CHAPTER 16

The Oompa Loompas

‘Oompa-Loompas!’ everyone said at once. ‘Oompa-Loompas!’

‘Imported direct from Loompaland,’ said Mr Wonka proudly.

‘There’s no such place,’ said Mrs Salt.

‘Excuse me, dear lady, but …’

‘Mr Wonka,’ cried Mrs Salt. ‘I’m a teacher of geography

‘Then you’ll know all about it,’ said Mr Wonka. ‘And oh, what a terrible country it is! Nothing but thick jungles infested by the most dangerous beasts in the world – hornswogglers and snozzwangers and those terrible wicked whangdoodles. A whangdoodle would eat ten Oompa-Loompas for breakfast and come galloping back for a second helping. When I went out there, I found the little Oompa-Loompas living in tree houses. They had to live in tree houses to escape from the whangdoodles and the hornswogglers and the snozzwangers. And they were living on green caterpillars, and the caterpillars tasted revolting, and the Oompa-Loompas spent every moment of their days climbing through the treetops looking for other things to mash up with the caterpillars to make them taste better – red beetles, for instance, and eucalyptus leaves, and the bark of the bong-bong tree, all of them beastly, but not quite so beastly as the caterpillars. Poor little Oompa-Loompas! The one food that they longed for more than any other was the cacao bean. But they couldn’t get it. An Oompa-Loompa was lucky if he found three or four cacao beans a year. But oh, how they craved them. They used to dream about cacao beans all night and talk about them all day. You had only to mention the word “cacao” to an Oompa-Loompa and he would start dribbling at the mouth. The cacao bean,’ Mr Wonka continued, ‘which grows on the cacao tree, happens to be the thing from which all chocolate is made. You cannot make chocolate without the cacao bean. The cacao bean is chocolate. I myself use billions of cacao beans every week in this factory. And so, my dear children, as soon as I discovered that the Oompa-Loompas were crazy about this particular food, I climbed up to their tree-house village and poked my head in through the door of the tree house belonging to the leader of the tribe. The poor little fellow, looking thin and starved, was sitting there trying to eat a bowl full of mashed-up green caterpillars without being sick. “Look here,” I said (speaking not in English, of course, but in Oompa-Loompish), “look here, if you and all your people will come back to my country and live in my factory, you can have all the cacao beans you want! I’ve got mountains of them in my storehouses! You can have cacao beans for every meal! You can gorge yourselves silly on them! I’ll even pay your wages in cacao beans if you wish!”

‘”You really mean it?” asked the Oompa-Loompa leader, leaping up from his chair.

‘”Of course I mean it,” I said. “And you can have chocolate as well. Chocolate tastes even better than cacao beans because it’s got milk and sugar added.”

‘The little man gave a great whoop of joy and threw his bowl of mashed caterpillars right out of the tree-house window. “It’s a deal!” he cried. “Come on! Let’s go!”

‘So I shipped them all over here, every man, woman, and child in the Oompa-Loompa tribe. It was easy. I smuggled them over in large packing cases with holes in them, and they all got here safely. They are wonderful workers. They all speak English now. They love dancing and music. They are always making up songs. I expect you will hear a good deal of singing today from time to time. I must warn you, though, that they are rather mischievous. They like jokes. They still wear the same kind of clothes they wore in the jungle. They insist upon that. The men, as you can see for yourselves across the river, wear only deerskins. The women wear leaves, and the children wear nothing at all. The women use fresh leaves every day …’

‘Daddy!’ shouted Veruca Salt (the girl who got everything she wanted). ‘Daddy! I want an Oompa-Loompa! I want you to get me an Oompa-Loompa! I want an Oompa-Loompa right away! I want to take it home with me! Go on, Daddy! Get me an Oompa-Loompa!’

‘Now, now, my pet!’ her father said to her, ‘we mustn’t interrupt Mr Wonka.’ “But I want an Oompa-Loompa!’ screamed Veruca.

‘All right, Veruca, all right. But I can’t get it for you this second. Please be patient. I’ll see you have one before the day is out.’

‘Augustus!’ shouted Mrs Gloop. ‘Augustus, sweetheart, I don’t think you had better do that.’ Augustus Gloop, as you might have guessed, had quietly sneaked down to the edge of the river, and he was now kneeling on the riverbank, scooping hot melted chocolate into his mouth as fast as he could.

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