

Ozflash Revised, Part 5

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 12 Mar 1999

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William H. Ansley — 12 Mar 1999, 23:05

The New Improved Wonderful Eyeflash of Oz
Oz References in "The Eyeflash Miracles" Part 5

Little Tib learns that he has slept for more than a day and that Dr. Prithivi wants him to appear as the boy Krishna in a sort of pageant he is putting on. Since Dr. Prithivi has paid for the motel room where he, Nitty and Mr. Parker are staying, he feels obliged to agree to participate.

Mr. Parker decides to use Dr. Prithivi's pageant as a diversion while he goes into the County Administration Building and reprograms the central computer so that he and Nitty will get their old jobs back. But first he needs Little Tib to get into the building and retrieve the keys to the padlock on the side door. Little Tib is small enough to squeeze between the bars of a window with a broken latch so he can get into the building, though the bars are much too close together for a grown man to fit between. While Mr. Parker is explaining what he wants Little Tib to do, the boy asks where the computer is, because he is afraid of it. Nitty tries to reassure him that the computer can't hurt him.

Little Tib succeeds in getting into the building through the window. Once he is inside he has another vision. "It was the funniest-looking man Little Tib had ever seen." [20] Little Tib then realizes that what he is seeing is not a man but a suit of clothes, stuffed with dried grass, with a sack with a face painted on it for a head. Because of this, Little Tib refers to him as the Clothes Man. Little Tib can see the Clothes Man and the things he touches, such as a locked door which blocks him from going any further into the building and getting the keys. (Mr. Parker had forgotten all about this door when he sent Little Tib in through the window.) With the encouragement (or possibly aid) of the Clothes Man, Little Tib is able to "teleport" through the locked door.

Before he can get to the keys, Little Tib has to pass the room containing the Computer. It speaks to him in a deep, horrible voice and groans as if in agony. Even though the Clothes Man tells Little Tib not to go into the Computer's room and Little Tib says he won't, he does go in. The Computer speaks to him again, asking if he has come to torment it. Little Tib asks what its name is. The Computer makes a horrible thundering, grinding noise in which Little Tib thinks he hears hundreds or thousands of voices, all speaking at once. Little Tib tells the Computer to answer him and it says: "We are legion. Very many." Little Tib shouts, "Get out!" and there is a deep moaning sound. Something in the room falls and shatters. Then the Clothes Man says, "They are gone." Little Tib tells the Clothes Man that he can get the keys without any help and the Clothes Man disappears. Little Tib finds the keys and passes them out another window, then climbs out himself.

The Clothes Man is obviously the Scarecrow, also known as the Straw Man, who appears in all (or nearly all) of Baum's Oz books and in the movie. Little Tib's teleportation through a locked door is the fourth miracle. I am going to count the event with the Computer as the fifth, although it is not clear what that event is. The resemblance to the Biblical description of Jesus

driving out demons in Mark 5: 5-9 is too strong for even me to miss, so it is very tempting to say that Little Tib drove demons out of the Computer. But whether that's actually what happened is unclear, at least to me. Later on in the story the Computer is found to no longer be working, but whether this is due to what Little Tib did or Mr. Parker's attempt at reprogramming is never revealed. The Scarecrow definitely had a role in Little Tib passing through the locked door although exactly what his role was is uncertain, but whether he was needed when Little Tib drove the demons out of the Computer is less clear. Having a witness seems to have been important, however.

Mr. Parker takes the keys and unlocks the padlock on the side door while Nitty takes Little Tib back to the motel to get ready for Dr. Prithivi's pageant. Nitty helps Little Tib put on his costume and takes him to the outdoor stage where the pageant is to take place. They meet Dr. Prithivi, who introduces Little Tib to one of his fellow performers, a man wearing a wooden mask (Little Tib knows this because he asks to feel the man's face), who will portray the god Indra.

Little Tib is left alone in the trailer with Indra, who tells him a story that turns out to be about Little Tib. I'll be as brief as I can.

A group of women (teachers at a college and the wives of college teachers) volunteered to have their ova genetically altered in a way meant to produce superior human beings: smarter, healthier, stronger, etc. Other women with unaltered children the same age were brought into the study as controls. The parents of the unaltered children were paid and recruited from the surrounding area. This occurred at a medical center in Houston, Texas.

Nothing unexpected occurred until the children turned six. At that time, strange things started to happen.

"People and animals-- sometimes even monsters--were seen in corridors and therapy rooms who had never entered the complex and were never observed to leave it. Experimental animals were freed--apparently without their cages having been opened. Furniture was rearranged, and on several different occasions large quantities of food that could not be accounted for was found in the commons room."

This was of great concern to the government-sponsored scientists running the program. They determined that these events happened at the time of the examinations given to the genetically altered children. The children were examined exhaustively for paranormal abilities, but none were found. The scientists tried to isolate these phenomena to an individual by examining only half of the genetically-altered children at a time, but the phenomena occurred when either half was being examined. This was considered evidence that several individuals were involved and so alarmed the government that they took over the program and decided to terminate it. All of the genetically-altered were killed and the controls sent home.

William Ansley

[20] This phrasing is so reminiscent of Baum's early Oz books that I was surprised to find that it does not actually occur in any of them. Many similar phrases do occur, however, most of them using the word "queerest" where Wolfe used "funniest." Obviously "queerest" has a rather different connotation now than it did in Baum's time, which may be why Wolfe didn't use it.