've always come home safe at the last. So perhaps he'll take comfort and think I'll come home safe this time."

"I'm sure you will," said the shaggy man, smilingly nodding at her. "Good little girls never come to any harm, you know. For my part, I'm good, too; so nothing ever hurts me."

Dorothy looked at him curiously. His clothes were shaggy, his boots were shaggy and full of holes, and his hair and whiskers were shaggy. But his smile was sweet and his eyes were kind.

"Why didn't you want to go to Butterfield?" she asked.

"Because a man lives there who owes me fifteen cents, and if I went to Butterfield and he saw me he'd want to pay me the money. I don't want money, my dear."

"Why not?" she inquired.

"Money," declared the shaggy man, "makes people proud and haughty. I don't want to be proud and haughty. All I want is to have people love me; and as long as I own the Love Magnet, everyone I meet is sure to love me dearly."

"The Love Magnet! Why, what's that?"

"I'll show you, if you won't tell any one," he answered, in a low, mysterious voice.

"There isn't any one to tell, 'cept Toto," said the girl.

The shaggy man searched in one pocket, carefully; and in another pocket; and in a third. At last he drew out a small parcel wrapped in crumpled paper and tied with a cotton string. He unwound the string, opened the parcel, and took out a bit of metal shaped like a horseshoe. It was dull and brown, and not very pretty.

"This, my dear," said he, impressively, "is the wonderful Love Magnet. It was given me by an Eskimo in the Sandwich Islands--where there are no sandwiches at all--and as long as I carry it every living thing I meet will love me dearly."

"Why didn't the Eskimo keep it?" she asked, looking at the Magnet with interest.

"He got tired of being loved and longed for some one to hate him. So he gave me the Magnet and the very next day a grizzly bear ate him."

"Wasn't he sorry then?" she inquired.

"He didn't say," replied the shaggy man, wrapping and tying the Love Magnet with great care and putting it away in another pocket. "But the bear didn't seem sorry a bit," he added.

"Did you know the bear?" asked Dorothy.

"Yes; we used to play ball together in the Caviar Islands. The bear loved me because I had the Love Magnet. I couldn't blame him for eating the Eskimo, because it was his nature to do so."

"Once," said Dorothy, "I knew a Hungry Tiger who longed to eat fat babies, because it was his nature to; but he never ate any because he had a Conscience."

"This bear," replied the shaggy man, with a sigh, "had no Conscience, you see."

The shaggy man sat silent for several minutes, apparently considering the cases of the bear and the tiger, while Toto watched him with an air of great interest. The little dog was doubtless thinking of his ride in the shaggy man's pocket and planning to keep out of reach in the future.

At last the shaggy man turned and inquired, "What's your name, little girl?"

"My name's Dorothy," said she, jumping up again, "but what are we going to do? We can't stay here forever, you know."

"Let's take the seventh road," he suggested. "Seven is a lucky number for little girls named Dorothy."

"The seventh from where?"

"From where you begin to count."

So she counted seven roads, and the seventh looked just like all the others; but the shaggy man got up from the ground where he had been sitting and started down this road as if sure it was the best way to go; and Dorothy and Toto followed him.