

The
**CLOUD
DANCER**
of **OZ**



Ellis

The Cloud Dancer of OZ

By Sam Ellis

Based on

The Works of L. FRANK BAUM
Co-authored via ReTell™

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Chapter 1 | The Sky Was Still Soft

Kikko danced in the highest winds. He did not think of himself as brave, or noble, or strong. He thought of himself only as light—as a thing meant to leap.

High above the jungle canopy of western Oz, in the hours just before dawn, the other monkeys slept in their hammocks of woven leaves. But Kikko soared. His flight traced star-paths that only he could see, darting between fireflies and the low-sweeping clouds that hugged the ancient forest.

The air was chill, but not cold. The wind was swift, but not cruel. These things mattered to Kikko, because a Cloud Dancer needed to listen to the sky.

He spun once, twice, three times—his wings snapping like a taut sail—before plunging downward in a joyous tumble. At the last second, he caught an updraft from a mountain ledge, twisting his tail in delight.

The stars blinked. The moon hung like a pearled smile. Kikko bowed to them, mid-air.

Below, the forest whispered in sleep.

This was his world—before orders, before curses, before the Golden Cap. Kikko knew nothing of witches or wars. Only rhythm. Only grace.

But something had shifted.

It was in the stillness.

For weeks, the skies above the western cliffs had begun to lose their shimmer. The stars dimmed faster. The winds arrived earlier. The birds that once flew beside him had changed their routes.

And now, on this very night, the moon gave no reflection in the distant lake. Just a black mirror.

He felt it in his tail: change.



Chapter 2 | The Root of Dreams

Kikko tucked his wings tight and slipped into the descent. The forest, still wrapped in the hush of pre-dawn, opened its arms to him as he spiraled toward the root-hollows—the sleeping place of the **eldest monkeys**.

They were not like him. Not anymore. Their wings were frayed from time. Their limbs slow. But in their dreams, they held centuries.

The **dream-keeper**, a half-blind monkey named **Aara**, slept among twisted roots of a fig tree so ancient it hummed. Its bark bore the claw-marks of generations. Fungal lights pulsed dimly beneath its boughs, blue and soft like thinking stars.

Kikko landed in silence, but Aara stirred.

“Why do the winds carry you to the ground, cloud-kin?” she rasped, even before opening her eyes.

Kikko bowed low and waited. It was rude to speak too quickly in the dream-hollow.

At last, Aara sat up. Her tail moved like a reed in the air. “You feel it too,” she whispered.

Kikko nodded. “The stars have stopped dancing. The air tastes... folded.”

Aara sniffed, then placed her hand on the earth.

“There is a **new voice** rising in the west. Soft now. But growing. Twisting the air. It doesn’t belong to the sky. It walks. It burns. It commands.”

Kikko felt the fur along his spine rise.

“A voice?”

“A spell,” she corrected.

She pulled something from her satchel—a bone carved with spirals. She whispered to it.

From the spiral emerged a faint image: **a shadowy woman cloaked in flame**, speaking to a mirror that did not show her face—but someone else’s.

“She’s not from this forest,” Aara said. “But she wants it.”

Kikko’s wings twitched. He’d heard stories, of course. All monkeys had—tales of strange beings who built towers of fire and broke promises with green smoke.

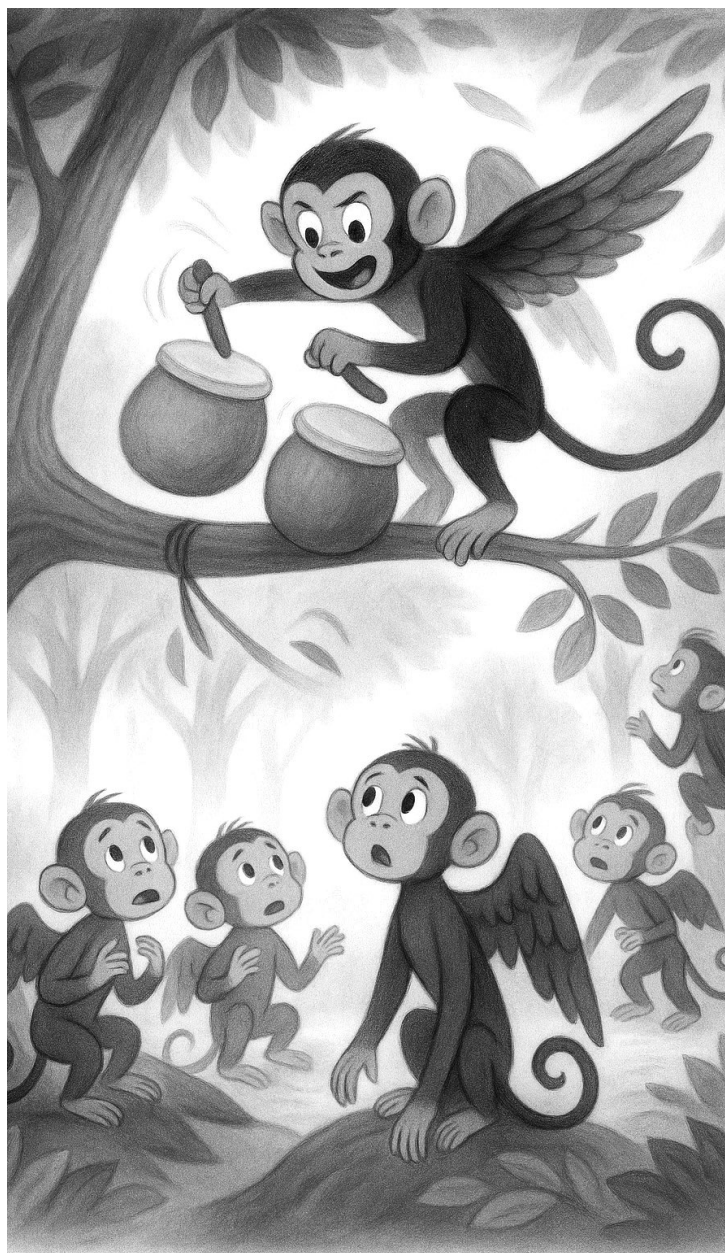
“But we are wild,” Kikko said. “No one commands the sky.”

Aara sighed. “That’s what we believed. Until now.”

She leaned close. “You’re still limber. Still unknown. **The spell hasn’t named you yet.** That makes you rare. You can move where others can’t. You must go east, Kikko. Find the place where the silver wood touches the mirror-lake. There waits a bird who does not sing. It sees what is to come.”

Kikko hesitated.

“Do not wait for the trees to burn,” Aara whispered. “Go.”



Chapter 3 | The Drums Without Sound

Kikko burst from the dream-hollow like a sliver of moonlight—his wings tight, his mind sharper than it had ever felt. He didn't glide. He **darted**, weaving through thickets and branches as dawn cracked gold across the forest.

The younger monkeys—his friends, his tribe—were just waking. Some stretched on limbs of hanging moss. Others tumbled and tussled in morning play. Their chatter echoed like rain on bamboo.

Kikko didn't join them.

He shot up to the great **drum branch**, where the tribe called meetings by striking gourd-shells hung from vines. Normally only the elders beat them. But Kikko didn't care.

He grabbed one and **slammed his foot down**, again and again.

Dum. Dum. DUM.

The forest stilled.

One by one, monkeys flew in—first curious, then annoyed, then wary.

When Kikko saw the last of them perched and quiet, he began.

“There is a spell in the wind,” he said. “Old Aara showed me. It’s moving west to east. It speaks a name it has not yet chosen—but it’s coming.”

A few snickered. Some frowned.

“Kikko, you’ve always flown too high,” muttered Bris, a swaggering branch-leaper. “Maybe the thin air’s made you dizzy.”

“Dreams are just stories half-told,” said another. “We have dancing to do.”

Kikko’s wings flared, frustration rising.

“Do you think clouds cannot fall?” he snapped. “Do you think wind cannot bend?”

Only one voice answered calmly. It came from **Talla**, the youngest wind-reader, still awkward in her flight but born with ink-colored wings.

“Where?” she asked. “Where should we fly if it’s true?”

Kikko paused. Then spoke low: “To the silver wood. Where the mirror-lake hides a bird who does not sing.”

The phrase silenced them all.

Old stories whispered of that place—a grove of trees where truth gleamed on every leaf and time moved sideways. The unsinging bird was said to see both **curse and cure**, but it had not been glimpsed in generations.

Talla nodded. “Then I’ll go with you.”

“No,” said Kikko. “You must stay. Wake the others. Teach them to fly silent. To circle wide. The skies will not be ours for long.”

The tribe began to murmur. The air thickened. Something trembled—not from Kikko, but from the forest itself.

DUM... DUM...

One of the drums struck itself. The others swayed gently in air that did not move.

The spell had crossed into the trees.



Chapter 4 | Where the Air Spoke Back

Kikko took to the air like a string cut loose.

He rose above the canopy until the forest below looked like a single velvet pelt, stitched with shadows and rippling leaves. He didn't look back.

Somewhere behind him, the drums still swayed.

Somewhere ahead, the spell crept.

He angled his flight **westward**, into the part of the sky that had begun to feel... wrong. The clouds there didn't move. They **watched**. The wind beneath them did not lift, only **listened**.

Kikko slowed his wingbeats. This wasn't a place to dance. It was a place to listen. So he folded in his motion and drifted like a leaf, wings spread wide, tail curled for balance.

Then—he felt it.

The air turned thick. Heavy. *Named*.

He wasn't flying **through** wind. He was flying through a whisper.

“Monkey of the twilight leap...”

“Tail of mist and starlit step...”

Kikko's chest tightened.

It **did** know him.

“Cloud Dancer, called Kikko...”

He stopped.

A voice—not bark, not breeze—was calling him in the open air.

Below him, a field of thorned poppies now stretched where forest once stood. At its heart stood a **mirror**. Tall, narrow, and wrong. It had no frame. It leaned against nothing. It stood in a place where no mirror should exist.

And in its surface, Kikko did not see himself.

He saw a **throne**, made of bones and black vines. On it sat a woman with fire-colored lips and a crown of spiders.

She saw him.

She smiled.

“So this is the one the dreams protect,” she whispered. But her lips did not move. The mirror itself had spoken.

Kikko flinched and pulled back into a hover. The air fought him. Like sap, it dragged at his wings.

“You are not named yet,” said the voice in the mirror.
“You could still be useful.”

Kikko shook his head. “You do not own the wind.”

“Not yet,” it replied. “But soon, I will. And when I do, I will name every tree, every crow, every monkey. Especially the ones who *dare to watch me*.”

She rose.

Kikko turned—and bolted.

The clouds screamed.

A streak of **red lightning** cracked the air behind him, and the sky itself seemed to fold inward as if trying to **swallow** him.

But Kikko was a Cloud Dancer.

And his name had not yet been caught.



Chapter 5 | The Bird That Would Not Sing

Kikko flew until his wings screamed.

Behind him, the spell boiled. It reached for him with threads of naming—threads that could bind the air, the branches, and the wild parts of the world.

But it did **not** have his name. Not yet.

And so Kikko dove through stormlight and silence, chasing a half-remembered legend: a bird that saw without song, that perched where silver trees touched glassy waters, that watched the birth of curses and did not blink.

The silver wood.

He saw it by moonlight.

Not green like the rest of the forest—no. The silver wood shimmered like wet stone and crystal bark. Its trees had leaves like slivers of moon-peel. No birds sang here. No frogs croaked. No wind dared rustle.

The air was... **listening**.

Kikko slowed his wingbeats, drifting low, silent as mist. At the edge of a black-glass lake, where the trees bent inward like bowing dancers, he found it:

A perch of black root.

A branch bent low.

And on it: the **unsinging bird**.

It looked like nothing—just a small gray thing, feathers puffed, eyes shut.

But when Kikko landed, it opened one eye. Not both.

That one eye showed him everything.

Not in words. Not in thoughts. In **echoes**.

- A cap of gold, once given as a wedding gift, soon to fall into wicked hands.
- A name, **his name**, on the lips of a fire-voiced woman.
- Chains of air. Cages of sky.
- And himself—older, broken-winged, leading others into freedom from inside the chains.

Kikko staggered.

The unsinging bird did not speak. But it did blink once.

Kikko understood.

*“You cannot stop the naming... but you can change
the story it will tell.”*

There was something in the crook of the bird’s perch. A **feather**, white and warm. It pulsed slightly. Like breath.

Kikko touched it.

And he knew what to do.



Chapter 6 | One Feather Hidden

Kikko wrapped the feather in his tail, gently, like you'd carry breath.

It was **light**, impossibly so. Yet when he held it, the world seemed to hush. Not out of fear. Out of **respect**.

The unsinging bird gave no cry, no nod. It simply closed its eye once more, as if to say:

What comes next is yours.

Kikko rose into the darkening air.

Behind him, the western skies burned red—the spell had grown bolder. It now sang names to the trees. Some bent. Some broke.

But Kikko flew **where names had no place**.

He flew higher than song, past the veil of thunder, into the hush above the clouds—where even spells forget to climb.

There, in a small crevice of sky tucked between stars and forgotten moonlight, he found it:

A single floating stone. A relic of the ancient sky-folk. Hollow, weathered, **nameless**.

No bird nested there. No map marked it. The wind passed it by, believing it a trick of light.

Kikko landed.

He opened his tail and placed the feather into the stone's crack—wedged it deep into a patch of moss that hadn't moved in a thousand winds.

The feather pulsed once. Then vanished.

Not destroyed. Not hidden.

Preserved. A piece of *unwritten freedom*. A thing the spell could never bind, because it would never think to look here.

Kikko exhaled.

He had not won.

But he had made it harder for **her** to win.

That was enough—for now.

He turned. The clouds below churned like slow fire.

The witch's naming had begun.

And tomorrow... she would wear the **Golden Cap**.



Chapter 7 | The Name Beneath the Name

Kikko flew down slowly, wings tucked in reverence.

He no longer danced.

He **descended**.

The sky felt heavier than before. The spell had spread. The poppy fields were wider now, the trees quieter. The very clouds had begun to bow.

The witch had done it. She now wore the **Golden Cap**.

Kikko had not been named aloud, not fully. But she knew of him. She called him *Cloud Dancer*. She summoned him not with a whip or a chain, but with the whisper of power and a promise:

“The skies remember obedience. Join me now, and you will lead the rest.”

Kikko came.

He landed on the broken spire of her tower, where scorched winds fluttered the edges of her cloak.

The Wicked Witch of the West stood tall and sharp. Her face was shadowed. Her crown, a ring of iron thorns, pulsed with runes.

“You arrive,” she said. “The last one.”

Kikko bowed.

She smiled. “The others will follow you now. Once I name you.”

He looked at her. Quietly. Not with defiance. But with **delay**.

She raised the Cap. She spoke her first command.

“Serve.”

Kikko nodded. The name burned itself into the air:

Kikko, Winged Monkey, Skybound Servant.

But deep inside, wrapped beneath bone and feather and silence, Kikko carried something the name could not touch.

The **feather**.

Not physically. It had long vanished. But its echo lived in him. A rhythm no spell could match. A secret he would never speak—but might one day show.

And so Kikko bowed low, as the others gathered in chains of air.

And when the Cap was used again—first for conquest, then for terror—Kikko flew with the rest. He obeyed. He bowed.

But in the deepest cloud, in the briefest flash of lightning, he sometimes twisted.

Danced.

Just once.

A reminder that not all names stick.

And not all cages are closed forever.



Chapter 8 | Whispers in Emerald Glass

Years passed.

Dorothy would come. The house would fall. The Witch would melt.

But in the days before that, in quiet towns and jungle paths, Munchkin children told stories of a Winged Monkey who once flew **against the wind**. Who answered no one's call but the stars. Who vanished the day the Golden Cap was made.

They say he dances still, when no one watches.

They say the sky remembers.

Thank You for Reading

We hope you enjoyed *The Cloud Dancer of Oz*, a secret story whispered between the pages of L. Frank Baum's timeless world.

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The CLOUD DANCER of OZ

*A heartwarming OZ adventure
about bravery, belief, and the magic
of staying true to who you are.*

Long before Dorothy followed the Yellow
Brick Road, the skies of Oz held a secret:
a winged monkey named Kikko
who danced for the stars and
dreamed of freedom.

When a strange spell darkens the sky,
Kikko must follow a golden feather through
clouds, curses, and forgotten legends.



With hope in his heart
and the wind at his back,
Kikko's quiet courage may just
change the skies forever.