

5-1-2009

Scarecrow's Last Thought

Anthony Armstrong

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.collin.edu/forces>

Recommended Citation

Armstrong, Anthony (2009) "Scarecrow's Last Thought," *Forces*: Vol. 2009 , Article 89.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.collin.edu/forces/vol2009/iss1/89>

This Short Story is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Collin. It has been accepted for inclusion in Forces by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@Collin. For more information, please contact mtomlin@collin.edu.

SCARECROW'S LAST THOUGHT

Anthony Armstrong

"YOUR BRAIN IS CHANGING OZ FOR THE BETTER," said Tinman.

"My big, beautiful heart says thumping great—thumping great; there is something great in our future for your big brain to think."

Scarecrow stood with Tinman in the palace of green, and he looked out on Oz and smiled at the scene. The rolling hills of green with bright colors divided, by long yellow brick, stirred something inside him.

"Wait," said Scarecrow as he looked down at his boots. "I just had a thought. Let me think and take root."

Tinman was looking down into the palace yard, "The palace horse has turned green again. They won't find him for hours. I'll tell you what we need, and I'll tell with great speed, we need a better way to travel than a horse with a saddle..."

Tinman faded out as Scarecrow began to think. How should I think the thought I thought I should think? For if my thought is not the thought that ought to be thought, what should I think, for if not, what ought?

He pondered this question until the thought left him dazed, and instead he thought of his cornfield where he hung his early days; where he talked with ladybugs and centipedes and toads; where he talked of the horizon and the yellow brick road.

"It must go on forever," he had said to what he thought was the ladybug's head. "In any direction, I can't see the end."

"The end is down at your feet. Down at your feet," the ladybug replied; repeating himself, as ladybugs often do with great pride.

"But all I see are my boots," said Scarecrow, looking down and around.

"When you stop walking, stop walking; the road stops too, stops too. You can go forward if you want, but never back. A road is not a road if you just stay where you're at."

Several years later, now that he had a brain to remember, Scarecrow repeated the words of the ladybug and pondered. Those are the words that I ought to have thought. When you stop walking, the road stops too. You can go on...but never back—a road is not a road if you stay where you're at.

With a sudden rush of jubilation, of joy and great awe, Scarecrow knew these words would forever change the great Oz.

In a dark corner of his painted sack-head, Scarecrow's straw began to twitch. It snipped and cracked and sometimes snapped, as it worked its magic from way in the back. It thought of math and matics, and formulaic habits. Lines and curves and prisms in the sky. Levers and pulleys and scaffolding high.

Like a witch to ruby slippers, he rushed to good Glinda's door, and he poured out what his brain and his heart had in store. "Glinda, I thought of the most wondrous things. Schematics and plans and industrial machines. Telephones and typewriters and great super roads. Public transportation and easy prefab homes."



TRAMPA Mirtha Aertker

"Your brain is truly wondrous," Glinda replied with a smile. "We must gather the others and talk for a while."

So Scarecrow and Glinda rounded up the thinkers and builders and workers a-plenty. They gathered them together in the palace and the city. Scarecrow addressed them. "First things first, we need some inventions--to make life better, not worse. We'll have better roads, not made of brick. The roads must go everywhere, so we can move about quick. We can sell our munchkin crafts, and build hospitals for the sick."

So for days and weeks and weeks and months, the builders built and the thinkers think. They invented Oz money and gave it out freely, and people gave it back as they bought goods greedily.

New buildings filled the fields surrounding the city, and new roads were laid through, soon jostling and busy. New jobs filled the pages of "The Oz Tattler," a brand new subsidiary of Straw Man Endeavors; and Ozzers, as the people decided they liked to be called, flocked to the city for jobs and money and money without jobs.

The heavy traffic back and forth wore out the yellow brick road, so a team of roadologists built great super-ozways, eight times as wide as the yellow brick of old days. Ozzers praised the road, big and smooth like glass, and roadologists and earthmovers cut through every field, wood and impassable pass. The haunted woods came down, and the apple-throwing trees were moved far from town.

The countryside was filled with manufacturing plants and machines. From sun up to sundown, the city was bustling with the biggest commotion and calamity that Oz had ever seen.

The builders built homes farther out from the city, called the Munchkin Bungalows and Gardens Good Witchy. General Monchampoo hired out his winged monkeys, so monkey lifts became the rage, carrying workers for money. With access to the city via road so convenient, the builders spread out, with steel and cement. The Ozzers thought these communities were simply superb and filled them up faster than they could say "superb is the word."

Then one day Scarecrow sat high on his hill, and he noticed the tractors and cranes were all still.

"We've cut through every field and swamp and wood," the roadologists said. "There's no place left without roads, and surely that's good."

"Not true," said Scarecrow. "We must build out of Oz and across the desert sands. We must connect with other people and let Oz reach other lands."

So Scarecrow and the builders began a monstrous task. They built to the north, south, east and the west. They built all the day and into the night. They created new roads with nothing in sight. Three months they worked and then some more. Finally, they reached a road not seen before.

"What do we do now?" asked a munchkin who squinted and scratched his head. Scarecrow looked around. "I don't know," was all he said.

The munchkins gathered around Scarecrow and sat down to wait.

"What if a wicked witch comes by?"

"Grab a bucket of water—just in case."

"What is that? What is that?" someone asked as he pointed.

"I think it's a horse," said a voice disjointed.

As they watched, the object moved closer and grew large and fat.

"It's not slowing down!" yelled a voice from the back.

With a sudden rush of wind and dirt and noise, the object roared by without any pause.

Three Munchkins threw water and ran from the slaughter.

"Whatever it was," said one shaking with fear. "It just finished eating. I saw people inside as it grew near."

"It didn't eat them," said Scarecrow. "That was a wagon of some sort. It must have been powered by an invisible horse."

"I've think I've seen enough," said one worker to another. "I want to go home; this has been such a great bother."

Everyone agreed and they packed up their stuff; they began the walk back because they all had enough.

On their return, they saw more horseless wagons zoom by, coming and going without hello or goodbye.

When they finally reached Oz, the road was full of wagons, honking and rattling, and coughing smoke like sick dragons. One curious little wagon, of the oddest color and shape, had the mayor of Munchkin Land, with his big shiny face.

A hotel was built where the mayor's house once stood. Where the park once was, were buildings not woods. There were Munchkin stores and Ozstaurants. Munchkin shops

sold Munchkin dolls and painted Oztrays. Little wagons sped by, wheezing noise and smoke. The drivers leaned out and yelled, "Get off the road!"

The Emerald City had changed even more than imagined. Surrounding the outskirts were thousands of wagons. They were all parked in rows like poppies of metal; they leaked fluids and goo and smelled something terrible. At the entrance to the city, you needed tickets to get in, so the workers stood in line, their patience wearing thin. Eventually, they learned, after an hour and a half, they needed to use the service entrance, way in the back.

Scarecrow and the workers walked through the back alleys, stepped over piles of trash and plastic bags of laundry.

TRAIN #2 Austin Worth



As they cut through the palace, Scarecrow was stopped for pictures, with children and parents and autograph seekers. Babies would cry and cameras would shoot, and little children pulled clumps of straw from his dirty red boots.

Scarecrow went alone to the top of the west tower, and sat down on the floor to think for an hour. He looked out the window to survey the new Oz. He saw tourists with cameras, wearing shirts that said, "I SAW THE WIZARD," with matching hats on their head. Palace guards ran back and forth, cleaning crews too, as the noise of the people rumbled and grew.

As the sun went down, and the air turned brown, Scarecrow looked at his boots and saw three pieces of straw. The power lines hummed and the traffic droned on, and he lost himself in a really long thought.

"Scarecrow...Scarecrow!"

Scarecrow looked up.

It was Tinman.

"I said the sun is coming up...you haven't said a word all night."

"Is it time for more pictures?"

"What pictures do you mean? Do you feel all right?"

Scarecrow stood up and looked out on green rolling hills. He saw the grass and the trees and brick roads in the fields.

"I must have thought it all up," he said half out-loud.

"Thought what?" asked the Tinman, raising his brow.

"Oh I thought the most wondrous things..." but he trailed off as he spoke.

Scarecrow looked down at his boots, at Tinman and then, he looked out the window once more and again. Without saying a word, he ran out of the room, down the tower, through the palace and out the city gates. Little bits of straw fell to the ground, but he had no time to waste. He dashed down the brick road, through the haunted woods, through the valleys and fields until he knew where he stood—at his cornfields once home, with the pole he once loved.

He stared at the pole, grabbed the cross bar and climbed. As he extended each arm, he saw nails rusted with lime. He lifted his legs and kicked his boots to the dirt. Then the straw in his legs began to slide out first. Straw after straw fell down and around, his clothes became loose, his chest fell to the ground. He could no longer look up, only forward and down. Out of the corner of his eye he saw his boots as they lay.

Then he thought his last thought:

"This is a good day."

TRAIN #6 Austin Worth

