

*Satiric, child-like fantasy. When an elementary class sets out on a quest to save the world from disenchantment, their adventures reveal paradoxes of the human mind and ways of awakening the magic within us.*

## **The Lizard of Oz and Other Stories**

By Richard Seltzer

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# The Lizard of Oz

and Other Stories



Richard Seltzer

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The Lizard Of Oz is illustrated by Christin Couture.  
Other stories are illustrated by the author.

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David Gleason designed the cover for the first edition.

This is an expanded version of the underground classic, originally published in 1974.

The illustrator, Christin Couture was born and raised in Western Massachusetts. She has a BFA in Painting from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, studied at the Brooklyn Museum Art School, the Art Students' League of New York, and in Bologna, Italy. Couture has received Fellowships from the MacDowell Colony, Yaddo, the Millay Colony, and Fondation Karolyi, Venice, France. She has exhibited her work in museums and galleries both regionally and abroad. She illustrated The Lizard of Oz in 1970.

She is also the author/illustrator of two children's books published by Farrar, Straus & Giroux, "The House on the Hill" (1990), and "A Walk in the Woods" (1992). She had the pleasure of illustrating "The Lizard of Oz" in 1970 while she was an art student at UMass.

Couture currently lives in New York City and Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts with her husband and collaborator, sculptor William Hosie. [www.redtidebluefire.com](http://www.redtidebluefire.com)

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## **Chapter Fifteen:**

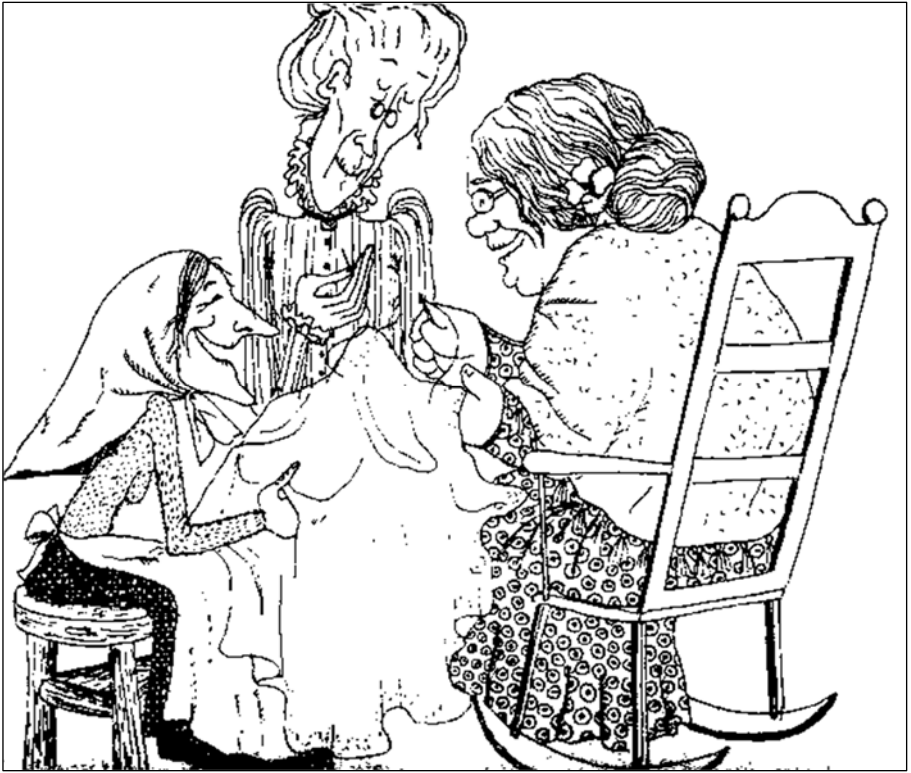
### **The Mothers Of Fact**

After the lessons, Mr. Carroll led the class and the redcoats on a twisty road that led back to the river. He had a pocketful of magic coins, so they had no trouble getting back on Mr. Charon's ferry, and in no time at all they were in another underworld.

As soon as they got ashore, Kathy said, "Why I've never seen such pretty clothes in all my life. Could you please teach me how to make clothes like that?"

One of the three old ladies who were spinning and sewing said, "As a Mother of Fact, that could be very difficult."

Mr. Carroll introduced them, "These are the Mothers of Fact: Miss Hap, Miss Fortune, and Miss Take."



Kathy said "I'd like to learn to sew like that?"

"Sew what?" asked Miss Fortune.

"Sew pretty clothes like you're making."

"Those are very special clothes. They're costumes for our spring fête."

"Fate? What's a fate?" asked Kathy.

"Oh, that's a party. The way we do it, it's a masquerade party, and everybody wears pretty costumes and acts out silly parts. Our job is to make the costumes."

"Can I help? Please? Pretty please?" Kathy pleaded.

"Well, I'm afraid it's probably beyond you; but if you want to try, here's a needle and thread."

"But what can I use for cloth?"

"Use the fabric of time," answered Miss Fortune. "That's what we use."

"But ..."

"Once you get into it, it's really quite simple, nine times easier than regular sewing — just a stitch in time."

Kathy felt silly sitting there with a needle and thread and no cloth. But she would have felt even sillier to ask again. So she pretended she was sewing.

The other kids gathered around her and stared.

"What are you doing, Kathy?" asked Mark.

"I'm sewing, silly. Can't you see?" she answered.

"But you don't have any cloth. How can you sew without any cloth?" he asked again.

"I'm just stitching time," she said.

Miss Fortune confirmed, "Yes, and she's doing a fine job of it. She'll soon have it all sewed up."

Miss Hap added, "Why that's lovely, perfectly lovely. That's finer than anything we've ever made. That's a very special costume. Fit for a king."

"For an emperor," said Miss Fortune. "That'll be the emperor's new clothes."

Kathy wasn't sure whether they were being nice, or if they were making fun of her, or if they meant something she didn't understand.

Donny said, "You mean emperors don't wear anything at all, not even underwear?"

Kathy giggled and whispered to Gaynell; and Gaynell giggled and whispered to Kathy.

Miss Fortune said, "There's a special fiber for making it visible. Yes, moral fiber. The emperor has to supply that himself. It's indecent for an emperor to go around with no moral fiber."

Mark asked, "What's moral fiber?"

"Cotton grows on some plants. Wool grows on some animals. And moral fiber grows on some people. They're a rare breed."

"I'd like to buy some moral fiber," said Kathy.

"Well, you don't see plants buying cotton or animals buying wool, do you? They've got to grow it themselves. People can't buy moral fiber either. They've got to grow it. It grows on you. Until you're all grown up."

Mark said, "Well, Miss Osborne's a grownup. She must have some."

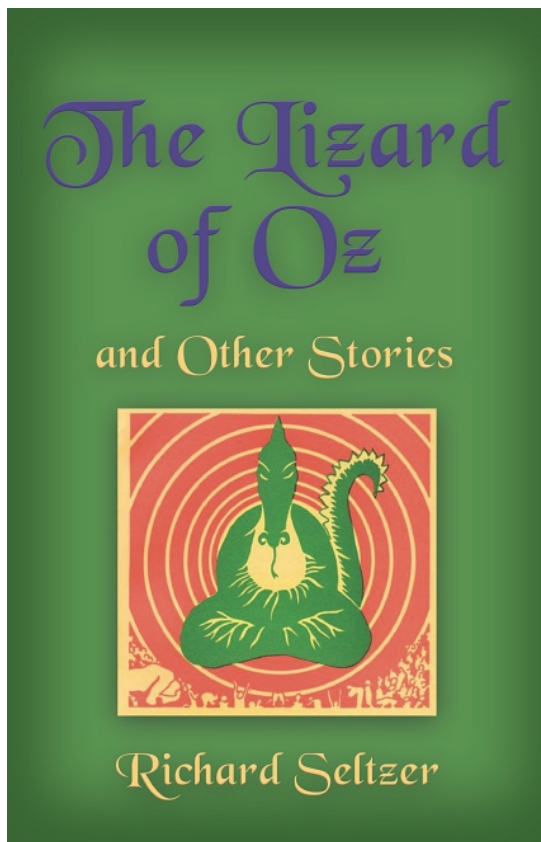
Everybody looked at Miss Osborne, and she blushed.

Donny said, "I don't see anything."

Miss Osborne blushed some more.

Miss Fortune explained, "Just give her time, and it'll show. Yes, matched with the right time, moral fiber can be quite beautiful — bright red and blue and green. Really very becoming. Becoming even more beautiful."





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