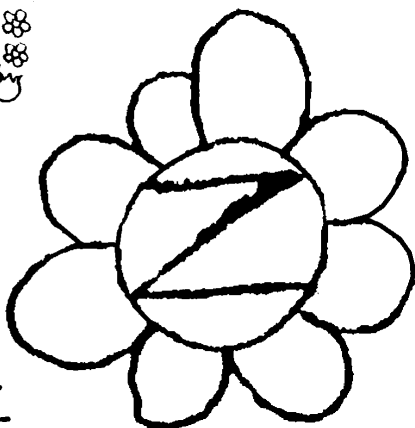
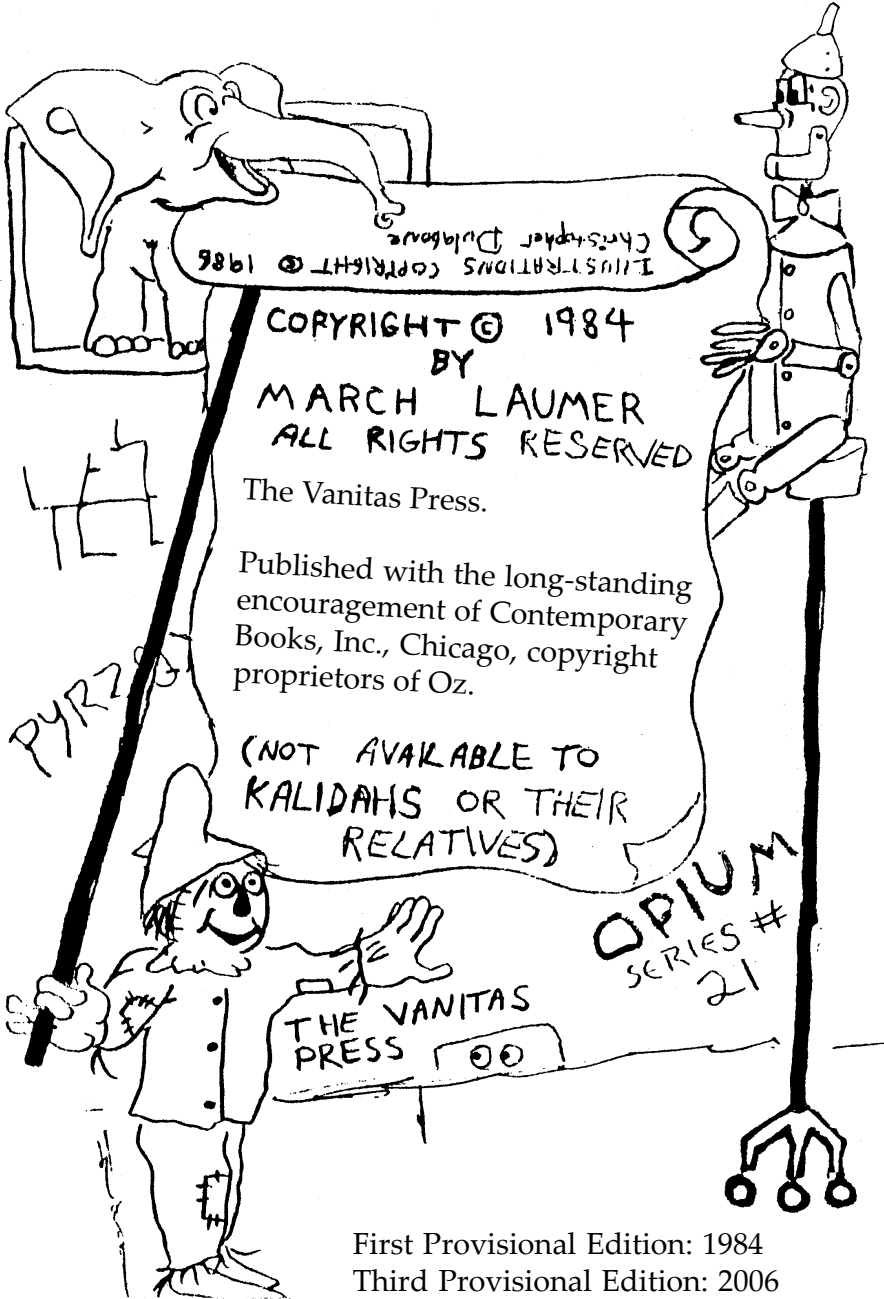


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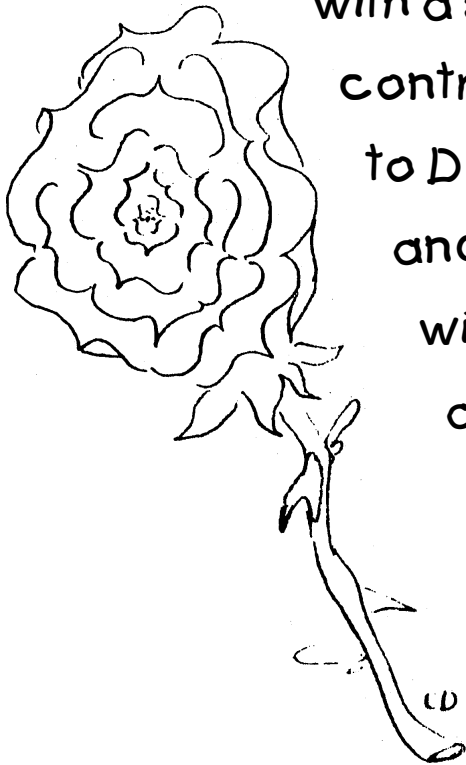
Uncle Henry and Aunt Em in Oz The Oz Book for 1911



First Provisional Edition: 1984
Third Provisional Edition: 2006



This edition is dedicated with great gusto to Chris Dulabone...



with a bow, for his
contribution,
to David Johnstone
and
with cordial
acknowledgements
to others whose
ideas were used
in the tale.

C H A P T E R O N E

Aunt Em thought of herself as the right person. Indeed, her conviction of her rightness in every question and situation was such that, privately, she even thought of herself as the Right Person—as another might think of HIMself as, say, “the Tin Woodman”, with scarcely a proper proper name (nobody in forty books ever says, “Hello, Nick” or “Good day, Mr. Chopper”) or “the Cowardly Lion”, with no given name at all.

Aunt’s rightness was principally to be observed in her relations with her husband, Uncle Henry, who by definition was always wrong. Henry was amiable and resigned and had long since grown used to his own wrongness. Now, whenever Em spoke, Henry said, “You’re right, Em,” and the conversation ended and peace was preserved. On the side Henry frequently did things that Em would probably not have thought right but he took care to see that she did not find out about them. One thing he did was practise Indian Corn Magic out behind the barn.

In the present situation Em was loudly right and Henry was meekly wrong. Em said, “I wish I had my rag rug.”

“Your what?” said Henry, scarcely crediting. “The rag rug I made out of my wedding dress. You remember.”

This was an order and so of course Henry obeyed. But that

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was when he made his mistake. He dared to say, "Gosh, Em—after all these years? You'll never see that again."

"Why not?" said Em, arms akimbo as she stood a window of the mock farmhouse erected in a far corner of the grounds of the Palace of Magic of Oz where the couple had lived for a number of years.

"Well, I mean," said Uncle hesitantly, aware that he had trod in it, "the rug blew away with the house an' all, didn't it?"

"Of course." Em did not elucidate further. When she knew she was right she could be provokingly elusive.

"Well, then—" But Henry wasn't dumb either. "Oh, I see!; you mean the house is right here in Oz—and probably the rug with it?" He experienced a wild surmise. "Gosh, Em, you don't intend—? "To go fetch it back? Well, now that you suggest it, Henry, what's to stop us?" Em suddenly glowed with an anticipation and an enthusiasm.

"Hmm, well, gosh, Em—" said Henry during several moments but could feel himself being wrong and was clever enough to end his sentence with "nothing, I guess."

"There, you see!" triumphed Em.

But Henry was not through having certain reservations. "How come," he said, "you suddenly thought of that, Em?"

"It's not so sudden," his wife replied tartly. "It's a whole week since you fell asleep and dropped your pipe on the floor where it set fire to your newspaper and scorched a big place on the parquet before we got it put out! Right away I wondered how I'd cover the spot. Then this morning I remembered what day it was..."

"Yes?" said the farmer when Em paused. "What day was it?"

"YOU wouldn't remember, naturally," sniffed the wife. "It's only March thirty-first—in other words one week before our anniversary."

"Oh, Em," murmured Henry, all too aware of how wrong he was verging on being.

"Yes," asserted Em. "And like always at this time of year I

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got to thinking of the old days and remembered what had become of my wedding dress and suddenly I realized the rug would be the *perfect* thing—only it isn't here!"

"Nope, " admitted Henry. "But if I know you, it soon will be."

Aunt Em didn't let any grass grow under her feet. She waltzed right off to Princess Ozma and requested—or, rather, announced—an absence of ten days for herself and spouse from the group of courtiers who attended on the young Girl Ruler.

"Well, Auntie," said Ozma hesitantly—even she was not as sure of herself as Aunt Em—"if you're sure that's what you want to do..."

"Quite sure, Your Highness," stated Em. "It's Henry's idea. He thought it would be nice to re-create our wedding journey: to take me back to the house where I went to live as a young wife." This was a white lie. Henry had not mentioned any such idea.

He mentioned it now though—and in a way that Emily herself had not been going to mention it. "Yes, Ozma," he said diffidently (but Henry was not without humor, despite—or perhaps as a result—or cause!—of—the relationship he had grown into with his wife), "you see, it's going to be our twirtieth anniversary in a week's time. Em thought it would be kinda fun to see the old place again. We haven't, you know, in all the time we've lived in Oz. I guess it's about time."

"Maybe it is at that," agreed Queen Ozma. "Even in the perfect climate we enjoy in Oz the old house may have experienced some weathering—even have fallen a bit into disrepair. Although of course it's a National Shrine, no one's been in it in all these years. Maybe you'd like to take along a few tools, Uncle?, in case there are some small repairs to be made."

"Well, that's a good idea, Your Highness," acknowledged Henry. "I'll get my tool kit."

"Oh, never mind," reassured Ozma. "I'll get the Wizard to outfit you with the latest carpentry and household implements. Magic ones, to boot."

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And then after that there wasn't much more to be said. Departures in Oz were often casual, even impromptu. It was decided that the Sawhorse and the Red Wagon were the ideal engine of locomotion for the jaunt, especially since the Wizard's tools needed to be transported—and Aunt Em had a few overnight things, as well, to be loaded in behind.

The elderly couple went to say goodbye to their niece Dorothy. She was playing croquet on the lawn with her chums Betsy Bobbin and Mayre Griffiths (mostly called 'Trot'), and the girls all crowded round.

"Have fun, Uncle!" said Betsy gaily.

"I hope you'll find your rug all right, Mrs. Gale," said Marye, who was more formal and grave, though cordial withal.

There had been kisses all round and the travelers-to-be were turning away when Dorothy said, "Aren't you forgetting something, Aunt?"

"Oh, I don't think so, dear," said the aunt. "What might that be?"

Then Dorothy took from her pocket "The key! How did you think you'd get in without it?" asked the girl merrily. "I put it here when I closed and locked the house all those years ago. I've carried it ever since—just in case this moment should arrive."

"You clever child!" exclaimed her aunt and kissed the girl again for her thoughtfulness.

C H A P T E R T W O

"I wish Dorothy could have come with us," said Uncle Henry wistfully.

Aunt Em clenched her mouth and looked at her husband crossly. "Henry Gale, you're the limit!" she declared. "What about this being our wedding journey re-enacted?! Just the two of us alone together...?"

Henry was too kind-hearted to remind his wife that such a scheme was entirely her own idea. Just the same he missed his niece.

"Who's Dorothy?" said the farmer's wife in whose house the couple had passed the night and at whose table they were now breakfasting.

'There! you see?' was the remark that could be read in Emily Gale's eyes as she looked again at her husband in annoyance.

'There go all our plans for escaping incognito and going off into the wild blue yonder for a lark all on our own!' But all she said was, "Oh, that's our young niece. She had to stay behind in the Emerald City because she's due to attend a summit conference of all the crowned heads in Oz in a few days." Henry having blown their cover, Em went on to enjoy, anyway, a wee bit of boasting. "She's a princess, you see."

"Oh, dear me," said the woman, pausing suddenly with a

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plate of bismarck buns in mid-air. Henry looked at them longingly from a distance. "That wouldn't be Princess Dorothy of Oz and Kansas, would it?"

"Why, yes, as a matter of fact," confessed Aunt now preparing to unbend and take pleasure in celebrity.

"And then *you* must be Mr. and Mrs. Gale!" cried The farmer's wife, vastly impressed. The strangers had given their names as simply Frank and Maud, address unknown, on requesting hospitality the night before. But the woman had a little name-dropping of her own to do. "Why, I know your niece well," she revealed with a simper. "She and her friends spent their last night here before their first-ever arrival in the capital!"

"Of course!" cried Aunt Em with a shock of recognition.

"Oh, wait!" cried her hostess and ran to fetch a big green book. She had put the plate of bismarcks down carelessly and Henry was not slow to avail himself of them. The woman leafed hastily and then presented for Aunt Em's inspection a drawing of a group about a low dining table: in fact it appeared to be the very table at which at this moment the visitors were taking their breakfast. Henry, who was no midget, had trouble getting his knees under the table.

"You see?" said the woman, who for the moment was doing all the talking for the family. Her husband and two children were present at the meal as well but merely listened politely and with interest. The woman placed a finger. "That's me!" she announced proudly. "And you recognize your niece... And there's the Lion! His head is absolutely vast, isn't it? I'm not sure the artist got that quite right."

Well, there was enough to talk about now, to be sure! The visitors, who after all were in no frightful hurry to move on, ended lingering for hours at the table of the kindly farm family. The big bismarck plate was quite empty when farmer himself put in a word. "I remember that evening very well indeed. And of course we've kept up as much as we could with the doings of little Dorothy Gale—as we knew her—ever since. But there's one thing I've puzzled over a lot never heard any explanation

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of..." The man's voice trailed off as if he dared not say any more but, from the look of him, clearly was longing

Henry Gale encouraged his Ozian colleague. As farmers they had a lot in common. "Say on!" he urged. "Is it something we could clear up for you?"

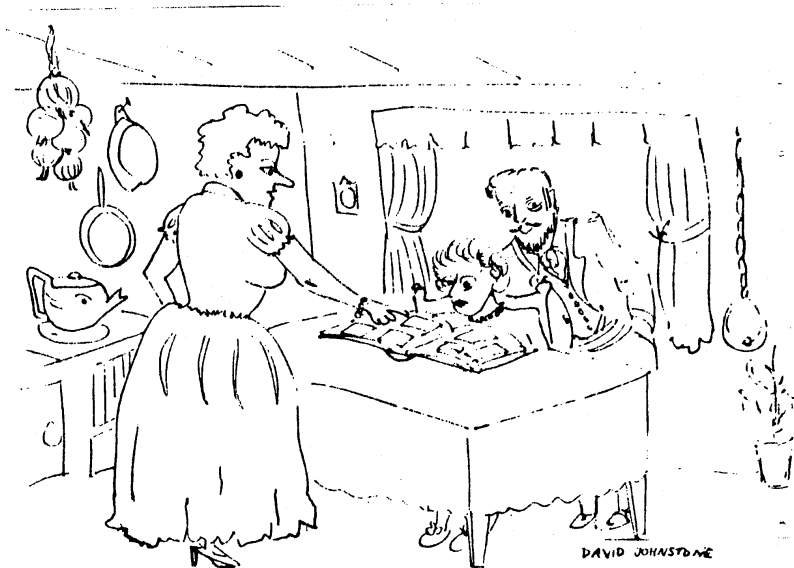
"Yes!" declared the man. "Dorothy's name is Gale—and so is yours! But you're not her parents, are you?"

"Good gracious, no!" declared Aunt Em—and then with a sniff, "no matter how much people in some countries may think so. No. Dorothy's my sister's child."

"Oh?!" said both farmer and wife, and looked at each other more puzzled than ever. "But then—" they turned again to their guests—"the name... 'Gale'...?"

"Well, she's also," said Em, having nothing to conceal, "Henry's brother's child!"

"Why, how interesting!" exclaimed the farm-wife "—and how romantic! So sisters married brothers—" but here she broke off, for, astonishingly, Henry Gale had stood up, put down his napkin, and was saying in no uncertain terms to his wife, "We've taken up enough of these good people's time, Em. We must be going."



C H A P T E R T H R E E

It was some hours later before Emily Gale adverted to the touchy topic again. Even the right Aunt Em knew there were one or two subjects on which it was preferable not to exercise her rightness in regard to her husband. But after all, she *was* right. It wasn't *her* brother who—"Henry!" she said as they bowled along the yellow brick road; "I don't see why you had to break off our talk with those nice people. I had a *lot* more to say and they seemed so interested."

"Yep, I'll *bet* they'd have been interested if you'd gone on!" positively growled Henry Gale as he took his corn-cob from his mouth. He used it to point with: "What do you 'speck that is, Em?" And the sore subject was again gracefully stored in mothballs.

"Why, it's all red-glowing!" cried Em, agog. "It's almost like when you come over the rise and see the Ruby City. Henry!" she broke off. "We haven't taken a wrong turning, have we?"

"Sawks knows where he's going," calmed Uncle Henry. "Now think what it could be! We're doing Dorothy's original journey in reverse—"

"Of course!" shrieked his wife. "How silly of me! The deadly poppy field. Oh, Henry!" she interrupted herself again, "do let's stop! I—um, I'd like to grub up a few of the plants! If they glow

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like that, think how they'd brighten up the old house when we get to giving it a going-over." "Are you crazy, Em?" asked Henry mildly but he drew on the reins as they got nearer. "Those things are poison. You know what they did to Dorothy and the Lion."

"Mm-hmh." Em nodded sagely. "But I also remember what they didn't do to the field-mice. If a person works quickly, there's no danger. Come on—and bring the spade!" Em jumped nimbly down from the wagon, seized a tin bucket in each hand, and ran toward the nearest outlying patch of the bright red flowers.

But the woman stopped and stood staring. It was a sight to see: a gently undulating meadow stretching out of sight up a distant rise and all one nearly undifferentiated carpet of scarlet. It was wind-still and the poppies' tissue-paper petals motionless. Presently, "I don't smell a thing," said Em to herself. "I don't reckon there's much danger of the scent overpowering me."

But still she did not kneel and begin to dig with the spade the farmer handed her. "I wonder what makes them glow that way, Henry," she said thoughtfully. "They're just flowers, after all."

"You're right, Em," admitted Henry. "They're not even magic ones, as far as I ever heard. That property of making creatures fall asleep is just a natural one for Oz poppies; anyway that's what I heard Professor Wogglebug say once."

"Shh!" said Em rudely. "Do you hear anything?"

"Why, no, Em. It's wind-still—so there's not even that to hear." But then Uncle Henry's hearing was not all it might once have been.

"I hear something," declared Em. "I know I can't be wrong. It's far away but it sounds—it sounds like somebody—*snoring!*"

"You must be hearing things, Em," posited Henry.

"Yes, I am," agreed his wife. "And I'm going to find out what they are! Henry, you stay here—and keep an eye on me. If you see me falter and fall dash in and drag me out—the shortest way." And so saying the intrepid wife lifted up her skirts and set her high buttoned shoe within the poppy field.

She hardly knew which way to begin to look but then it struck

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her that the crimson glow was strongest out toward the middle of the field and she gravitated that way. When she had gone a dozen paces, trampling down with her boots and skirt a wide swath through the unprotesting flowers, it seemed to her that the sound of sleeping breathing was a little louder. She pressed on.

Henry Gale, at attention at the edge of the plantation, began to grow anxious. Suddenly just where the field's red reflex looked the brightest he saw his wife bend down—and then disappear completely! "Em!" he yelled in anguish.

The woman's head reappeared above the vermilion tide far away. "You, Henry!" she screamed. "You come right here! I need your help."

The farmer hesitated not a single moment but plunged at all speed into the field along the track his wife had left.

In a hundred seconds he had reached her side. At her feet he saw a young boy in a silver suit lying fast asleep.

C H A P T E R F O U R

"You're a bright lad," said Henry Gale in admiration.

The silver-suited boy was sitting propped against a wheel of the red wagon, stuffing the Gales' provisions into himself as if he hadn't eaten in twelve years—which, as it turned out, he hadn't. In between huge—though well-chewed—bites he was answering all Henry's questions with promptitude and intelligence.

"Why, I ought to be bright," admitted the boy freely. "My mother was the famous Maid of Light—you've heard of her?—" As a matter of fact they hadn't. "—and, though not a girl, I'm made of light too." Here he shifted his sandwich to another hand and snapped his fingers and a big silver spark shot out and zigzagged away into the sky. Presently a little bark of thunder was heard.

"Hot ding!" said Henry, delighted. "But now you go ahead and finish your lunch and then we sure would admire to hear your history complete." And while the boy cleaned out their picnic basket the old couple went for a walk.

Later, as all three sat abreast on the front seat of the wagon and Henry Gale urged on the Sawhorse briskly so as to reach somewhere nice by nightfall, the silver boy told his story.

"My father was a famous necromancer—maybe he still is!—

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but I doubt it. Otherwise I can't account for his letting me stay there in that field for years and years without finding out and coming to rescue me.

Anyway, by his clever arts it was an easy thing for him to enchant the famous Maid of Light and make her fall in love with him—though as I remember Dad he was nothing much to look at—anyway, twice. I was the result of their union. I don't remember Mom very well. She went away when I was just a kid. But Dad and I got along fine and I was apprenticed to him in the magic trade when I was just out of rompers. He always said I was sure to turn out just as competent a wonder worker as he was—but while I was still a kid I mostly served as his messenger—”

“But how did you end up in the poppy field?” insisted Emily Gale. She was perhaps not the world's most patient listener.

“Let him tell it his way, Em,” urged Henry at the reins quietly.

“Well,” the boy acceded to Em's question, “that all began one stormy day when I had been sent to do errands for Dad's colleague, the Good Witch of the North. *She* sent me to keep tabs on *another* witch who was known to be up to no good—and it just happened that I was on the scene when the most fantastic thing happened...”

The boy knew how to keep his audience. Both farmer and farmer's wife were hanging on his words now.

“As the good witch's representative and errand boy I was talking to a bunch of the locals as we followed at a distance this awful old BAD witch who was gathering toadstools and deadly nightshade in an otherwise pretty green glade. It had rained all night and morning and that made it just right for the sort of wicked plants the witch was after to sprout up like anything. Thunder was still rolling but it seemed like the last of the storm. Still we all tagged along, fearing—well, hoping, really—that a last bolt of lightning might strike down on the wicked old woman out there in the middle of the glade and put an end to her machinations. If I must tell the truth—” said the boy coyly, cracking

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his knuckles quite ominously loudly, "I had half a mind to help on the lightning a bit myself. But then as it turned out it wasn't necessary. For all of a sudden—out of a not-so-clear sky—a little wooden house—not much bigger than a hen-house—came whirling down and dropped with a splat right on top of the witch!!"

If he had hoped for an effect, the boy achieved it. The man to his left and the woman to his right let out, respectively, a deep groan and a loud scream. "The 'swift messenger'!" they yelled as one.

The boy looked from one to the other with the deepest attention and interest. "You know of the incident then?"

"Know of it!" shrieked Emma. "It's the cause of—just everything in the world—and the reason we are where we are at this very minute."

Now it was the silver boy's turn to be greatly intrigued and he listened devoutly while Henry and Em between them retailed most of the latter-day history of Oz. "How amazing," he said when they had finished. "All that! And to me it's as if only yesterday..."

Which for all practical purposes it was. When the Good Witch of the North received from her messenger boy the epoch-making news of the fall of the house upon her rival, the Witch of the East, she dispatched him instantly to bring the glad tidings to every other magic-worker, good and bad alike, in Oz. The Lad of Light (his professional title) traveled with the speed of light but, like other light lads, he sometimes played truant too. He'd already sped about to sixteen wizards, fairies, and petty sorceresses—including his own surprised and suddenly thoughtful father—to relay the news and the fourth day was a bit tired of the trick. He was ambling along—at a good deal less than the speed of light—on his way to number seventeen, farther-afield-residing Good Witch of the South, when he happened to pass over the great field of poppies.

Their color attracted him for a start: so red! ere everything else lay green or blue. And then what was this?: a great tawny

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lion lying asleep near the edge of the field? Now nothing is so alluring to an adventuresome lad as a wild free-ranging beast of prey, especially one conveniently asleep and available for safe close-up inspection. The messenger landed lightly beside the great rumbling animal to have a look.

He walked around and admired him from every side. Come to think of it, he was feeling a bit sleepy himself. He sat down—at a judicious distance. Really he felt very much like *lying* down. And after all, he *had* been hard at it for four days running now. He might *just* take a wink.

But suddenly he was aware that two most peculiar-looking individuals were gliding toward him, apparently *sitting down*, and being moved by some invisible force across the field of flowers. He didn't feel in the mood for socializing just now. Perhaps after just a wee nap. Quickly the messenger turned and crawled away, further in among the strangely reeking poppies.

"And that was yesterday," said the revived messenger boy, wondering.

C H A P T E R F I V E

"No dice, hey?" said Uncle Henry.

"Nope."

"You want to try one more time?" the farmer proposed thoughtfully. "Maybe you just need to build up to it by practice."

"Well ... okay," said the Lad of Light doubtfully. He planted his feet wide, standing on the yellow-bricked picnic area, and clenched his fists—and then presently his eyes. But nothing happened.

"What if you tried running?—at the same time as you concentrate," suggested Henry.

"Well..." Again the boy was doubtful. "I never used to have to." But again he was ready to try. This time he stood in sprinter's stance as he clenched his fists and mind.

Suddenly he vanished—and in almost the same instant was heard shouting from far away where the road entered a forest.

Henry and Em gaped, then waved, but by the time ; they finished their wave the boy stood at their side again, not even panting—or only very slightly.

"Zippiochoggolak!" cried Aunt Em, exalted.

"My friends call me 'Zip'," the boy offered, pleased.

Uncle Henry nodded sympathetically. "I can understand

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why," he said. And then with gathering comprehension and enthusiasm: "It's like I said: you need to build up your facility with practice." "No, Uncle," said Zip. ('Uncle' already! but the trio's mutual affection was growing apace.) "I think it's like this: I was only an apprentice, you know. I could travel at the speed of light, right—but only at a 'master's' behest. Same thing with returning: I could only home back in on 'master'. While running an errand—or returning from same—I could go as fast or as slow as I liked—or even stop. But I couldn't initiate any journey on my own. Of course my dad and the Good Witch have long since given up trying to send or receive me. But now you've taken over—a little bit—as my master. *You* sent me just now."

"Do tell," breathed Henry, awed.

"But just the same," Zip went on to puncture the loon: "I don't think we'd be any good as a team *yet*—trying to send me anywhere out of sight. I'll just have to tag along with you for the time being—if you don't mind."

"My dear Zip!" exclaimed Henry. Nor did his wife look displeased. And no more discussion was said on that score.

They had overnighted at Landowner Boq's and now it wasn't far at all on to the little house that'd flown from Kansas so long before. Em was quite thrilled at the prospect, but—funny!—she also felt just the slightest bit anxious—almost, well, she certainly wasn't going to use the word 'afraid'!

Then she happened to glance behind her. That explained it! Emily had always felt uneasy whenever a storm was brewing and now she saw that great dark clouds were thudding towards them out of the west. Storms were rarities in Oz and such a cloud-burst as this one promised to be would make *anybody* nervous. "Henry!" she exclaimed, "jog up the horse, will you? We better make tracks or we're going to get a drenching."

Now Henry looked also and felt an ominous twinge. That was exactly how the western sky had looked that awful day at home on the prairie. He needed no further urging to encourage the Sawhorse, with reins and voice, to switch to top speed. The forest to either side became a dark green blur and even

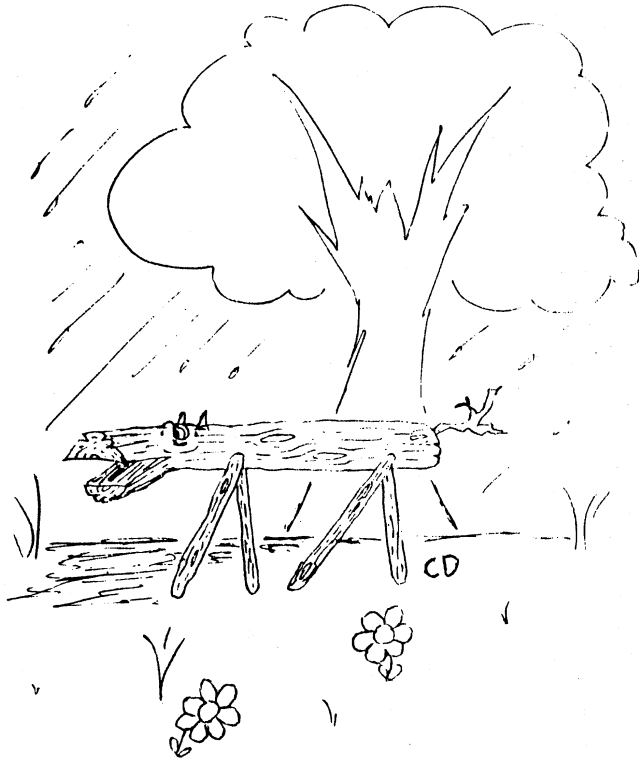
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Zippiochoggolak, the Lad of Light, thought he might take some lessons from the agile wooden steed.

But after all it wasn't enough. The sky was black and the wind roaring all before it as the red wagon came to a stop—or tried to!—in front of a little grey battered shack at the edge of a glade. “Oh, this is terrible!” screamed Em as she attempted to grope in her reticule. “It's not a bit like I pictured our homecoming!”

“Anyway you have to admit this weather's appropriate,” yelled Henry in reply—and had no idea how very just his remark was. “It's exactly like it was the last time we saw the place.”

Now Em had found the key and she jumped out of the wagon just as the first bellying cloud was torn open and disemboweled. She was already soaked when she thrust the key in the lock, turned it—and the long-sealed door fell open. Henry and Zip were right behind her as she sprinted over the threshold. The poor old Sawhorse just had to stand outdoors and let it rain.



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What a sight met their eyes! Well, actually it wasn't much of a sight. Dust lay ankle-deep over everything and obscured the scene to a soft even greyness. Where Em's rag rug might be could not even be seen.

"Pyew!" said the goodwife in disgust. "You say this place is a National Shrine? They might have stirred their stumps to tidy it up a bit once in a while."

Rolling thunder and dashing rain blurred the sound of what she said and her husband had to ask her to repeat. When she did he really had to protest: "Oh. Em, now you're being unfair. The Munchkins have done all they could. Notice how well-oiled they kept the keyhole. But they would never have gone against Dorothy's implied intentions and come into the house. You surely see that."

"If they had the faintest gumption," hmpfed Em unconvinced, "they'd have sent for the key ages ago. There was nothing in here Dorothy was all that sot on preserving."

Henry shrugged his shoulders, unconvinced in his turn. HE certainly would never have wanted to come into any place that looked, as he now realized, as dreary as this. Not even nostalgia and the recollection that his own hands had fitted together every board in these walls made him want to stay in the house a moment longer. There was an ugly chill in the air. But of course!: all three of them were half drenched. No wonder they were shivering.

"Come on, Em," he took control, "let's get busy. We've got our work cut out."

C H A P T E R S I X

It was six hours later and getting on for evening. The situation within the reinhabited Kansas farmhouse had not been able to get any worse and—since changes *had* taken place—it had consequently got better. Thank heavens! the storm had subsided and was now reduced to a steady-falling but untempestuous rain, as Aunt Emily Gale put her hands on her hips and looked around her.

In the first place a comforting big fire roared in the stove and all their damp clothes hung on lines around it. The first thing Henry had done had been to send Zippiochoggolak three times into the nearby woods at the speed of light to fetch back three armloads of fallen brushwood. Meanwhile Henry and Em hung up the clothes-line that the farm-wife had stored in the cupboard half a generation before.

It was all very well to have an arrangement for getting rid of wet garments—and Zip's by now were absolutely dripping—but what about dry ones? Glumly Henry looked through the window to see if he could spy the wagon and their traveling bags, whose contents were by now no doubt as sopping as the clothes they would all so have enjoyed taking off.

But what was this? At first there was no sign of horse or wagon. Henry crossed to the other window. Clever beast! The

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Sawhorse had NOT just let it rain. He had turned his knot eyes about and quickly descried a lean-to (it turned out to be the Munchkin custodians' tool shed) with attached projecting roof, at the other side of the clearing. In a twinkling horse and wagon had preserved themselves at least as dry as the luckless people inside the cottage—and they were likely to remain so.

During a comparative lull in the storm Henry sent Zip—who anyway could get no wetter—to fetch in all their traveling gear—and a few of the Wizard's tools too, while he was at it. To the newcomers' infinite relief the clothes in Em's valise were scarcely damp at all and soon all were snug and warm, Zip in a tucked-up suit of Uncle's overalls.

The house had no modern conveniences—or even old-fashioned ones—but just at the moment there was no lack of a fresh-water supply. On the red-hot stove Em soon had a kettle of water boiling and then there was a comforting cup of tea for each.

There was no question of their going anywhere else *that* day and, though so dark, it was still only two o'clock in the afternoon. There was no mad rush. Little by little the three addressed themselves to coping with the dust. Now dusting—if the dust is ankle deep—is not a job you can do fast. You have to sweep with care and brush with caution—if you don't want the whole thing to rise up into the air and make the operation do-over-able an hour later.

Em supplied a broom, a dustpan, and old soft rags. The three worked steadily. Zip got a lesson in doing things slowly. Henry was presently heard to hum a tune. And at the bottom of the mess Emily found her rag rug. "Mission accomplished!" she announced wryly.

Now she looked about her and felt reasonably content. Oh, there was the odd reminder of dust that had been—on top of a window frame; behind a picture of "Hope" on the wall—but any reasonable housewife would be satisfied with the appearance the room now presented. Henry and Zip were quietly playing checkers at the table. And Em herself might—

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Oh, there was one thing more. Just outside the door, under the dripping eaves, still stood the tin buckets with the goodwife's grubbed-up poppy plants. Poor things! they would *soon* be drowned. Em walked to the door, yanked it open, and lifted in her two pails. "I'm going to transfer these to pots," she announced.

"That's right, Em," said Henry abstractedly, considering his move.

Flower pots are never in short supply in a farmhouse and soon Em had six lined up before her on the cupboard counter. "But earth!" she exclaimed—more or less to herself really. With chin in hand and elbow propped on crossed arm, she considered. She was not about to interrupt the game and send either of the two menfolk out into the ever drearily descending rain again to scoop up soil for her pots.

"I have it!" she exclaimed. She stepped to the trap door in the middle of the floor and gave a heave. After all it came away easily; a decade and more of drying had made the wooden slab fit very loosely in its supporting frame. But the woman was nearly sorry she had taken this abrupt action without more careful forethought. For dust—horrid *black* dust—billowed into the room and interrupted the game at the table after all.

"Wow!" yipped Zip and "Whew!" exclaimed Henry, wrinkling his nose. "Shut that thing, Em!" he commanded without thinking. "That's terrible."

Startled, Em let the trap door fall. For once she didn't feel so terribly right. In fact, after a single involuntary inhalation of the swirling dust she felt far from all right. It was a defeat and she was well aware of it. She didn't care for Henry's tone and peremptoriness either. The incident rankled.

But meanwhile the poor poppies, a wither-prone plant at best, were drooping more than ever in the now hot air of the room. Em, with no other projects in hand, was perplexed. What to do? She seriously wanted a breath of fresh air now to calm a sudden queasiness. But drat the rain! And after all, the earth—dust—what-have-you—under the trap had looked to be the

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finest powdered loam or peat-moss. What if she did just edge up the door careful as could be and scooped out a few potfuls?

She decided to attempt it.

And all went well. The fellows at their checkers were this time scarcely aware of what she did. With infinite caution Em wedged the wooden slab open and with her bare hands carefully scooped a dollop of the rich black powder into each flower pot. The soil smelt horrid—she had to admit that. But then rotting things did smell bad and rotting vegetable earth was just what you wanted to give a good start to plants. When the six pots were established, each with its burden of red and green, in a row on the window-sill, Em gave her hands and arms up to the elbow a good scrubbing. And that was that.

C H A P T E R S E V E N

Glinda, the Good Witch of the South (latterly always referred to as ‘Sorceress’ to spare delicate American sensibilities), was seated over her books in the study in her pink palace. It was early morning and a rosy sun peeped in at the east window. Glinda was to depart at ten-thirty to attend the Plenary Assembly of Royal Personages of Oz (or ‘PARPO’) at the Tin Woodman (Emperor Nicholas the First)’s palace in the Winkie country and she was looking forward to meeting again queen Ann Soforth, Kings Fumbo, Pompus, Kinda Jolly, etc. etc. and of course her close friends and colleagues Queen Ozma, Princess Dorothy, and also (ex-) King Scarecrow the Wise, sometime ruler of the Emerald City. First, however, she had paper work to do before absenting herself from her domains for a week.

One task, a daily one but one that must be done today with special attention, was to note all current entries in the Great Book of Records. If there were any events being registered there that might seem to bode ill she would want to take in hand preventive measures.

Oh, dear, there seemed to be rather a lot of things going on today: “Joe King and Queen Hyacinth hold a levee before departing for foreign parts,” “King Pompus cannot find his Sunday-go-to-meeting crown,” “The Gold Conference Room at

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the Yellow Palace receives a thorough spring cleaning,” It took her half an hour to read through them all. Just near the end of a not otherwise disturbing page of entries the sorceress came across this odd note: “Mrs. Emily Gale is not herself today.”

“Curious,” mused Glinda and rested her chin on her hand a moment. “I must remember to ask Dorothy about her aunt’s health. I hope it’s nothing serious.”

But there was nothing in the great tissue-leaved book to cause the Good Witch a moment’s real concern and she closed it with a little sigh of anticipation and prepared to go enjoy herself at the convocation.

At that same moment the same Mrs. Emily Gale was reading her husband Henry Gale the riot act. “Look at that!” she screamed and pointed to her right elbow. “Black! And where did that come from, I ask you! It’s all your doing! If you hadn’t been so wrapped up in your wretched checker game you could have gone outside and spaded me up some proper dirt. As it was, I had to use that nasty stuff under the trap door—and now I can’t get it off!” The infuriated woman sat down on the bed again and wept for very frustration.

Henry was hurt, and more than hurt, alarmed, and more than alarmed, mystified. He had not been any more wrapped up in his checker game the evening before than that he had observed his wife giving her hands and arms a good scrubbing. Neither the woman herself nor her husband at a distance had at the time remarked anything more than her limbs’ return to the state of clean whiteness normal to a farm-wife in refined retirement. Yet now Em’s elbow was black, and she blamed it on him.

Not only the elbow was black. The woman’s mood could not have been more sable. And what was this?: instead of reassuming the cheerful green and yellow print dress she had traveled in yesterday, Em was seen to open the wardrobe half of the old cupboard-chifferobe and take out a rusty old mourning gown she hadn’t worn since Kansas.

“Gosh almighty! You’re not going to put that on, are you, Em?” bleated the gaping farmer.

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"Shut up! Mind your own business and go fix breakfast!" ordered the farmer's wife.

Well, that was just the beginning of a reign of terror that lasted all day. Henry and Zip were quiet as mice as between them they got breakfast. Just once Henry essayed a pleasantness. "I noticed," he said, ostensibly to Zippiochoggolak but clearly with his still scowling wife in mind, "a fine bismarck bush out by the back stoop with some nice ripe ones on it. I'll go gather some... if Aunt Em would like to toast them in the oven...?"

"You and your stupid bismarcks!" muttered the woman as she heated the poker red hot through the nest of rings. "Go stuff yourself on 'em! but don't expect me to aid and abet." And with that she applied the poker to her hair and began to frizz her fringe. The smell of scorched hair mingled off-puttingly with that of frying bacon.

Breakfast was a miserable affair. Em ate nothing. "I've felt sick ever since last night," she complained, consenting to swallow half a cup of ink-black coffee. "The only thing that appeals to me is—" and here she stopped suddenly and threw a glance sidelong at her husband, "a fat frog or so. Or failing that a toad."

Young Zippiochoggolak almost chucked up and he stared at the woman wildly.

Immediately after the washing-up Henry became decisive. "Let's get our things together, Em. I'd like to start right away."

"Where to?" said the wife suspiciously.

"Why, back to the Emerald City. We'll all feel better back in our own back yard. Besides, I want to get Ozma and the Wizard right onto helping young Zip here find his family."

"Are you daft?" said Em. "I didn't come all this way just to turn around and go back again. You seem to be forgetting: this is our honeymoon—recaptured." And here the woman chuckled maliciously.

Her amusement was short-lived. She had been looking grey around the gills before but her complexion now turned green almost suddenly and in a moment she had rushed outside.

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When she came back in a little later she said, "That's a bit better. That coffee didn't agree with me... I don't think I'll drink anything else."

"But, Em," protested her husband, still solicitous, "you've got to have SOMETHING. You can't go all day—"

"Never mind," she shut him off. "I'll—go out in the woods later and find something." And with that rather threatening promise Henry had to be content. Though his wife seemed to have recovered from her attack, he observed that her complexion stayed green.

The next tribulation on that day of woe was the arrival of the Munchkins. When the Dorothy's House National Monument custodians arrived for work that morning they were amazed to find the Sawhorse and Red Wagon in residence under the tool-shed eaves. Not only that but the house itself, from whose chimney flowed a trail of smoke, was clearly occupied. Word spread fast and by nine-thirty a crowd of the modest little people were hanging about the grounds.

Em was the first to spot them. "Drat those busybodies!" the goodwife exclaimed as she glanced out the window. "If I've warned them once I've warned them a thousand times not to spy on me. Go chase 'em off, Henry!"

Her husband gaped. "What in the world do you mean, Em? You've never seen those people before in your life!"

The woman gave her husband a sudden startled—nay, frightened—look. Then she passed the back of her hand across her eyes and forehead and affected to be faint. "You're right," she said. "I don't know what came over me..." She paused and looked curiously through the window again. "But just the same, I don't want to see them."

Henry jerked his head silently at Zip. "I'll just go have a word with them, Em. You have a lie-down; it'll do you good."

Quietly the man and boy passed out into the brilliant though cool morning daylight that had succeeded the night of rain. Flashing drops sparkled on a million leaves. Henry approached the first blue-suited Munchkin in his path, shook hands, and

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said a few courteous words. "My wife's not feeling well. The journey, you know—" and he nodded in the direction of the Red Wagon—"and the exertion and excitement, arriving yesterday in the middle of that downpour. I'm sure she'd love to receive you later though. Maybe tomorrow...?" Unconsciously the farmer had registered the conviction that they would not likely be leaving the neighborhood any time soon.

The Munchkins politely faded away. "Let's go for a walk, Zip," said the troubled old man, and the two fell into step.

"What's with Aunt, Uncle Henry?" said the Lad of Light in great wonderment. "She was always so nice before..."

"She *is* nice, Zip," insisted the man. "Emily is essentially a very decent woman. A bit sharp around the tongue sometimes but she would never knowingly do anything selfish or dishonorable. I can't think what's come over her."

"Is there anything we can do about it?"

"Not a thing I can think of! Leastways 'til we know what's the matter with her." The poor husband shook his head in bewilderment.

"Well," said Zippiochoggolak, "the thing to do is find out what's up. Now how can we do that..?" He too fell into a brown study as they walked a long a flower-fringed path in the forest.

"Of course," said Henry presently, "we could consult our friends in the Emerald City ... only they're not IN the Emerald City. They'll all have gone off to that PARPO conference at Winkiezia by now. And I don't think I want to drive the wagon clear across Oz—not 'til we see what we can do for her ourselves."

"Gosh, if I could only get back to Dad," said Zip wistfully. "He'd know what to do."

"You know where he lives—lived...?" Henry looked a question. "I mean—you haven't forgotten..."

"Course not," said Zip, wondering slightly if *Uncle* had forgotten—how *bright* he was. "We had a cottage on the border between Munchkinland and the country of the Gillikins. It was painted half blue, half purple. Too small, really, for all Dad's gear

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but he hung onto it because of its associations with Mom, he always said. I could find it in a minute."

"Yes," Henry was speculative, "if it was only within hailing distance." Then, "What do you say we practise your message-running a little? just 'til Em's settled down a bit?"

Zip was all enthusiasm. Quickly they followed the path to where it joined the yellow brick road cutting broad and confidently through the blue forest. In the far distance they could see where the road left the woods again and passed on across vague tilled fields into the blue. "This'll do," said Uncle.

First they repeated their experiments from that time on their journey. They found that if Zip concentrated, while preparing as if to run in bodily person, he could flash as far as the edge of the forest and back in less than the shake of a lamb's tail. "Now let's try something else," proposed Henry. "While you get in position I'm going to do the same thing and concentrate too on your moving as far and as fast as you can. Ready?"

The experiment succeeded marvelously. The Lad of Light vanished to the far horizon; indeed, for Uncle Henry's aging eyesight he *was* out of sight.

"Okay!" said the farmer, as the boy stood once more, flushed and triumphant at his side. "Now we'll try another refinement. You scoot off to the limit of your present range—but when you get there, stay! Meanwhile I'll retreat out of sight, where you don't know where I am—and see if you can home in on me. When you get off, count slowly to one thousand—that'll give me time—then try to make your way back to me."

Thus it was carried out. Henry trotted along the path they had come by, himself counting to a thousand. He found he had regained the clearing in front of the monument house before his numbering was done. He waited expectantly... tensely... and then less tensely. Zip did not come.

The man's attention was claimed meanwhile by the appearance of the house. Great clouds of black smoke boiled out of the chimney—and from the open windows a hideous reek reached him even at that distance.

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Then, almost forgotten in Uncle Henry's alarm, Zippiochoggolak came running out of the woods all breathless and joined him. "It didn't quite work!" he panted. "I only made it back to the spot where I'd last been able to see you. From there I had to hoof it on my own!"

"We'll try again another time," said the farmer abstractedly. "Look there! What do you make of that?"

There was nothing for it but to approach the house, undelightful as such a prospect was, and see what the badwife was doing. The door stood open—and green and brown fumes escaped thereby. There was a direct view in to where Emily Gale—or an unreasonable facsimile of her—stood at the stove stirring something in the biggest and most ancient pot—it was a cauldron, really—that the cottage afforded.

With virtual fear and trembling the two males approached. "Oh. Em," said Henry with a sickly effort to be light and gay, "I'm glad to see you're able to take something after all. Is that your lunch?"

"Hah!" The woman gave a loud harsh laugh and thrust under Henry's nose a great wooden spoon charged with a reeking black slime. "There's lunch! How would you like it: vinaigrette, or under glass?"

Uncle Henry could have sobbed with distress and alarm. This woman simply was not the Emily Gale he knew. From thinking she was merely out of sorts he now quickly began to believe she had gone—temporarily?—out of her mind.

He looked to Zippiochoggolak for support but the boy could only look back at him dolefully. They collapsed dispiritedly at the table and continued to observe what the scowling black-clad woman was up to.

Em herself seemed contented enough. At least: she seemed to be humming a little tune—or rather, wasn't it more like a droning incantation? And the scowl on her face was perhaps merely a look of concentration. For, as they watched, the woman lifted the heavy lid from the cauldron again, spooned up a ladleful of the odiferous boiling mass, and sniffed deeply—

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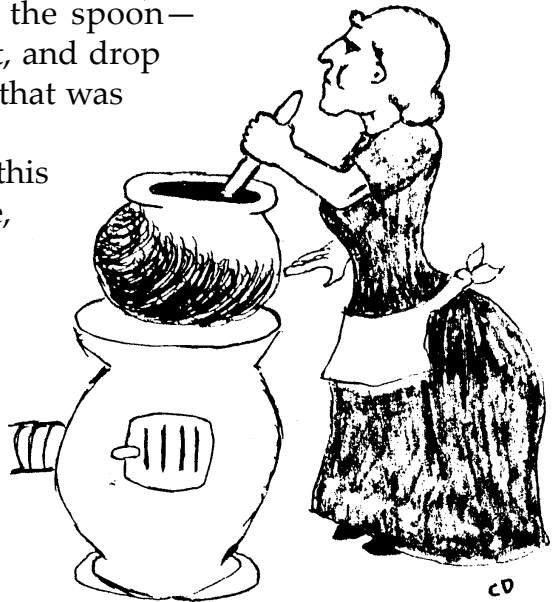
being careful not to let a drop fall upon her. It seemed that the brew had reached a proper potency. Now she bent and lifted a heap of feminine apparel the watchers saw had lain beside the stove—and dropped it into the vessel, where she stirred it in with a will.

Henry Gale gave a sigh of relief. So his wife had not totally taken leave of her senses! She did not intend that herself or others should *consume* the dreadful draught. She was merely dyeing her clothes!... though *why* she should want to spoil the pretty garments by rendering them all black, he could not for the time being determine.

Em stirred energetically as the cauldron bubbled and heaved. When twenty minutes of this activity had elapsed, "You there!" she barked, and turned again to her husband and her erstwhile young friend. "Go bring in the wash-tub from under the rain spout. I need it."

Henry was only too glad to be able to do any little service as a possible way of placating the evil spirit that seemed to have invaded his help mate. When he returned with the tub he found Zip on a chair taking down the clothes line per the woman's instructions. Now Em began to fork the garments—though with the spoon—one by one out of the pot, and drop them into the tub. When that was done...

"Now, you two: carry this outside, string up the line, and give the things a thorough rinsing in that little brook. I mustn't touch them 'til they've aired totally dry on the lines in the wind and sun... Oh, no..." The woman shuddered. "That would be fatal."



C H A P T E R E I G H T

They got through the dreadful day somehow—but the morrow gave little promise of being any merrier. Upon Uncle Henry and young Zip devolved all responsibility for keeping normal household functions ticking over. The few emergency rations that remained from their travel supplies were exhausted and Henry mainly existed on ripe blue bismarcks from the luckily continually fruiting bush, while Zip discovered some twelve-year-old canned goods in the cupboard that had not gone off: a tribute to American food engineering. Em of course ate nothing (while the others were watching).

At bedtime Aunt Em commandeered Zip's single bed that had been Dorothy's and relegated the two menfolk to double up in the bigger bed. Gone was the easy friends-together casualness about dressing of the day before. Already earlier Em had ordered a curtain rigged round the solitary bed with the clothesline (once the dyed things were dry) and bedsheets from the all-containing cupboard. Behind its shelter she could—and did?—do all manner of strange things unseen.

Before dawn the next morning Henry whispered Zip awake. The boy crept into his silver suit and Uncle pulled on his overalls soundlessly and together they left the house. As they hurried through the mist to the caretakers' shed the Lad of Light

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said, "What's up?"

"We've got to have help. I thought we'd ride to landowner Boq's and see if he can suggest anything."

"What if we tried to get to my dad's place?!" proposed Zip instead.

Henry stopped—and rubbed his chin. "That's an idea. But it's chancy. He could very well not be there—after all these years. And—" the farmer dismissed the idea—"it's too far."

"No, it isn't!" protested the boy. "It's no farther than Mr. Boq's—just in the other direction." This time Henry was persuaded. "It's true Boq might know little more than we ourselves, whereas a magic worker—that is: a *former* magic worker—I hope! ... since Ozma's prohibition—would likely be a lot more help."

But an extra shock was waiting for them under the tool-shed roof. They spoke politely to the patient Sawhorse—who, when not needed, could stand stock still in a trance for days—and were climbing to the driving seat when "That's queer!" said Henry and motioned with his head.

Zip followed his glance and saw that the rear of the wagon was totally empty. "You never moved the Wizard's tools, did you, Zip?" said the older man.

"I took in the broom and the squeegee and one or two things the first day," the boy reported. "But the see-saw and the augury auger and the clever cleaver and the rest were all still here when I happened to look yesterday."

"Was that before our trip to the woods?" enquired the farmer.

"Why, mmm, yes," admitted Zip.

"No wonder Em wanted a screen around her sleeping area. Those magic tools are all under her bed at this minute, sure as shootin'."

Hence it was with added desperation that the two quietly clucked to the Sawhorse and rolled off, fording the little brook, and headed northeast.

An hour's ride—and the glory of a fine spring morning in the Oz countryside could not fail to lighten their spirits more than a little—brought them to the blue-purple cottage Zip had

described—if “cottage” it could any longer be called...

“Wow!” said the Light Lad and for a space was speechless.

“What’s the matter?” said Henry after a moment. “Don’t you recognize the place?”

Zip stuttered: “W-well—sure! At least—I mean—there’s the front door just as it used to look, and I recognize that built-on wing at the left. Dad finally had to have extra room for his machinery—he went in rather for magical engineering. But what’s all that along to the right...!?”

He might well ask. Connected to the relatively modest original purple-and-blue semi-detached bungalow was, on the right, a great blue-and-purple-striped pavilion, like a great inflated tent with bulging sides, which quite dwarfed the older wing of the building. The annex had a vast door in its side and a pattern of windows; on the top rested a shingle roof, and there was even a brick chimney sticking up—but these furnishings had the odd appearance of having been stuck like decals on the outside of what was really a vast thick plastic suit encasing a monstrous swollen body. Most curious of all was a silo-like structure standing behind and rearing over the building; from it a jointed metal chute led down to the opening of the chimney.

Gradually Zippiochoggolak got over his bewilderment and the pair dismounted from the wagon and drew nearer to the strange building. As one they gravitated toward the annex that to Zip was such an unlooked-for and inexplicable addition to his father’s house. There was no question of attempting to open the enormous door that bulged so threateningly outward and which was taller in itself than the whole front of the original cottage. They marveled at the row of windows that mounted in a graceful arc from left to right and then, from the central peak of the façade, descended again to where at the far right of the building the last window was at normal human-eye level.

Toward that last window they made their way, hoping to get a glimpse inside. Instead, they got a serious shock.

The entire area of the square uncurtained window was blocked by a palest-rose-colored screen of some sort with an

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attractive brown fringe that ran down its left border. Even as they looked, this fringe was drawn quickly aside to the right—and a vast eye, completely filling the window square, looked out.

The pair had only begun to gape when further wonders drew their attention. The entire building had begun to heave and tremble. And now muffled noises, like groans or cries, could be heard from somewhere out of sight.

The two new arrivals now gaped at each other, while the eye inside the house also did its share of gaping.

Suddenly Zippiochoggolak dropped Henry Gale's gaze and darted along the façade of the New Wing to the original front door of the cottage. Oz-fashion (Dorothy in early days wasn't to know that), the door was not locked. Zip yanked it open and was going to run in when he found his way blocked by an immense foot—or rather, two of them. Baffled, he started back.

Uncle Henry had meanwhile caught up with him and the two conferred. They had a pretty good inkling by now of the truth. But how were they to communicate with the enormous creature—human?—that lay imprisoned within the building?

They drew back a way from the house and studied how to get inside—assuming there was any room inside to get into, seeing how the whole edifice amounted really to no more than a vast protective covering, stretched and twisted to its uttermost limits, for an unbelievably grossly fat giant who lay inside.

"I have it!" cried Zip suddenly. "Uncle, the chimney! Undoubtedly that's simply a food-intake valve for whoever lies inside—"

"Of course!" struck in Henry. "And the chute is the way the food is directed—from the silo—down to the chimney opening."

"And!" jubilated the boy, "that whole arrangement is one of Dad's constructions—if I'm any judge of his professional 'signature'. But where can HE be?"

"There's one way, I reckon, to find out," surmised the farmer. "We've got to get up there to the chimney and have a word with

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the mouth at the other end. Zip!" Uncle's mind was working fast. "Get ready! I'm going to 'send' you to the rooftop.,,

Scarcely said when done. In a twinkling an alarmed-looking Lad of Light was standing on the wobbling roof and clinging with arms about the great metal chute that fitted closely over the chimney-top.

Worriedly he called down: "I can't budge it! I can't get to the chimney opening to talk down it. What'll we do? This pipe is articulated. I think it could be moved aside or up, but—" Here the boy gave a great heave and a groan. "—but I can't shift it... I need your help."

But how was Uncle Henry to get up to the roof? The collapsoladder the Wizard had thoughtfully loaded into the Red Wagon now reposed under Aunt Em's bed miles away.

"I've got an idea!" said the Lad of Light. In an instant he stood before the older man again. "Give me your hand!" he cried and, grabbing the same, "Concentrate!" he commanded without ceremony. There was a momentary mental struggle and then miraculously both males were standing on the trembling roof and struggling to preserve their footing.

"Hooray!" screamed Zip. "We've solved the problem! But more of that later. Let's see about twisting the spout aside so we can get at the chimney mouth."

Between them, man and boy, by dint of considerable effort, did at last succeed in bending upward the last three or four rings of the great aluminum-like articulated tube that depended in a big gentle loop from the silo side twenty yards away. As the rings moved aside and unblocked the chimney opening, the erratically repeated groaning noises reached their ears with magnified amplification. "Help!" was the first distinct word they were able to make out, and then: "Rescue, fair lords!—or else the day is lost."

The sighs and groans went on a while and then finally Uncle Henry was able to get a word in edgewise and slip it down the chimney. The word was "Hello!"

"Hello!" boomed a vast bass voice in reply—and then, some-

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where below, a mind had sense enough to let the voice fall silent.

“Who are you?” was Uncle’s next sally.

A faint pause, a sound like a sob, and then, “I am Edward, Prince of Wates...”

C H A P T E R N I N E

The story, when the two Ozites (Uncle Henry by adoption) had got it strung together consecutively from the disjointed remarks of the imprisoned Prince delivered under the amazingly unfavorable circumstances of an interview down a chimney, was this:

“I was born eldest son to King Munchalot and Queen Chewy on the island of Gumm in the Nonestic Ocean. You know the place? It’s quite famous, actually. Several persons of Gummian descent have become celebrated out in the great world. I believe one family of Gumms did a song and dance act. And there were others. But no matter. Life on Gumm was easy and peaceful. Though not immortal like you Ozites we in Wates live a long time. My father was healthy and there was no likelihood of my succeeding to the throne for many years. When I was in my teens he sent me out to make the grand tour and stretch my mind.

“With a suitable retinue of attendants I sailed one August day from the port of Meziere. We traveled for many months among the other island kingdoms and republics of the great ocean. I learned much and broadened myself considerably—and I had never been a *puny* child. All seemed delightful—and my company of retainers enjoyed our adventures as much as I did myself. But then one day—or rather, night—our happiness

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was at an end. A terrible storm struck—oh, very much worse than the one that passed over here the other day.

“Now we on Gumm—and particularly the folks in the Principality of Wates—tend to be a little well filled-out. We enjoy our food and there rarely seems to be any limit to how long we can go on enjoying it at a session. Aboard ship, deprived of the daily exercise we got at home, some of us had grown, to speak frankly, a little stout. That was our undoing.

“The good ship Inflatable was a worthy vessel but her cargo of souls had become with the passage of time unwieldy. When the tempest struck she could not cope with her excessive lading and, oh, alas, she foundered... I weep for my lost companions.

“As Prince I had been put into the only life jacket that was any longer big enough to fit. Thus I was carried away on the billows and drifted for many days, until at last I was cast up on a dessert island.

“You can imagine my state. Grandiose as was my capacity as a trencherman, I had been able to consume nothing—except a little inadvertent sea water—for longer than I cared to remember. When the waves washed me up on the sands I had no strength left even to raise myself up. I lay comatose on the beach—and might eventually have starved to death right there, unconscious, but for a singular circumstance.

“I had come to rest face down. I suppose the sand upon which my face reposed began to interfere with my breathing. In my stupor I must have thrashed about—and some of the sand got into my mouth.

“Presently I came to my senses. What was this? I felt refreshed—almost fit again. And there was a a sweet taste in my mouth. That was never the result of the salt sea. What could it be? I wet a finger and touched it to the beach sand. It was granulated sugar! All unconscious my system had received a life-renewing infusion of carbohydrates!

“Another mouthful or two of sand and I felt up to almost anything. I threw off my life jacket and began to explore the island.

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“It proved a veritable paradise—for someone with a sweet tooth like my own. I wandered for days in a sugarplum dream, discovering ever more marvels of culinary delight. From the pastrees of every known genus down to the basic rock candy fundament of the island, *everything* on it could be eaten—and all of it was sweet.

“Eventually I settled beside a lake of fruit soup, built myself a gingerbread cottage, and gave myself over to a rich and growing contentment.

There was nothing else to do but eat—nor, strangely, any competition in the fight for food. One might have expected at least bird life, but there was nothing. With the whole vast ocean about, full of savory snacks, I suppose the exclusively *sweet* substance of the island could not permanently attract a bird population. But at first, as far as I was concerned, there was but one sole drawback to life there: one felt always so dreadfully *sticky*.

“One day, however, as I sat beside a stagnant pond of charlotte russe among some mounds of coconut chocolate, too bored with eating even to stick a finger in the crumbly pool of pudding, it suddenly came to me that there was one thing worse than the stickiness. That was the loneliness.

“At first I tried to put the idea from me. I had found Paradise and was going to complain? But from a chance thought the thing grew to a conviction and all too soon to an obsession. I had to get away from the island! My parents, my people, must be frantic for word from the royal yacht, by now months unreported. Thus altruistic did I belatedly become. Besides, it was unworthy for a king-to-be to give himself over to mere gluttony. But what was I to do?

“I tried felling some sugar maples to build a raft. I even succeeded in lashing the timbers together with licorice straps. But when with great trepidation I launched the craft, and before I even had time to get aboard with my load of provisions, the whole thing dissolved before my eyes in the salt sea. Nor did a similar attempt with, for building materials, reeds from a candy-canebrake prove any more successful.

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“Naturally I tried signaling to attract the attention of the rare ships that passed far out at sea, but there was no way to make a fire, and, even as vast as I had grown with constant feeding, I must have appeared to them as no more than a motionless speck on the beach.

“Then at last I had a bit of luck. The weather on the island was abnormally constant and fair. There never seemed to fall more than a gentle lemonade rain, which made the toffee plants and cookie bushes flourish extravagantly. Once or twice I did see what looked like snow falling on the ice-cream cone of the central mountain peak, but when I toiled up to investigate it proved to be merely powdered sugar.

“But one morning I woke to find that there must have been another violent storm somewhere out at sea. All manner of flotsam was washing up on the beach—and along in the afternoon a vast tree bole floated to the shore. It was of a size and redness never seen around the coasts of the Nonestic Ocean. Could it have drifted all the way from California? Anyway it was ideal for my purposes. If ever I was to make an attempt to get out from behind candy bars, now was the time.

“I hesitated only over night. The next morning early I tied the old life-jacket around my neck—the only part of my body it would any longer fit, pushed the great log into the sea again, and waded in after it.

“My ordeal was not long. It turned out that the island of my captivity lay at no great distance from the mainland coast. Early the next morning I flutter-kicked the log ashore in the land of Ev. “I must move on in my account!—though my adventures would fill a book. People were kind in Ev, especially when they found out who I was—though there were hurdles before the goal was achieved of proving my identity. The most urgent problem, of course, was presented by the fact that my incessant feeding on my island had made me as big as a house. I had long since burst out of my clothes. That was no worry, in the mild island climate, all the while I suffered from loneliness. But now I was surrounded by people, very curious ones as well—in more

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ways than one—and my first ardent plea as I cowered in an altogether inadequate thicket was that they send for a circus tent for me to wear as a cocktail dress.

“Clothed, after a fashion, I traveled from court to court among those tiny kingdoms. I was aiming, indirectly and more or less, at getting home to Wates, but first there was the problem of my size to be solved. We like folks heavy, where I come from, but this was ridiculous. I could no longer even have entered my princely palace—at least, standing up. So now I sought the cure—but that was not so easy. Everybody said, ‘Just stop eating!’ but that was simply impossible. Cold turkey? Yes, thanks! and everything else there was in the fridge—until I had eaten my hosts’ larders to the shelf—at which point I would be shunted on, sometimes not even very politely, to the next royal court.

“Until I met the Red Jinn! He sized up the situation in a trice—and, at *my* dimensions, that was no light accomplishment. ‘You’ll need magic,’ he declared, ‘to deal with your case.’ By this date the only fully reliable magic workers to be found were across the great desert in Oz.

“It was the work of but moments for the Jinn to transport me, even at my size, across the strip of sandy wastes, to the northeast corner of Oz. From there I was to make my way further on my own. Jinnicky had given me precise directions about getting to the famous Emerald City, where I would find any number of licensed practitioners of magic arts.

“But my cares were not by any means near an end. Two problems arose with appalling rapidity: the first I noticed within minutes of my arrival: I was hungry! Now the Red Jinn had said that I would have no trouble in living off the land in Oz. Prepared-food plants flourished in all parts, he said. What he forgot to mention was that said plants, all the while I had been growing gigantic, had remained at their traditional size. Okay, so I found a thicket of beefsteak bushes right away—but each fruit was so awfully tiny in relation to my size!—and even when I had stripped the plantation I still felt ravenous. If I was going to have to stop and forage constantly I would never get to the

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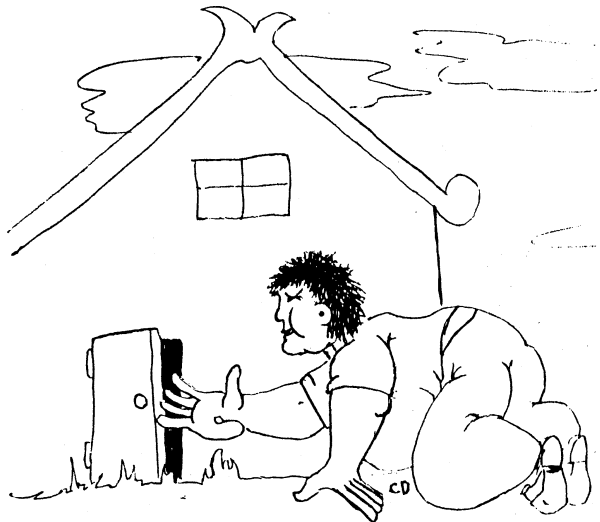
Emerald City.

. “The other problem was—still! but in other ways—my size. Not only did I find bearing my own huge weight exhausting—especially as time went on and I was using up more energy than I was able to replace—but I soon noticed that the yellow brick substance of the road itself was shattering under the unaccustomed stress. Heaven knows, also, how many thousands of tiny creatures were perishing in my way: beetles and worms and gnats, whom I had no possibility of avoiding treading upon.

“It soon became clear that I would never be able to make it to the capital. I enquired of dwellers in the area after the nearest known magic worker. They replied—rather shocked—that magic had *long* been outlawed in Oz but did confess at last that they knew of one who had *formerly* dealt in necromancy. I learned that his residence lay a few miles on, down a side lane, and I made my way there—that is, here.

“The wizard Wammuppirovocuck was most obliging! and flattered that I had made my way through such vicissitudes to seek him out. But it was quite true: since the royal decree forbidding dabbling in the occult sciences except by a certain few specified masters of the techniques, he had of course given up all use of magic.

“He told me a very sad tale. His young son had gone missing just around the time of the promulgation of the law prohibiting use of magic. Such a stickler was Wam for keeping within the law that, even in that emergency, he did not use his enchanter’s skills. In-



stead, he put a simple wayfarer's pack on his back and set off to walk the roads of Oz, just *looking*, as the veriest simple peasant might do, for his lost boy. He was gone for years—and never found the lad.

“Wam returned home sadly—and from then on devoted himself merely to experimental non-magical science: engineering, hydraulics, architecture. As a matter of fact, my arrival came as a boon to him. The problem of reducing my volume could be an intriguing professional challenge.

“I was already in bad shape and could have walked no further in any case. Sleeping out nights—no house and only the largest barns were big enough to contain me—had further drawn on my waning resources. My tent raiment was in tatters. And as always I was starving.

“Wammuppirovocuck took the project in hand. Within a week he had requisitioned materials and built the reinforced canvoplast structure you see about me here. In those days, of course, I could still get in by way of the door in the side. But soon I had to crouch. I couldn't stop eating! and Wam had not yet come up with any system, short of outright cruelly starving me, for making me cut down on my nutrient intake.

“Procuring my food supply was no great problem, though he had to employ a force of workers round the clock to bring in the shipments. But the fatal day was not long in dawning when I could no longer get out of the Royal Wing, as we call it. Wam hurriedly built on an addition and warned me to lie down before it was too late. He went into a huddle with his technicians and they ran up the fodder tank I've no doubt you've observed outside there.

“But not long after that poor Wammuppirovocuck lost his head. All his time and ingenuity were being absorbed in seeing to the requirements of my increasing bulk, when all the while a DEcrease in it was what was indicated. The day my feet broke through the retaining wall and filled up his own private living quarters the engineer panicked and fled.

“I had literally eaten him out of house and home.”

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C H A P T E R T E N

Here was double trouble. Or, in view of Prince Edward's size, one might well have been justified in calling it 'hundredfold trouble'.

Uncle Henry Gale and Zippiochoggolak made their way down from the roof-top and withdrew to confer at the Red Wagon in the shade of a walnut tree.

"What in tarnation do we do now, Zip?" Poor old Uncle was completely at a loss.

"Oh, that's easy," assured the boy with the confidence of youth. "Go look for my dad."

"That's what we *been* doin'," reminded the old man. "The question is how. The Prince can't give us any help; he's just added a problem. He hasn't got a clue where your father was heading for. Maybe Wummappi—er..."

"Oh, just say 'Wam'," assisted Wam's son. "Maybe Wam didn't know himself."

"I know," stated Zip.

"Well," said Uncle, amazed. "You're brighter than I even suspected! So where did he go?"

"To see Mom and tell her his troubles. He always did that."

"Zip, my dear fellow, you astonish me," said Uncle but then recollected that perhaps this wasn't all as marvelous as he at

first flush thought. After all, he and Zip had only been acquainted for

four days; he didn't know *all* about the Lad's history.

"Maybe you better tell me the whole story," suggested the older man. "I thought—anyway I got the impression—your mother had disappeared and no one knew where...

"Oh, no," said Zip matter-of-factly, sitting again with his back against a wheel of the wagon and peeling the husks from some last year's wind fall walnuts. "We knew. We just didn't like to think about it. Dad and I rarely mentioned it, but Mom went right back where she came from: to the amber castle of the Lords of Light, right down in the lightest brightest tightest corner of Oz, the southernmost point of the land of the Winkies."

"But how...?"

"Did Dad and Mom ever get acquainted? Yes, that's what might seem puzzling, I know, Dad being from up here in the exact opposite end of the country. Well, you see, he had been a traveling magic salesman. With the particular branch of magic he'd specialized in: petronecromancy—"

"What in the world's that?" blurted the unsophisticated Henry.

"The study and practice of magic in combination with gem stones," informed Zip expertly. "I used to hear about it at home. Dad knew all about which stones had magic properties and which properties went with which—and where to find them—and where to sell them—"

"Sell'?" said Henry, a little shocked at the obscenity, which was no doubt inadvertent on the part of the young boy.

"Well, deliver them to people who were interested in having them—in return for room and board. That's how he lived: traveling around the country finding and—'delivering'—magic jewels—and incidentally building up a nice collection of stones for his own use.

"One day he called at the amber castle. Nobody came as he crossed the drawbridge, so he strolled on in with his pack on his back and in a little while he came to a sunny courtyard and

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there he saw a vision.

"It was a beautiful maiden, all golden white, dressed in a sheath frock of ivory velour with pearl and nacre accessories, sitting at her spinning wheel. She was fletting sunbeams into thread and the bobbin was already fat and glowing away like mad. It was a splendid sight and naturally Dad fell in love with her right away. That was Lucinda, the Maid of Light."

"Your mother."

"Yes, but not right away. Mom was well used to people being bowled over by her brightness and beauty, so she was not about to fall in love instantly with a traveling salesman. She was no farmer's daughter, after all. So Dad had to get with his magic minerals and do a little hexing. He happened to have with him at the time a couple of emerald necklaces that were pretty good at granting most wishes.

"When they had showed him to a room in the servants' quarters he got busy. The necklaces were small affairs, the stones just chips, really, that Dad had picked up at a mine at Green Mountain—"

"Just lying about?" said Henry, surprised.

"Oh, yes. It was just slag. No use as building material. But of course it wasn't the stones' essential esmeraldry that Dad cared about. He was interested in their magic potential and that was pretty high, despite their size. He had got them strung at the first town he came to.

"By late afternoon Dad had completed his sorcery and he went to find Lucinda again. She was in her work-room now, busy weaving her sun thread into a noose of light... Omar Khayyam has a line about that commodity," mentioned the ever-surprising Lad of Light in an aside.

"The emeralds had made all the difference! Lucinda now looked at Wam with considerable interest and after all he was—*is*—a fascinating man, with his know-how, charisma, and charm—despite a gaunt hawk's head and practically no hair. Oh, had—*has*—some hair but he keeps it clipped close to the skull—and of course it's blue—with violet highlights—which

didn't perhaps appeal much to the very blond Lucinda, who preferred her own kind.

"Anyway, the upshot was that she agreed to steal away with him by moonlight. They left no forwarding address and Wam—Dad, that is—had been careful in his dealings with the Lords not to mention where he was from. To them he parted with a rather nice topaz-studded stomacher that had certain rudimentary properties for stopping time in its flight and even for making the earth revolve—for very short periods—in the opposite direction. They didn't realize until too late what they were parting with in exchange."

"Quite a romantic story," approved Uncle Henry, who was after all a bit of a romantic at heart. "Mmh," mused Zip. "And it went on so. For brief days they were happy, though so poor—"

"'Poor'?" said Henry, startled.

"Oh, they hadn't been able to pack even a ham sandwich in making their getaway, and they had no mounts, and their only clothes were the ones they stood up—or lay down—in. So they were not too well off for worldly belongings... Of course, they had plenty of jewelry.

"They made out on nuts and fruits they found growing along the way. To avoid pursuit they didn't give away their whereabouts or destination until they were well on toward the Emerald Country."

"Why didn't Wam wish himself home with the emeralds?" asked Henry logically.

"That was part of his psychological planning," explained Wam's son. "Dad thought if Lucinda was thrown enough alone with him while they took part in a romantic escapade it would make a less painful transition for her from the splendors of her brilliant existence at the amber castle to the very modest surroundings of his cottage, where she'd be having to do the dishes and mop the floor herself. As it worked out, maybe the transition wasn't long enough..."

"And yet, when he had problems he went back to her...?"

"Oh, they stayed friends! After all, Dad was as good to her

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as he could be. Mom just got bluer and bluer in this blue-violet country — and when a golden girl is blue she's green! So she went back to the Castle of Light."

Henry felt like he'd been cheated a little of the end of the romantic story of the elopement. "But what happened on their wedding trip? They didn't get caught?"

"Oh, no, Dad managed that all right. They hid out for a little at the Green Mountain — where Dad had picked up the emerald chips. The king there was one of Dad's customers. They had a laugh about the emeralds. King Vergrodius got quite enamored of the little necklaces, especially when he heard about their wonder-working qualities. It was only when they were leaving that Wam confessed he'd picked them up practically in the king's own back yard. He left them with the king to pay for their week's keep. Seemed Vergrodius wanted them to impress some girl he was after.

"Anyway, they got back here at last. Dad gave up his wanderings right away and concentrated on making a name for himself with his magic hydraulics and engineering. A year later I was born."

"A nice story," said Uncle. "A darn shame it ended — sadly."

"Yes," agreed Zip. "I wonder if we can do anything about it..."

"We'll add it to our list of projects," said the old man with a wistful smile.

C H A P T E R

E L E V E N

“Shall we sleep on it?” asked Uncle Henry. “I guess we better,” agreed Zippiochoggolak.

The two had spent all afternoon discussing their predicament. They had arrived at the cottage/pavilion with one problem: how to get help in bringing Emily Gale back to her—if not senses—at any rate her former state of mind and body. Now they had a whole agenda of things they were under a greater or lesser obligation to accomplish: to bring help to the Prince of Wates, to reduce his vast bulk and get him returned to his native isle; to find Zip’s father, the Wizard Wam; and even, if any way possible, to bring Wam and Zip’s home situation to a happy solution.

“You see,” reminded Henry, summing up, “your father’s decamping means he’s already thrown in the sponge as far as assisting the prince goes. Wam’s become just another problem for us, rather than a means to a solution. I think we’d do better seeking out the Good Witch of the North than looking for Wam. You say she doesn’t live all that far away—”

“No: just through the forest and over a mountain. I could do a few seconds in the old days. But just the same...” What the boy could not—or didn’t like—to put into words was that he was so enjoying his adventures with the companionable old man,

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Mr. Gale, that he scarcely cared for the idea of going to dump their challenges limply in the lap of a good-natured wonder-worker who would immediately solve everything by a shake of her witch's staff. After twelve years out of circulation a young fellow wanted to be back in the thick of things.

"Okay, we sleep on it," he repeated. And so that's what they did.

There was no room for them in the house. Prince Edward's knees filled the former bedrooms and his feet the laboratory. But by dint of some contortions and crawling Zip did manage to make his way under and over the royal limbs to pull a blanket off a wrecked bed and retreat with it through a window in the west wing. Under it he and Henry hunkered down for the night beneath the Red Wagon.

A blue moon arose and looked down amiably on the peaceful scene, whose silence was interrupted only occasionally by discontented groans, sighs, or snores from the captive prince.

Or was there one interruption more? You would have had to be fearfully keen-eared to hear it—or else extremely close to the source. As it happened, Zippiochoggolak's ear *was* very close to the source.

"Help!" screamed a teensy-weensy voice.

Nobody heard it. "Help!... help!..." the little voice squeaked—or croaked—on.

Then at last Zip did hear it. Or would it be more exact to say he felt it? For the noise was coming from something cold and damp inside the shell of his own ear, and it was the *feel* of the thing that had awakened the boy.

He pounded his hollow hand against his ear and shook out whatever it was.

Silence.

Zip figured it was something he'd dreamed. All he could hear now was Uncle's mild snuffles. He laid his head on the grass again and prepared to dream on.

"Help!" screamed a teensy-weensy voice.

Zip's eyes flew open and he listened intently.

"Help! ... help!" the little voice croaked.

"What is it?... Where are you?" whispered Zip—and the words echoed cavernously in comparison with the tiny decibels of the call for help.

"I'm here!" cried the voice. "Under a blade of grass where your cheek was lying!" So much blue moonlight was there that a tiny observer could make out cheeks and blades of grass.

"That's no good," said Zip, after a search. "Here! I'm going to lay my hand where my face was resting. See if you can get on it."

From the cool damp spot he could still feel in his ear Zip knew that the infinitesimal speaker was corporeal. The boy lay on one elbow patiently and presently he was rewarded—and amused—by being able to make out dimly a minute frog about one and a half centimeters long which made its way in feeble hops to the middle of his palm. There it stopped and bleated, "Help."

"Everybody needs help today," commented Zip wryly; "me too. But who are you? And what kind of help do you want?"

"I," croaked the tiny frog, "am the King of the Green Mountain."

If he expected to make an impression with this announcement, the frog succeeded. "Wow!" yipped Zip—and no longer in a whisper. "What a coincidence! I was talking about you only today—at least: I was telling about the King of the Green Mountain... But how...?!"

"Did I get in this shape?" asked the frog. "Well may you ask. This is the fruit of rashness. Or if one cared to analyze further, it could be said that this was the reward of true love." But at this point the little creature broke down in croaking sobs.

"Uncle! Uncle!" spoke Zip urgently and jerked the sleeve of the sleeping man next to him.

"Hey! What? Em..?" muttered the startled Henry—and then come to himself and realized where he was. "Zip? What's going on?"

"Listen to this!" said the excited boy. "I've just met the King

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of the Green Mountain!" Henry gazed round but saw nothing in the blue moonshine. "You didn't just dream you met him, boy?" speculated the old man. "I remember you mentioned somebody by that name lately."

"No, no, Uncle! Look down here! in my hand. There's a little tiny froggy. That's the king." Henry obediently looked—but without his glasses and an ear trumpet he could neither see nor hear anything out of the ordinary.

Zip was obliged to relay word to him. He explained the case, and then man and boy leaned on their elbows under the blanket under the wagon and heard—gradually—a heart-rending tale.

"I was Vergrodius the Fourth, King of the Green Mountain, scion of an ancient and honored line—if *not* perhaps the most handsome of families," began the frog between croaks and sobs. "Indeed, my people were not of any great size either, and at my birth my family were distressed that I seemed to be going to be the smallest of the entire race. Therefore they doubled their efforts in providing me with the finest and most genteel of up-bringsings. I must after all be a worthy successor to the long line of Green Mountain kings.

"One great and beautiful distinction we did possess. Our mountain, called Gruneberg, was—and I dare say still is—the most majestic mountain in all Oz. Though it is only one great spreading cone its total area from the foot-slopes upward is greater than that of many other kingdoms in Oz. We had every right to be proud and content.

"Until one day...!"

"I had just attained my majority when my grandfather, old King Vergrodius the Third, died, and I was to succeed. I was a lusty youth—though so small of stature and—some said—ill-favored. But the great eyes and receding chin were caste-marks of our dynasty; no more than the Guelph pop-eyes or the Habsburg jaw, among royal characteristics out in the great world, did we Grunebergers want to lose our distinguishing traits. And I was popular. At least, my hunting and drinking companions

affirmed there was no one they would rather go jousting or wenching with.

“Until one day...”

The green king realized by now he had his audience. Zip and Henry looked and listened raptly and the frog gradually relaxed in the place where Zip had positioned him; full in a blue moonbeam on horizontal spoke of the wagon wheel; he also ceased to hiccup.

“One day, hunting in the forest of Vervalde, and happening to become separated from my companions, I found myself beside a green forest mere—and near the opposite shore, bathing, I espied the loveliest creature in the world. It was a wood nymph, as I afterward learned. When I startled her, she ran from the water, shedding emerald drops, and hid herself in the greenery. Of course I followed her, but never a trace of her did I find. Only, an old woman in a forester’s hut not far off told me it must be Lorna, the local tree sprite. She was well known in the neighborhood.

“After that, every day for months I was in the wood and sometimes I glimpsed her but more often not. Then at last one winter day I entrapped her. I came to the pond to find it—a great rarity in Oz—frozen over.

“Wood nymphs like to be very dainty about their persons always. Lorna wanted her daily bath. But the poor thing! What was she to do? There she stood at the ice’s edge with knees drawn together one nether limb chafing the other, and seemed wholly perplexed, as cautiously I drew near.

“Well! when I offered her a hot tub at the palace she succumbed at once. I could see she wasn’t really so wild about *me*. But don’t you see?: I could do things for her and I wanted so much to be her true cavalier.

“So things went on for some time. I would see her occasionally and often there would be some little way in which I could be of service to her. People even began to say that the relationship, though distinctly irregular, was having a beneficial effect on me: for the first time I was thinking generously of someone

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other than myself, and such an advance in maturity in a ruler was all to the good.

“But, marriage: that was what I wanted. It was partly dynastic, I’ll admit: I thought of what beautiful children Lorna and I might have! But when I proposed it she was scornful. I had to admit my beloved sometimes showed unlovable traits of personality. But she was so pretty!

“Then one day my old friend and sometime drinking companion, the magic-peddler Wammuppirovocuck, turned up at the palace. He had his own girl friend in tow and how I did envy them: so happy in their elopement—though they hadn’t a bean. They did have a satchelful of jewels with them though and I was struck by a pair of fine emerald necklaces. I thought how splendid they would look on the shoulders of my beloved—or perhaps wound round her arms. Their brilliant gleam would just set off her fine-spun-green hair. So I had them of the merchant.

“I had need of my bodyguard of faithful yeomen now. They had orders to hunt out the forest nymph it at any cost. After a week came word that they had her surrounded at the vast old hollow oak which I now learned, at last, was her usual residence. I hurried to the scene, dismissed the men, and with trembling heart knocked at the door to her tree.

“After a moment an upper window flew open and Lorna leaned out. ‘Oh, it’s you, King,’ said she. ‘Half a tick. I’ll be right down.’

“Soon the door was opened wide and we were both inside.

“‘So this is where you live?’ I said. ‘Very tastefully appointed,’ I commented, noting the needlepoint pictures on the staircase wall and the antimacassars in the best sitting room. Lorna shoved some rather at-home-looking squirrels off the settee and asked me to sit down.

“Soon my business had been done. I showed her the magic emerald-chip necklaces: so dainty and fine in their olive-wood case, and Lorna was thrilled. ‘Are they for me?’ she cried, and I explained that they were—with a proviso. They were in fact my

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bride-gift to her. If she accepted them, it was understood that we were betrothed. Do you wonder my heart beat high?

"But at this the nymph looked grave. She *still* held back. Then I saw a calculating look come in her eyes.

'Tell me,' she said, 'how do they work?'

"At once I handed her the instruction booklet which explained just how one should go about accomplishing whatever wish one wished, by the use of the emeralds.

"'Done!' cried Lorna, now in fine fettle. 'I'll marry you.' How my emotions thrilled. 'And now may I have the jewels?'

"With a courtly bow and a tender kiss to her outstretched hand I delivered the case into the keeping of my adored one.

"Quick as a wink she turned me into an infinitesimally tiny green tree frog."



C H A P T E R T W E L V E

It was a fine morning and the Red Wagon was rattling along at a furious clip, yet no fierouser than that Henry Gale and Zippiochoggolak could discuss their plans. They were on their very fast way to the Land of Light.

'Sleeping on it' had been no easy thing, since they had sat up most of the night listening to the Green King's adventures. But after all by the time dawn came they had reached the decision they had hoped to reach by that morning. They were on their way to try by whatever means to find the necromancer Wammuppirovocuck.

King Vergrodius' story had been most tragic. As he vanished (so he related) to an almost invisible green point on Lorna's cretonne-covered settee he had seen the wood nymph stuff the emerald necklaces in her pocket with a cry of triumph. Then without a backward glance she left the apartment.

The frog king would have liked to do the same. In the first moments of shock he was only intent on getting away to a safe corner where he would not so likely be sat on and could think over his sudden awful predicament. He had at least, he found, the frog's traditional ability to make monstrous great leaps. In only four jumps he had arrived at the edge of the seat cushion. Then a mighty spring and he landed on the grey turkey-carpet.

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By mid-afternoon he had reached a corner of the room and there he lay low and went into delayed shock.

It must have been the next morning that he came to his senses to hear great screams rending the air in the otherwise silent tree house. He recognized Lorna's voice! but had no idea what occasioned her cries of apparent grief and outrage. Later he heard a door slam and then all was once more stillness.

By nightfall the transformed king had made his plans. Already he was growing in wisdom. After weeping all the first night over his pitiful comedown he was now resigned to it—or at least resigned to the fact that he would remain down-come unless he undertook to do something about it. But what to do? Make his slow and tortuous way back to his palace where no one would ever by any chance notice him or hear his laments—nor, as far as he knew, had any clue about undoing an enchantment?

The only possible—and hopelessly distant—chance, saw the king, lay in taking the road to the house of the necromancer who was ultimately responsible for his present sorry state. Vergrodius had had Wam's business card in his pocket at the moment of his enchantment and he remembered the address perfectly: Number 13 Legerdemain Lane, near the gallows tree on Blastead Heath at the Munchkin-Gillikin border.

He started out. In just two days he had made his way downstairs and out the door of Lorna's house-tree. At least in his present infinitely small shape there were certain advantages. No barrier was so secure but what he could pass it; the fact that Lorna had slammed the front door did not prevent the king's strolling underneath it and so out to freedom. Furthermore, nourishment was no problem: one drop of rain water did him for drink for a day, and the head of a wood-louse or a few gnats' wings would feed him to repletion. That he might be eaten himself seemed not to occur to him. He was after all a King.

But how long would he remain so? Having no word from the lost regent for many weeks, months, at last years, his subjects would long since have chosen another ruler. Vergrodius

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had named no heir. Who expected a twenty-year-old king to be vacating his chair any time soon? He supposed it was his elderly cousin Zhelenny who would take over.

Soon thoughts of his lost mountain kingdom grew attenuated in the mind of the king. That mind was more filled for a long time with bitter reflections upon his lost mistress. As he made his way by infinitely slow stages through the forest he often saw Lorna roving about in distress, her garments in disarray and prickly burrs caught in her palest-green tresses. She seemed to be looking for something but Vergrodius was never able to make out what it was. What should she need to seek in the barren woods? If there was anything she wanted she had emerald necklaces that would grant her every wish.

By the end of that year he had at last reached the edge of the forest. Afterwards, for many months, he traveled along the shores of Lake Quad, a rather large pond that abutted on the grounds of the Palace of Oz. He did not enter the pond and paddle directly across. That was because he was a tree frog and no expert swimmer. He felt more secure on land, where, after all, he had lived his whole life.

He had lived his whole life in a palace too, so he felt quite at home during the weeks it took him to journey past the great green mansion of the ruler of Oz. Sometimes in those days, early in the morning, he would notice a funny little (by human standards; vast, to Vergrodius) bald-headed man slip out of a side door and go for a constitutional up and down the paths of the park.

But after a time the palace turrets disappeared in the distance.

Many years later Vergrodius happened to be in a blue glade in a Munchkin forest when a curious scene was enacted before his eyes. It is not generally known that there were in fact five participants in a tableau that later became most celebrated in Oz annals.

The frog king had arrived at nightfall at a lump of corroded metal that lay in his path. By a couple of extraordinary leaps he

was able to get upon the crest of what to him was a sizeable tin hill. He remarked another massive flange of metal that seemed partly to encase the surface he stood on, and he hopped in under the ledge of it and there spent the night, disturbed only by occasional hollow reverberations that came from somewhere on high. He put these down to summer thunder. Bright and early the next morning, as the sun gleamed on certain unstained portions of his metal hostelry, Vergrodius was making his toilet, prior to departing, when he was surprised to see a young girl appear at the edge of the clearing. She was staring at the great metal construction that ran up into the sky from the tin pediment which had been Vergrodius' hotel. In a moment a most peculiar male figure joined the girl, together with a black dog, and they all stared at the great statue which seemed to represent (much foreshortened, to the frog king's eyes) a man.

"Did you groan?" asked the young girl.

"Yes," answered the tin man; "I did. I've been groaning for more than a year, and no one has ever heard me before or come to help me."

"What can I do for you?" she inquired, softly, for she seemed moved by the sad voice in which the man spoke.

"Get an oil-can and oil my joints," he answered. "They are rusted so badly that I cannot move them at all; if I am well oiled I shall soon be all right again. You will find an oil-can on a shelf in my cottage."

The girl at once ran to the cottage and found the oil-can, and then she returned and asked, anxiously, "Where are your joints?"

"Oil my neck, first," replied the Tin Woodman. So she oiled it, and as it was quite badly rusted the strange-looking straw man took hold of the tin head and moved it gently from side to side until it worked freely, and then the man could turn it himself.

"Now oil the joints in my arms," he said. And the girl oiled them and the straw man bent them carefully until they were quite free from rust and as good as new.

The Tin Woodman gave a sigh of satisfaction and lowered

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his axe, which he leaned against a tree. "This is a great comfort," he said. "I have been holding that axe in the air ever since I rusted, and I'm glad to be able to put it down at last. Now, if you will oil the joints of my legs, I shall be all right once more."

So they oiled his legs until he could move them freely; and he thanked them again and again for his release, for he seemed a very polite creature, and very grateful.

"I might have stood there always if you had not come along," he said; "so you have certainly saved my life. How did you happen to be here?"

"We are on our way to the Emerald City, to see the great Oz," the girl answered, "and we stopped at your cottage to pass the night."

"Why do you wish to see Oz?" he asked.

"I want him to send me back to Kansas; and the Scarecrow wants him to put a few brains into his head," she replied.

The Tin Woodman appeared to think deeply for a moment. Then he said: "Do you suppose Oz could give me a heart?"

"Why, I guess so," the girl answered; "it would be as easy as to give the Scarecrow brains." "True," the Tin Woodman returned. "So, if you will allow me to join your party, I will also go to the Emerald City and ask Oz to help me."

"Come along," said the Scarecrow, heartily; and the girl added that she would be pleased to have his company.

At this King Vergridius gave a mighty leap and managed, in one bound, to clear the great metal foot to which he had until now been clinging.

Great heavens! to be carried all the way back to the Emerald City which he with such toil and care had left many years before? That would be the most awful disaster.

So, gasping from the exertion and at the fright he had got, the frog watched the Tin Woodman shoulder his axe and the quartet pass away into the forest.

C H A P T E R T H I R T E E N

As the months passed Vergrodius thought often on the curious scene he had witnessed, nay, almost taken a part in. Sometimes he regretted that he had been so hasty in jumping off the Tin Woodman's foot. If only he'd had a moment to think, he might have hung on and been carried along to the wonder-working Oz, whom those people had expected to perform services for them no less comprehensive than what Vergrodius was in need of. He must say, he admired their courage. He himself on passing the Palace of Oz had never for a moment considered daring to consult the Great and Terrible.

In the end though, the frog king always consoled himself by two considerations for not having gone long on the expedition to Oz. In the first place, he could never have kept his place on the immense tin foot as it tramped the yellow brick road: he would simply have fallen off, late or soon, after he'd been carried miles in retreat from his own original goal. Secondly, how would he ever have (communicated with those people to let them know that he too had a great wish? He suspected that the alert-looking black dog (outlandish creature!) might eventually have sensed his presence, but then, it seemed, the dog did no more communicating with his companions than he, Vergrodius, would have been able to do.

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So the froglet hopped on, as the years sped past, along the road in its northeasterly direction. He felt that he was growing old and grey, all his splendid youth and strength being lost to him in this consuming effort at self-rescue, when he might have been lording it at Gruneberg and trying to be a just king to his subjects. He did not however, forget to invoke daily the Oz charm that allowed each person to remain at the age he was—or to grow older—as he wished. At least Vergrodius was going to *appear* young, even if he was not.

At last—as it must, unless the exile king suffer an accident—the day came when he arrived in Legerdemain Lane. What excitement! The poor froglet was swooning with anxiety to know whether the wizard Wam was still in residence and whether he could unravel the horrid spell his magic emeralds had worked so long ago.

When he saw the cottage that Wam had once described to him, he hardly recognized it. ‘Cottage’ it could scarcely be called—with that vast market-hall-like excrescence to the right. Nor was he reassured by the sighs and groans that came from the strangely pulsating building.

As the frog slowly hopped nearer he saw a red wagon draw up, drawn by an odd animal that looked for all the world like a living sawhorse. Vergrodius watched from under the cover of a nasturtium leaf as an old man and a boy, clearly as mystified as himself, investigated the peculiar edifice. He heard all that they said to each other—and then his heart broke.

Wammuppirovocuck was not at home after all! The first impulse of the tiny frog king was to commit suicide in utter despair. He did not realize that, in the meantime, such a course had become impossible in oz.

His long years of travail, however, had brought him a modicum of prudence. He had in years gone by already missed two opportunities for salvation: when he passed the Palace of Oz without calling, and when he abandoned the Tin Woodman and his party. He resolved that he would not lose this possible third and last chance.

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King Vergrodius girded up his loins and began hopping toward the red wagon. It took him all the rest of that day and far on into the night, but he did arrive at last in the young boy's ear.

The frog king's final spurt of self-assistance did the trick. The sleepers awoke and heard his tale. What the King of the Green Mountain had to reveal served to tip the motivation of the two adventurers in the direction of going to seek the lost and/or straying Wammuppirovocuck. The final stroke was delivered at dawn when Uncle Henry, rising bleary-eyed, said to the others: "I'm a silly old fool. Of course we'll go to Wam and the amber castle! instead of traveling to seek the Witch of the North. Though I didn't hear her name mentioned, she is undoubtedly among the delegates to PARPO!"

Therefore, they started out.

The wayfarers had one painful task to perform before campaigning on to southern Winkie-land. Unhappy as the experience would no doubt be, Henry Gale and young Zip felt it would be a dereliction of duty if they did not stop at the Dorothy's House National Monument to see what developments, if any, had occurred in the affairs of Aunt Em.

With a good deal of fear and trembling they halted the Red Wagon at the edge of the glade and looked toward the house. Nothing seemed very much changed. At least the horrid black smoke was no longer pouring from the chimney. Didn't the old place even look a bit less gloomy and grey than it had done before? The windows!: the one facing them was a blaze of scarlet color. As the old red wagon edged on a little to give them a view of the side of the cottage as well they saw that the window there too was all glorious with red.

Em's poppy plants!

"That soil Em dug up must be powerful stuff," said Henry in a low voice. (Even at this distance they were leery of speaking above a whisper for fear the unpredictable woman inside the house might hear them before they had their strategy planned.)

"Mm-hmm," agreed Zip gravely. He'd tangled with poppies

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like those to his cost and was made uneasy at the sight of the flowers. "I sure hope Mrs. Gale knows what she's doing, having those things in her house."

"Em sure *acts* like she knows what she's doing," said Henry ruefully. "She always *was* right, you know. Well, come on. Let's see if we can get a reasonable word out of her today."

In the event, they got two words—but two words only—and though they made perfect sense they had an infinitely dispiriting effect upon the two travelers. The words were "Keep off!"

They were uttered by Emily Gale as she suddenly appeared in the doorway armed with a shotgun. (Where had she conjured *that* from, in non-hunting peace-loving Oz?!)

The two males stopped in their tracks. There was no arguing with a rifle. Granted: it couldn't kill them—if she fired—and there was every likelihood she would draw the line at gunning down her spouse in cold blood. But just an accidental blast, flying wild, could cause wounds that would bleed and be very painful. Natural laws of cause and effect had not been completely done away with in Oz and if a speeding projectile entered a solid body, even a human one, it could still make an ugly hole.

When no immediate gunburst occurred Henry took courage to argue a little, but he hadn't completed one sentence when his wife vouchsafed them one additional word: "Git!"

Therefore, they got. Reluctantly but rather quickly the two climbed back into the wagon, turned the Sawhorse, and drove off. Their last look at the green-complexioned housewife revealed her standing with the shotgun through the crook of her left arm. The knuckles of her right fist turned in her eye—but not, surely, to brush away any tear of remorse?

"Dern!" said Henry. "I'd got me a bright idea, too, about what we could do to help if we'd just once got inside..."

"What was that, Uncle?" said Zip, already brightening a little now that they were out of sight of the poppy-gaudy windows.

"I know a little bit about those magic tools the Wizard gave me and I remember that among 'em was a pair of swellobellows. If one of us could have distracted Em's attention, the other one

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might 'a' nipped under the bed and got hold o' them and then maybe we could have got away with 'em."

"How could bellows help Aunt Em?"

"Oh, not Em! Sorry! I meant our little frog friend. We could have put him into the blow end of the bellows and pumped him up to a manageable size!"

Zip laughed delightedly at the idea. "He *is* awfully tiny, isn't he?.. First the Prince of Wates—and now this king I have to keep in my cap band so as not to lose him. Why can't we ever run across anybody of ordinary size to help?"

Henry too was amused at these conceits and glad to fall into talk that tended to dispel the gloom brought on by thinking about his wife. "It's kind of like the limerick, isn't it?" he pursued.

Zip was thoughtful for a second. "You mean the one about the young man from Devizes?" he hazarded.

"Say," said Henry, impressed again, as always, by the boy's range of knowledge, "you get around! Now how did you know that one?"

"Oh, I read all Dad's library... and he had a book of limericks. But which one are you thinking of?"

"Our royals put me in mind of it," said Uncle. "It goes like this;

"Chester Chappel, who lives in St. Paul,

Is obese and enormously tall,

While in Minneapolis

His brother, Sam Chappel, is

So small you can't see him at all."

They both enjoyed the silliness and as they rode on they tried to cap each other's quotes and quips. Then they came to the broad Munchkin River.

Since the time of Dorothy's first arrival in Oz the fearsome tigerish Kalidahs had of course been done away with. (One doesn't like to say 'killed'; no doubt they had been turned into useful and contented sunbeams.) At the same time the great ravine-like circular ditch that had demarcated the Kalidahs' territory had been filled in and so no longer presented an obstacle to travelers.

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It was otherwise with the big blue river. For the benefit of the few road-farers in Oz it seemed scarcely worthwhile to engineer a great bridge over the Munchkin. Instead, a ferryman stood always on duty on one bank of the stream—and if you arrived from the other side you rang the big iron bell for him.

When our three travelers in the Red Wagon drew up on the east bank the ferryman was on the west. Zip jumped down to pull the bell, but Uncle Henry stopped him.

“Let’s do it our way, Zip,” he proposed.

“You mean...?”

“Yes, I think we might well venture it. We managed so well in tandem at the cottage roof—and you do need the practice. It’ll be a first too: you haven’t tried with more than one other person along. What if we dared with horse and wagon and all...?”

“Wow,” said Zip and was distinctly of two minds. But *he* would not be the one to curtail an adventure. “Well, okay, you’re the boss. I *hope* I’ve got the poof for it.”

“If we took a running start at Sawks’ top speed, that ought to give us plenty of lift-off,” speculated Henry. “You want to try it?”

So they drew back a quarter of a mile, recoiling the better to launch themselves, and then raced at blinding speed straight toward the river’s edge. *Just* as they came to the bank Zip and Henry, hands joined and spare hands grasping hard the wagon seat, concentrated for all they were worth and willed the equipage to lift into the air and carry them across by sheer mental magic and moral stamina.

Up, up! they sailed, high over the blue expanse of water, their brains nearly breaking with the effort. For an instant it was indeed as if their hinds had wings!

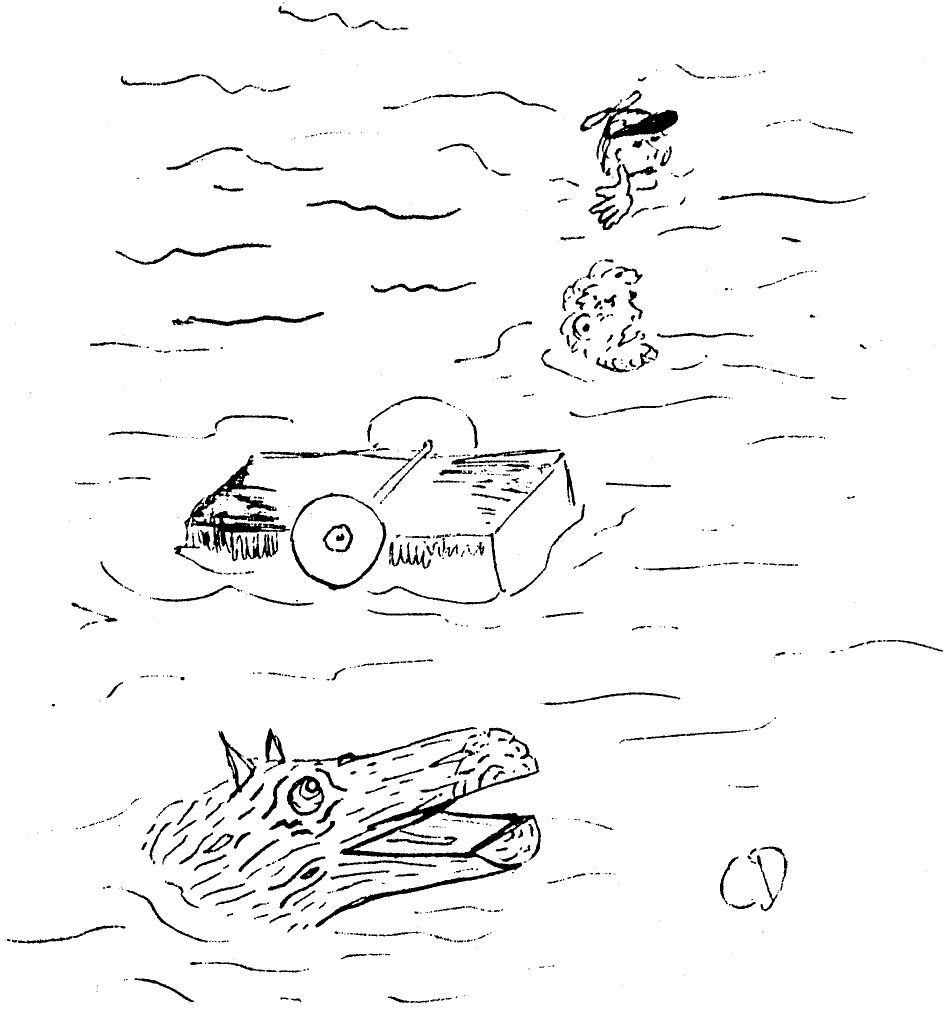
But then someone faltered; was it Henry? was it Zip? The strain was after all intense and one at least of the team of adventurers was only human. So down! like Phæton they fell, and, though they had no apples with them, they tumbled horse over applecart into the middle of the Munchkin River..!

What a splash. But soon they had all bobbed to the surface again, even one king included (safely still tucked inside Zip’s

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cap band, and the cap well down over the boy's ears). On with the deep blue river they rolled. It was quite refreshing. Only one thing: the Sawhorse and the Red Wagon were upside down, so it was no use requesting the intelligent horse to swim to the nearer shore. All that the others could do was hang onto the wheels—and hope for the best.

Henry saw the waterlogged blanket float past, trying its best to sink, and he made a lunge for it and secured it. The travelers might now be just as well pleased they had not had the back of the wagon loaded with magic gear, for by now they would not



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have had, anyway. And yet: if they had had any magic with them (other than that one intangible magic aptitude that had landed—well, ‘watered’—them in this predicament), they might not have come to such a pass.

Clinging to the wheel spokes the two took counsel.

“Would it be any good trying, again, to ‘project’ ourselves out of this, Uncle?” asked Zippiochoggolak.

“If we didn’t do better than we did from dry land, I can’t think we’d bring off much from a water take-off,” replied the older man doubtfully.

“Well, I’ll just give a try—on my own,” volunteered Zip. His brow furrowed, he let go of the wheel ... and rose—onto the top of the bottom of the wagon!

His talent must have been water-logged. That was as far as he got. Anyway he was now sitting down and rather more voyaging than drowning, and that was an improvement. He gave a hand to Uncle Henry and in a moment the farmer had struggled up to a position beside him.

And there they sat.

C H A P T E R F O U R T E E N

It was twilight and the sky was lavender, deepening to purple in the east. From somewhere in

the gloaming faint strains of sad music came stealing. Presently they awakened young Zip who had fallen into a half doze against the arm of Uncle Henry.

“Listen, Uncle,” he said.

“Yep,” confirmed the farmer. “I been hearin’ that for a spell now. Wonder where it comes from.” Zip looked out to sea—to river, rather—and observed that their wagon boat was no longer floating rapidly along in midstream. They seemed to have drifted into an eddy but an evening mist had risen from the surface of the stream and now obscured both banks, so he had no way of knowing how close they might be to either. The boy shivered. The air was just tantalizingly cool but in their wet clothes the two voyagers felt distinctly chilly.

Suddenly something green (blue-green actually, since this was still well within the borders of Munchkin territory) stuck up out of the lapping waters. A sort of reed leaf! Then there were more, and then cat-tails, and then tall stalks that almost looked like sugar cane—not that they had ever seen sugar cane growing—*or* water bamboos, which is in fact what these were.

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Uncle Henry had noticed them as soon as Zip and he said, "Grab a-hold, lad. We must be near shore. We ought to be able to pull our way along hauling on these reeds."

Now for a bit it was turn-about and the arms of man and boy were the motive power for propelling the Red Wagon and Sawhorse. That was fair play. But it was also a severe struggle and they made but inchy progress. Many plants were torn loose from their moorings in the unequal contest, but at last the whole water-logged and unrivervorthy craft came in among ever thicklier-bristling reed beds and the sideboards of the wagon scraped soggy bottom.

The travelers still had several yards to wade before they stepped on firm blue land and even then "I don't see how we're going to get the wagon righted, standing waist deep," worried Henry.

"Never mind that now, Uncle," answered Zip. "Let's go for a trot along the bank. We're sure to run into somebody who can lend us a team to haul 'em out. — It might warm us up a bit too."

But a trot along the bank it was not to be. They had gone but a dozen paces when a gate loomed up out of the fog. It was a wrought-iron waist-high gate and it sagged open on its hinges where it hung between two high, if ruinous, lengths of wall. If there was to be a trot it clearly must be through the gate—and inland.

They stepped within the wall and at once Zip noticed a broken signpost lying half concealed in a bank of brambles. He pulled it free, turned it round, and, on what remained of the board, he and Uncle were able to make out the word "... CITY."

"Hmm," mused Henry. "That tells what but not which. I don't think it could be the Sapphire City. That's in a different part of the country altogether."

Zip let fall the board and they passed on. It could scarcely be said that the place much resembled a city. In the still-lingering mist all they could make out was the trees and shrubbery of what appeared to be a great gone-wild garden. They wandered through broken arbors and past uncared-for faint-scented herb

borders. Once they thought they heard whispering: just out of sight behind a flowering hedge; but as they hurried near and called out there was no answer but a faint trill of laughter from two voices—and then silence. There was no one to be seen.

They came presently to another gate which gave on an expanse of water—but it was not the river. This was clearly a partly artificial lagoon: the faintly silvery water lay motionless and the shore line was a mortared stone retaining wall that ran off straight on both sides. Too, the fog from the river penetrated less completely here. They could make out ancient stone and brick walls across the water.

How to get across? For, otherwise there was no way to go but back.

Moored at a tumbledown jetty were a number of small gondolas. Then they noticed a sagging finger-post that said "EMBARK".

The two, man and boy, looked at each other, shrugged, and embarked.

Strangely, the gondolas had no poles, but as they took seats on the thwarts their black boat moved off of itself, out upon the lagoon, and somewhere a concertina seemed to be playing a barcarolle.

As they glided over the water other gondolas were seen to slide soundlessly along in other parts. Eagerly Henry and Zip looked for passengers in the boats whom they might hail to ask where they were. But though they caught glimpses of white hands trailing in the dark water or an occasional black eye-mask or enveloping cape there seemed to be no substantial *people* there: certainly none who approached near enough to speak to.

They drew near the quay on the farther side and the pair expected their barque to pull up to anchorage, but to their surprise it continued on, entering now a canal that debouched on the lagoon. They glided among old picturesque buildings: brownish yellow or terra cotta, for the most part; crumbling plaster, rusty ironwork, green-black water lapping at worn stone steps. Here, at last, they would see inhabitants of the

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city, they felt sure.

By now the fog had dissipated completely but the resultant visibility did not increase the numbers of anything living to be seen. "It's like a ghost city, isn't it?" whispered Zip in awe.

Yet all the while, faintly, far away, they could hear mandolins playing. Once, as they passed an open portway giving on a tiny square, an odor of verbena came to them. A perfume shop? or a very thriving garden? Some lady's boudoir? Another time a muffled sound of sobbing reached their ears—or a clash of dueling swords—or a drinking song. But never were there any performers of these actions to be seen.

They passed under stairway bridges, past ancient palaces, and once beneath a passage built out over the narrow canal from one house to another. As they stared, a handkerchief floated down from the small window in the bridge house and sank in night-darkening water.

For some little time candleshine had begun to be seen here and there. Tempting odors of exotic dishes were wafted to their nostrils. Suddenly they realized with a pang how vastly hungry they were. But if any of the lighted doorways were those of restaurants they were not to know. The magic gondola glided on.

Once or twice it did seem the boat was drawing near to a landing stage. There would be a pause but just as the two passengers were about to stand and be ready to step ashore it would slip silently on again. Now faintly in the far distance, as night came on apace, they heard cannon fire. Were they getting near the scene of some battle?—or was the battle line moving toward them? Skirling martial music came to their ears: of trumpets and cornets, of bagpipes!/? Deep-bellowed war commands. The scream of horses: so shocking though so far away. And now the night-dark was lightened again but by the unholy glow of vast fires. A whole section of the city must be in flames! Yet they SAW no fire; only its lurid reflex.

Now people at last! The boat was gliding out across a wider waterway when, just opposite to them, the doors of a great palace were thrown open and people in ball dress streamed out:

harlequins and farthingaled ladies, gentlemen in black knee breeches and cocked hats, grisettes with dark cheek patches and low-cut bodices. All were grotesquely masked, but the masks did not conceal the air of desperation that seemed to drive the crowd on. Quickly it dispersed, the haunted revelers hurrying away down dark passages and alleyways.

The gondola moved unhurryingly on, now once more past garden gates, beyond which they had glimpses of distant red-reflecting domes and towers. The waterway widened ever further and now they were to pass under the windows of a last tall garden house. Light shone from a single balconied window — where a lady was leaning out! Even in the near dark they could see that she was a southern beauty and she wore a ball gown, a tall mantilla comb — and behind her ear was a single blood-red rose.

Her they would be able to speak to! As the boat drew close under the balcony both men called out... But only this: silently, with a mysterious smile of Mona Lisa, the lady lowered her gaze to them and even as silently her hands were lifted to her head, she freed the rose, and as the gondola drifted smoothly on below she let it fall.

Slowly the flower fluttered down. The voyagers had a feeling it might be only a rose they dreamt. Certainly it wafted and drifted as if it were made of tissue paper. Yet when the flower fell into Zip's outstretched hands it seemed a real and fleshy rose enough. He stuck it in his cap band.

When they looked aloft again the lady was gone. They caught just a glance of the French doors closing: the last long vertical strip of candle-light; and they heard a few notes, broken off, of a spinet playing in a room far away.

It seemed very dark afterwards.

The boat passed on over lapping water. Now it was too dark to see anything, but presently they *heard* — a wooden sound of horse's neighing!

The gondola bumped against a sagging wooden dock and it seemed that now the voyage really was at an end. Zip and Uncle

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Henry clambered up on the jetty, and looked back to see—darkness. The water, the distant city, even their gondola, had disappeared; nor did they hear anything but a single wistful chord plucked from a distant harp.

In the other direction a vague but familiarish shape loomed. Again there was the glad neighing of a wooden horse. It was the Sawhorse and the Red Wagon: right side up, in their right minds, and ready to roll. In the back of the wagon they even found the blanket, neat, folded, and—dry.

Just as they stepped aboard Zippiochoggolak noticed at the end of the dock, half obscured by a tree, an iron lamp post which supported a bracket and from the bracket hung a weathered board with burnt-in lettering. This time it was quite legible. It said: “ROMANTICITY”.

C H A P T E R

F I F T E E N

Their accident at the river had brought the adventurers away from the yellow brick road. They now found themselves on a liver-colored road that led into the Quadling Country. This they realized clearly when they next morning woke in their blanket under the wagon and saw all red about them.

"We're getting on," said Henry cheerfully as they breakfasted from a fried-banana palm and a scrambled-egg-plant. "We should get there today."

"Yes," agreed Zip. "If I know my geography though, we want to bear to the right. No use getting lost in the middle of Quadlingland. By rights we ought to be aiming at the Quadling-Winkie border."

"You're the boss," acquiesced the old farmer amiably and let Zip take the reins as they started out.

The Lad of Light was as good as his intention—with the result that about noon they came to a green country instead of a yellow one.

"Lordee!" said Henry old-fashionedly. "We must 'a' overshoot. I *thought* we were getting a mite northerly. I hadn't rightly figured any longer to see the Emerald Country, leastways not this trip—but now that we're here is it any good stopping at the capital?"

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“Oh, I don’t see why,” said Zip, who still had that fear that somebody might wave a wand and solve all their problems, thus putting a stop to their adventures. For the Lad of Light the great thing was to do things for *oneself*, not always duck off to a court of higher instance to let a father—or mother—figure do all the problem-resolving.

“Anyway, look there!” Zippiochoggolak went on, pointing with the (furled) whip. Sharp in the distant west rose a broad and perfect cone, the loveliest mountain in the world, or, rather, out of it. “That must be Gruneberg!” he cried.

That was it; not much doubt about it. What excitement reigned in Zip’s cap band as the tiniest frog in the world, peeping out, saw the biggest mountain in Oz. For the first time in twenty-three years King Vergrodius was seeing his native land. It was half his life away since he had left it.

But, oh! alack and alas, he could never dream of showing himself in his present and always unregenerated form. How his successor—and his subjects—would roar with laughter when a tiny amphibian you could just *about* see announced that he planned once more to rule over them.

“No!” he shrieked—and kept on shrieking until some time later, when the rattle of the wagon wheels stopped and Uncle Henry and Zip alighted to take their lunch. Only then did Zip have the possibility of hearing the wee cries coming from his cap.

“What is it?” asked the boy in consternation.

“Please!” The froglet folded his forefeet in supplication—not that Zip would have been able to see the gesture without a magnifying glass. “Please! No matter what happens—or whom you may meet—on the Green Mountain, promise me you will not reveal my presence.”

Zip chewed his lip. “Well, okay, if that’s the way you want it.” And he told Uncle of what had been agreed.

With the promise gained it seemed as if the frog king would relax and enjoy his homecoming. After lunch they crossed the border of Gruneberg and rode along green lanes beside fair

meadows where green cows ate the green grass. Then they came to foothills and passed into a green forest. The road had lost its liver color, of course; it was now a dark tile green.

They could no doubt have traveled faster but the newcomers' curiosity about the Green Mountain had been greatly aroused and they wanted to see it. It was evening by the time they drew near the environs of Yeshilstad, the capital. First they had to traverse a last outreach of the wide-spreading Vervald and in its steep-sloping junglous depths they lost their way.

Another hour was spent in fruitless searching to refind their road before they stumbled across a humble forester's cottage where they thought they might ask the way.

A worn-looking woman with chestnut hair came to the door. "Yeshilstad? Yes, it's that way—" and she pointed off northwest toward a higher and even thicker part of the forest.

"But you must be tired—or anyway bored—with your journey in this endless forest," she went on. "I know I got bored enough with it in my time! Come in—and have a cup of nettle tea. It'll set you up so you can press on."

The travelers were pleased at such attention and did not say no. A little homely comfort would be delightful after their rugged nights out on the road. They hitched the Sawhorse to a hornbeam and followed the woman into the cottage.

"I didn't always live here," explained the hazel-eyed woman somewhat unmotivatedly, "but when the old body who had the place moved on I took it over. I'd got fed up living in that tree, where all my distresses began—"

"Distresses'?" repeated Henry, sipping at his cup and sensing a story.

"Yes," admitted their hostess. "I'd been a no-good, let's face it. I was a wood nymph in those days. Now I've been demoted to tree sprite, second class. I couldn't bear to go on living in

that tree. It had all mod cons, but it was there I pulled the biggest boo-boo of my life. Can you imagine?: the king of this idiotic country was in love with me! But fool that I was, all I could

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see was he had eyes like a tromped-on toad-frog and no chin to speak of. I never tried to find out what kind of a person he was inside. He may have been kind and honorable—he probably was—how was I to know? I just thought he was ugly, and so I turned him into the frog he looked like.

“I’ve had plenty of time since then to repent of my hastiness. My ‘frog’ king had given me some wishing emeralds, you see, and I figured I really had it made. Now I could get all my heart desired—so what need had I any longer of a toadish suitor?”

“Woe is me! Pride goes before a fall. I dropped the magic necklaces on a night table and lay down for a kip. When I woke up they were gone... Who knows?! I never found out who took them—though I suspect some squirrels I used to put up with in that tree I lived in. The skunks! I soon showed them the door—though in fact I never got any proof it was them who’d made off with the emeralds.

“After that I wasted a lot of years wandering through the forest, looking for my lost talismans. I never found them, of course. If I’d had the slightest brain I’d have put those squirrels to the third-degree; they were the only ones who’d had the entrée to my boudoir. Instead, I eventually ate them.”

Her audience was rather shocked. After all, in Oz they had that odd rule that you didn’t eat anybody after you’d once got acquainted with and made a friend of him. By then he was ‘people’ and not just another edible commodity.

That was just one of the bad habits the wood nymph had developed: taking a fancy for eating fried squirrels, a delicacy. By the way, that is the traditional fate of dogs in the manger: those who spoil the satisfaction of others without even doing themselves any good thereby. They often get fried—or roasted.

Now, to follow up their nettle tea, she offered her guests gin—and again they were shocked. “Gin?” said Henry Gale. “Dear me, madam. I didn’t know anyone drank in Oz. Where do you get it from?” he asked, intrigued.

“Oh, I don’t get it straight,” admitted the dyed-haired hostess. “There are so few gin mills in

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Oz. But there's no law against the purveying of ginger. I just lay in a supply of that. I chop it in half and just use the front part. Simple."

Still, the gentlemen declined to join the lady in imbibing. After all, a large readership had their eyes pinned on the doings of Uncle Henry Gale; he had to watch his step. To cover his discomfort he began talking about his and Zip's quest.

"You're looking for a necromancer?" said the wood nymph. "Is he any good? I wonder if he could help me."

"Of course he's good!" declared Zip stoutly. "He's my dad... Why? What do you want? Your emeralds back?"

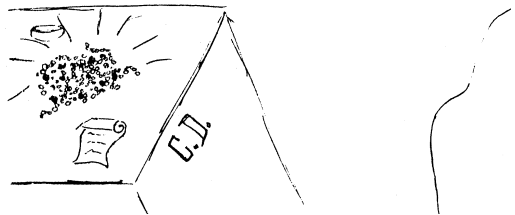
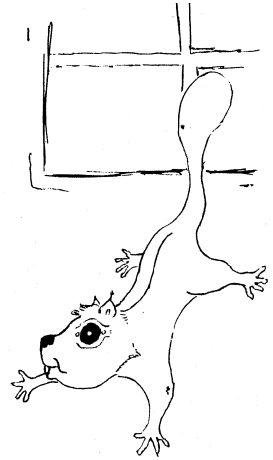
"No! To hell with them. I'd like to find my suitor again—and apologize. I was a criminal idiot."

"Well, gosh," said Uncle Henry, who was always prepared to let a repentant sinner start over, "what about it, Zip? There's plenty of room in the wagon. It won't matter to Mr. Wammuppirovocuck, will it?: to work one more wonder? if he feels up to working any at all..."

Zip had his own (romantic) reasons for falling in whole-heartedly with the proposal. Thus, kissing the unwashed dishes goodbye but carrying her gin bottle with her, the wood nymph Lorna joined the travelers in their journey to seek Wam, the Weird and Wonderful.

At a rustic inn on the outskirts of the mountain city of Yeshilstad, where they spent the night,

Zip had a chance to speak to King Vergrodius again. The king was ecstatic. "Isn't she lovely!?" he thrilled, and his great (though infinitesimal) eyes were starry.



C H A P T E R

S I X T E E N

They'd never seen anything so yellow.

There was the amber castle standing on its crag, the whole thing sticking up like a pencil of light against the meridian. It caught the shine of noon and since there wasn't a cloud in the sky the effect was blinding.

"That's where the Lords of Light hang out, you say?" asked Lorna interestedly. "What are they noted for?"

"Nothing much—so far," admitted Zippiochoggolak, the Lad of Light. "But their time is coming. They have great powers—which of course they only use for good. But those powers have to do with everyday miracles like the sun shining on the earth and the earth going round on its axis, so we don't much notice their wizardry and take it for granted.

"Also, of course, they're my family," reminded the Lad, and that comment was self-explanatory. The travelers had all recognized the site immediately and this was both surprising and not. Not: for the unique scene had been so often described by his mother to one of the adventurers and by him recently to the others. Indeed, what other castle in Oz, or elsewhere, stood on a shimmering pinnacle of golden sandstone jutting out over a Deadly Desert or gleamed from bottom to top with golden light? And yet, perhaps it was a *little* surprising that they should know

it, for not one of them had ever been there before.

The sandy way led upward fairly dizzily. When they came to the golden drawbridge they felt, perhaps, a little let-down. One expected a fanfare or gleaming-armored knights drawn up in order or at least a fierce gate-guardian demanding to know their business. There was nothing like that. The drawbridge was down and they could walk right across, while looking deep down to where heat shimmers rose from the molten gold that filled the moat.

"Mom used to talk about the Golden Moat," recalled Zip, pretending casualness about what filled the others with awe. "If ever there should be need, she said, the bridge goes up. Then it's quite impossible for anything animal, vegetable, or mineral to cross to the castle without getting gilded for its pains."

"Lawks," said the tree sprite, second class. "All that gold and a person can't get at it." The others looked at her in surprise. "What would anyone want to get at it for?" they inquired, really wondering.

"Well, it's gold, isn't it?" said Lorna, equally puzzled. "Everybody wants gold, don't they?"

"I wouldn't think so," said Zip, "—unless you're a sculptor and need it for doing statues."

"Or a dentist," said the prosaic Uncle Henry.

"It's not as pretty as silver," said Zip and stroked the lapel of his silver silk suit.

"I reckon if gold wasn't so rare," opined Henry Gale, "—most places, that is— we'd think it looked pretty vulgar and tawdry. Bronze, for example, has a much nobler look."

Lorna just stared at them and scratched her head. By now the wagon was over the bridge and within the great castle court. The place seemed to be as deserted as when the necromancer Wam had first wandered in there so many years before.

"Yes," reassured Zip, "Mom said they didn't need a lot of servants. Everything ticked over by itself. The lords spent all *their* time up in the towers doing their astronomical calculations. I suppose that's where they are now."

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“What about the ladies?” asked the ex-wood nymph.

“Oh, they stay pretty much in the frauenzimmer, spinning sunbeams and keeping the place clear of stardust. Let’s go there first—if we can find it. That’s where my Mom is sure to be.”

They still had not encountered any person by the time they came to a broad doorway where a heavy gold curtain was looped back with a golden rope. This seemed pretty clearly to be the seraglio but aside from an abandoned mandolin and the pinktipped butts of some Fatimas in a wide shallow dish there was no sign of the ladies’ having been there.

The Lad of Light was getting worried. “Come on,” he took charge. “This is getting to be not a joke. Mom always said everything ran by itself here, on solar energy, but she never mentioned that *nobody* lived here. Let’s go up in the tower...”

The castle, for all its great size, was rather simply laid out and the adventurers had no trouble in locating the three stairways that started from the central court and ran up into the three towers. They chose the gold stairway as being the most likely and quickly climbed up the fourteen turns to the top. There a softly glowing ivory door locked against them, and no amount of knocking calling brought anyone to open it. They could hear a soft mechanical humming from beyond the door but that was all.

“Dad’s not here!—OR the Lords,” announced Zip finally, when they had tried all three staircases in vain. He looked rather scared. “Nor Mom, of course... What do we do now?”

The disappointment of all was intense. They had supposed the solution to their problems was close at hand. In this place of potent magic how could they go unrequited? Yet now, those problems far from being resolved here and now, they wondered if they would ever be.

The adventurers had given no thought to what a next step might be. At last Henry Gale put forward the obvious proposal. “I reckon we just got to go get Ozma and them’s help after all,” he said, and pulled his beard. “Seems too bad. We were doing so well, sort of, on our own.”

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“Yeah.” Zip kicked the wall. “Well, it gives us another day or two’s travel and that’s neat... But I was so sure Dad was going to cure all our troubles, sort of privately, as you might say. Now he’s just one more problem we’ve got to solve: where he is. And Mom.”

“You’ve got one more mystery on top of that, seems to me,” said Lorna and took a quick swig from her bottle. “The secret of the deserted castle[§].”

§ See Alexander Volkov: *The Secret of the Deserted Castle*—although, of course, that was a different castle. Editor’s note.

C H A P T E R S E V E N T E E N

Since the wayfarers had the run of the castle they could at any rate make free with it for a night's lodging before setting out on the final run to Winkiezia. Lorna snuggled down under soft Persian rugs in the seraglio while Henry and Zip got comfortable in another, more masculinely appointed bedroom.

The males had a little bull-session before they went to sleep. King Vergrodius, of course, was on about how superb his Lorna was. Uncle Henry and Zip just looked at each other. They hadn't the heart or the least wish to spoil the frog king's dream but they could not fail to wonder how he could be so blind to the fact that what might indeed once have been a lovely wood nymph was now a haggard and distinctly plus-fortyish-looking lush, whose henna'd hair was going green at the roots.

"Well, my friend," countered Henry, just to be saying something, "why don't you reveal yourself to her now? You've heard that her only wish is to beg your forgiveness for the nasty trick she played you."

"Are you mad!?" cried the kinglet. "Oh, forgive my bluntness! dear Mr. Gale. But really: how could I let my darling see me before I am restored to at least the shape she knew? I long for her acceptance still; at least: I long for it *again*—for I must confess that through these long years of my enchantment my

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thoughts of her were bitter ones only. And yet ... when I saw her again... Well, it passeth all understanding, but she appeared to me as lovely as she ever was in her prime—though I see that she drinks and smokes and who knows what besides...?”

As he got ready for bed Zip said: “Gee, this rose is just as fresh as ever! It’s been two days now. I’d better put it in water. I want to keep it as a souvenir of our adventures.”

“Yes, you do that,” encouraged Uncle Henry, lying with hands folded behind his head. “Two days for a rose out of water is pretty good...” Then as he mused on, suddenly, “What day is this?!” he squawked.

“Why, um, gee, I don’t know,” said Zip.

“It’s April seventh,” said the king in the cap band, though how he knew is anybody’s guess. “Ooh, lord!” moaned Henry Gale. “It’s our wedding anniversary! Poor Em. She had so many bright ideas about celebrating that day with me—and here I am at the uttermost other end of Oz and she under some awful spell that I can’t even begin to guess what is.” The poor fellow seemed quite stricken at the return of the gloomy thoughts.

Zip wanted to be consolatory but as a matter of fact all he could think of to say was something explanatory. “Gosh, Uncle,” he demurred, “you couldn’t be in much doubt about that, could you? You do see, don’t you?, that Aunt’s digging around in that dirt under the old house must have brought her in direct contact with the remains of that old deceased witch. Then, since nothing ever dies in Oz—though it might be ‘destroyed’, in other words change its form completely—it’s clear, I think, that the life force of that old witch has gone into Mrs. Gale.”

“Thanks, Zip,” said Henry. Was he being ironical? But the gentle old fellow was not given to irony. Perhaps Uncle was thanking him because the boy had at last peeled from his eyes any illusions about what had gone, and was going, on. Now it would be easier for him. For it *is* easier—indeed, it’s the only way—to deal with a problem: when you accept all the firm facts of a situation.

The three men were just drifting off when the most terrible

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scream rang through the castle halls. They sat up and stared at each other in consternation!?" "Where did it come from!?" cried Henry.

"The cellars, I think," called Zip, already out the door.

The walls of all the rooms and corridors in the amber castle glowed always with inner light, so there was no difficulty in seeing, no matter the time of day. As they raced along, two more shrieks followed the first in quick succession. Then there was a gruesome silence; but those two dreadful cries had been enough to orient the searchers. In the basement they ran southeast along an echoing vaulted passage and came to an arched opening in the castle wall. The bricked pavement ahead sloped down a little and beyond the low aperture they could see something gleaming dully gold.

"The moat," breathed Zip in horror.

Yes, more's the pity. Lorna, the tree sprite, hadn't been able to withstand her delight in pretty things. In the gloom of night she had crept down along castle corridors and stairways until she came to a place where she could see close up the still-standing molten gold. Against the outer dark the heat shimmers didn't show and all she saw was the fascinating luminous golden glow. It really would be lovely to bathe! in such radiance, she thought, in her drunken stupor (she had finished the last of her gin that evening).

Cautiously she leaned down and stuck a fingertip in.

Then her dreadful scream rang out. It was like touching liquid fire. The shock caused the woman to lose her precarious balance and in she fell, having just time to utter two more Edward-II-like shrieks before the swirling gold closed over her head.

When her friends arrived she was nowhere to be seen. However, the relative lightness of flesh caused her body to lift slowly to the surface of the much heavier, though liquid, gold. When the men saw it surface Zip ran to the castle kitchens and found a clothes pole and returned.

Now for a bit it was touch and go. The gold congealing about

the pole end made it so heavy that the two males could scarcely support it. The drifting golden clump was just out of reach. They kept stirring and the slight eddies made the body slowly drift within range and then they could pole it close under the castle wall.

Of lifting up the gold-cased figure the few yards to the sill of the run-off port where the men knelt there was no question. "Go get the Sawhorse!" commanded Henry Gale. "No, I'll go. Zip, see if you can find rope in that kitchen of yours."

"I already know where there is some," returned the boy urgently. "The clothes line!" Off they hurried to their respective tasks.

Things went according to the impromptu plan. Within three quarters of an hour they had the golden statue of a wild-looking wood nymph lying awkwardly on one gold elbow and one gold toe in the back of the Red Wagon. The figure was still yellow-hot and apt to run.

There could be no question of attempting to sleep any more that night. "Let's take it and get!" said Uncle to the faithful Sawhorse. The equipage dashed out of the court, over the drawbridge, and down the winding sand-strewn trail to leveler ground. As they looked back, the amber castle glowed translucently in the moon-dark night and kept its secret.

C H A P T E R E I G H T E E N

The travelers had, after all, to eat something now and then! The prepared-food vegetation in that part of the Winkie Country was a little bit out of the ordinary. Therefore they decided they'd pretend they'd wanted a continental breakfast all along. They loaded their plates (plain gold ones borrowed from the amber castle) with pumpernickel, smoked eel, a sort of yellow Stilton, and some wienerbröd, and sat down under a jigsaw-puzzle tree to discuss the meal.

Nobody knew what King Vergrodius as froglet ate, but he wasn't starving. On the contrary: he was vigorous and vocal. It was past bird-song time in the morning and the two humans didn't make much noise eating, so Zip was able to hear, from his cap band, a tiny voice saying, "Oh, do hurry up, fellows! We must get on. Don't you know she's suffering the most fearful agonies inside there? She's fully alive! and that's what makes it so fiendish: think of the mind-destroying pain of burn sensation over one hundred percent of the body! My poor darling!"

Vergrodius broke down again and wept... while the others finished their Danish and licked their fingers.

They were just going to weigh anchor when a surprising thing happened. The breakfasters had been sitting beside a tributary of the Winkie River. When Zippiochoggolak happened to glance

once more at the saffron ripples, he suddenly caught sight of a great yellow fish with its head out of water, staring at him. He could swear it looked surprised and he was *almost* ready to swear it also winked. Then the yellow head sank again beneath the water.

Next instant a vast bubble broke the surface of the stream. Or "bubble"? It was more like a big opalescent balloon, for it floated up clear of the water and began to dance in the morning breeze. Rapidly it made its way toward them over the river, glistening in all the colors of an Ozian rainbow: puce, rose madder, aquamarine, cinnabar, and battleship grey.

What was it? bubble, balloon, or ball? It was hard to say if its 'skin' was a film of air/water molecules or sheerest silk or even gauzy rubber. Anyway, as it came close it looked a good deal like Billie Burke's bubble in the *Wizard* film, though of the wrong colors, of course. Then, just like Miss Burke's, the ball abruptly vanished and there stood ...Wam, the Weird and Wonderful.

"Dad!" screamed Zippiochoggolak and rushed to him. He recognized him instantly, and why not? In Oz no one ever changes in appearance unless he feels like it.

"Come to my arms, my beamish boy!" cried the necromancer, and father and son were tenderly reunited.

"But what...?!"

"Okay," said Wammuppirovocuck, "I'll tell you the whole story." The wizard was not slow to climb up to the wagon seat beside Henry Gale. "I can hitch a lift with you? You seem to be pointed in my direction."

The flabbergasted wagon-travelers could not match Wam in aplomb. They gasped out three or four explanatory sentences, as "We've been hunting for you," "Mr. Gale here found and rescued me," "We went to the cottage in Legerdemain Lane," and the able wonder-worker could guess the rest. Later of course he asked for the entire history in detail.

"That Prince of Wates got too much for me," confessed the errant sorcerer. "I've never failed so signally before in anything I set out to accomplish. Well, yes, I did... once: when I tried to

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find you, my dear boy," and he pulled Zip's cap down over his eyes in affection. "But that failure brought on only quiet despair, not frantic desperation as now. I dispersed my employees to their homes and fled into the wilderness.

"I wandered about for three days, half mad. Then I came to my senses a bit. One does, eventually. I suppose if I'd had my wits properly about me I'd have set off for the Emerald City to ask assistance of the wise ones there. But what I principally longed for now was a little gentle sympathy. I headed out to hunt up your mother—"

"See, Uncle?" said Zip, justified at last. To his father: "I told him that's what you'd do."

"Bright boy," acknowledged the fond parent. "But then you've always been that.

"Well, I turned myself into a swallow—"

Henry Gale's gape was audible. "So you do still do magic? People kept saying you never practiced it anymore ... "

"This was an emergency, I figured," the necromancer excused himself. "Besides, it's a trick I can do 'bare': without magic 'properties'. That way, I rationalized, it wasn't such genuine sorcery."

"But, Dad," put in Zip, "why didn't you use that knack to solve your big problem? I mean the outsize prince."

"Oh, I could have turned him into a pea in a pod—but that wouldn't have solved anything. He didn't want to be anything *else*. He just wanted to be himself, average human-size. My transformation trick doesn't operate that way."

Privately Uncle Henry was having some little doubts about Wam. The magician hadn't, it seemed, years before, considered the loss of his son a big enough emergency to risk practising forbidden magic to get him back; yet now a little—or, say, a huge—irritation like the presence of the Prince of Wates made him at once break the law.

Still, Henry would be charitable. Maybe with the passing years Wam had come to feel those arbitrary anti-magic laws were not very justified and hence not so binding.

But Zip was prompting, eager for the story: "So, swift as the flying arrow you went to Mom's abode?"

"There were one or two small interruptions," confessed Wam. "Part way along, a giant eagle swooped down on me, no doubt intending to swallow me like a swallow would swallow a gnat. I was obliged to turn myself into a rhinoceros in mid-air. It isn't a gestalt I would ordinarily choose but it was the first thing of great size that popped into my head in my sudden fright.

"If I'd had even an instant to consider—! But no. Down I dropped like a boulder and landed on my head in a fortunately placed straw stack. I was out cold for three days! Passers-by later confirmed it was three days past what I remembered it being. And when I came to myself I wasn't myself, if you see what I mean.

"In the first place I was a rhinoceros—and that was so seldom. It was a size and shape I didn't care for all. In the second place, I hadn't a clue who I really was, and so for a week I wandered around Oz—well, mostly in the Quadling Country—as the Reluctant Rhinoceros.

"Gradually, like a veil slowly lifting, my amnesia cleared and I realized who I was and what my business was. I had learned a lesson the hard way. I changed myself into a pterodactyl and flew on to the amber castle."

"And found Mom?" asked Zip eagerly.

"No!" Wammuppirovocuck was still under the impression of his surprise and shock. "She'd vanished without a trace! and everyone else from the castle with her. There was a still warm dinner on the table—just like the *Mary Celeste*—which I proceeded to eat. But there was nobody in sight."

"Pardon me, sir," broke in the civil Henry Gale. "How many people actually live at the castle? It seemed very peculiar to us too that there wouldn't be *anybody* about: no servants, no neighbors—"

"Well, 'neighbors': in that location and given who the castle-dwellers are, that isn't so surprising. As for servants: everything's automated at the Castle of Light. But that all three Lords, the

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First Lady, all those aunts,, and the ladies-in-waiting: that *all* of them should be gone: it passes all understanding.

"I've been hunting for your mother ever since," finished Wam simply.

"Under water?" asked his son incredulously. "Oh, I'd just popped in there for a morning dip," said Wam airily. There was a rather charming air of insouciance about this necromancer. "I always take a shape that's most convenient for the purpose. The only one I *don't* take is human," he added drolly, "- unless I find myself in the vicinity of a clothes tree. By the way, let's stop at the first one we see. It's a little cool in the morning air, now that I come to think of it."

The others passed him the blanket and then he was quite comfortable. As it happened, they came to no outfitting plants, nor to any towns where a shop might have supplied Wam's needs. Eventually he asked permission to turn the blanket into regulation magician's garb, which was willingly granted.

C H A P T E R N I N E T E E N

Young Zippiochoggolak was highly gratified at the success of his campaign to take the expedition a bit easily. If they had whizzed along as fast as the tireless Sawhorse was capable of doing, they would undoubtedly have missed being in the proper place and time to run up against Zip's father when they did. The boy's own quest was accomplished! even if quite by well-staged accident. Now they could go home.

No, durn, they couldn't, he very soon recalled. The group of adventurers still had on the agenda:

1. undoing what amounted to an enchantment of Mrs. Gale;
2. restoring the Prince of Wates to manageable size;
3. restoring the King of the Green Mountain to *his* proper shape and kingdom;
4. delivering the ex-wood nymph Lorna from her frightful transformation into a gold statue;
5. finding Zip's mother—and, for that matter, all her family.

Therefore, Zip concluded that it would probably be best to put on some speed, if the tale of their mission was not to prove endless. When Wammuppirovocuck had finished relating the story of his adventures Zip said, "I'll ask the Sawhorse to switch to top speed, right?"

"Mmm, fine," agreed Henry Gale amiably. "Er—in which

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direction?"

That was after all a question of some moment. Zip's own first impulse was to hurry home to Legerdemain Lane where his necromancer Dad could get at what instruments of magic remained to him, throw rules to the wind, and get cracking on unworking a few spells.

That necromancer's own personal mission, however, was now to find his estranged and newly re-lost wife. Hence, Wam thought in terms of casting about further in the lands of the Winkies and Quadlings.

And Uncle Henry voted for carrying on to Winkiezia, where surely the crowned heads (many of which were also magically endowed) could be put together to bring some clarity into the problems of the adventurers.

It was this latter course which won the day. Indeed, in view of the gravity and the multiplicity of the friends' goals, it might have seemed clear from the beginning that eventually the highest professional help would have to be called in. The Sawhorse was told to carry on in the direction they had been going, only now as fast as might be.

The jinx was broken. Right away, one after another, solutions to their problems began to be accomplished—and they stopped getting any new ones—for a while! The first such resolution occurred about an hour and a half after the Sawhorse had turned on the heat. It was then that a curious optical illusion began to be observed.

"Say, isn't Winkiezia north by northeast?" said old Uncle Henry, who was at the reins while his young fellow adventurer and father talked cozily together in the back of the dashing wagon.

"Of course!" said father and son as one and stood up to look over the seat-back in the direction of travel.

"Then how come the sun's shining straight ahead?" said Henry, pointing with the whip. "This isn't Australia." The old farmer had been in both countries and knew.

Zip took a quick decko to their rear and affirmed that at least

one sun was still shining from due south, it now being noon. What then was that golden glow ahead in the north?

They were not left long in doubt. They ran toward the glow and the glow met them as fast. Like a vast sunburst the luminance loomed and filled the sky, then passed directly overhead. It was low enough that the company could distinguish the under side of great sun chariots, the golden wheels spinning sparks like Catherine wheels and horses of Phoebus stamping the air. With a vast silent whoosh the fiery caravan passed over and slowly dimmed and retreated in the southwest.

"The Lords of Light!" said Wam, awed, and the others felt that nothing more needed to be added. Presently, however, Henry Gale did say what was obvious to everybody. "Not much mystery, really. The Lords were at PARPO, just like all the other local potentates of Oz."

His words broke the spell of amazement and they talked of how the new realization affected their own plans. "Missed her again," said Wam with chagrin. "We're getting farther apart by the minute. But anyway it's fine to know she's all right. When things get settled a bit we'll go back to the amber castle, ey, Zip? And this time we'll send word we're coming. Maybe then there'll be somebody home!"

"Two down and four to go," said Zippiochoggolak cryptically, but the others understood that he meant that one third of their quests had been achieved: the localizing of the whereabouts of the Lad of Light's two parents.

Another few minutes on and another golden sight delighted their eyes. This was the yellow tin castle of the Emperor of the Winkies on its yellow hill-top. It looked like pure gold—but was not. That glory was claimed by the castle of the Overground Miners in the north of the country, the third in the chain of splendid Winkle castles. But Emperor Nick's residence with its polished battlements and turrets of painted tin rivaled the craggy keep of the Lords of Light in magnificence. Its lower storey was of yellow brick and it was of course as an approach to that castle that the first section of the famous road, of match-

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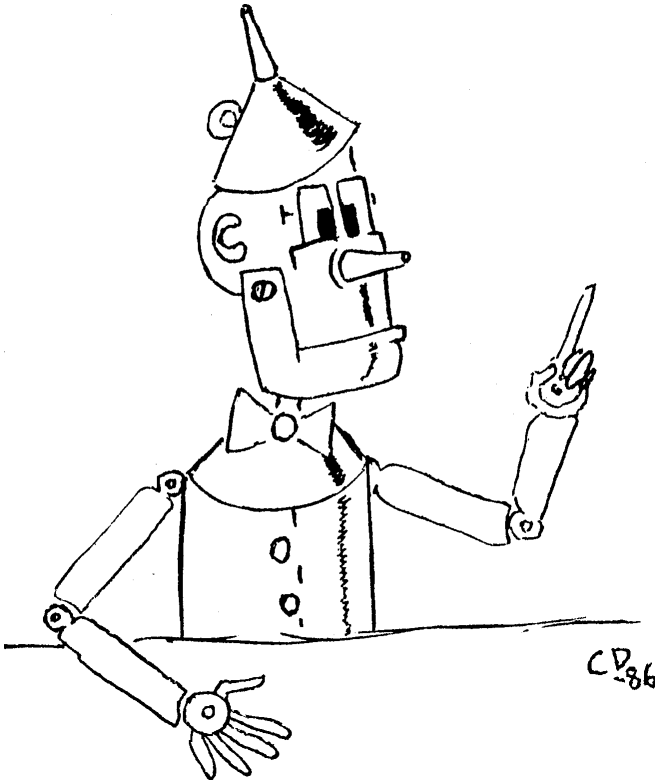
ing materials, was originally laid down.

"I hope we'll be in time!" said Farmer Gale earnestly as the wagon, a flashing red streak, careered through the streets of the yellow village. "If the Lords have left, so maybe have all the other delegates to the conference!"

The fear proved well-founded. As the journeyers drew up to the castle gateway in a cloud of golden dust not a carriage was to be seen in the car-park. "And they wouldn't have *all* traveled here by magic means," said Zip worriedly.

Yet all was not lost. There on the terrace before the ornate entrance to the castle-palace stood the Emperor himself and in his company the Princess Dorothy!

"Dorothy!" yelled her uncle, thrilled to bits, and dropped the reins, stumbled from the wagon, and ran up the steps to fold in his arms his all unsuspecting niece.



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“Uncle Henry!” cried the girl. “What a wonderful surprise!” Dorothy was too polite to put any questions about *why* she should have been honored with the treat just at this time. One question, however, flew to her lips involuntarily: “Why, where’s Auntie?”

“Oh, Dorothy dear,” gulped the old farmer and was once more on the brink of worried tears. The princess stared at him and then slowly went pale.

Hasty introductions and greetings were exchanged. Then the whole party moved inside to the conservatory just off the presence chamber in the East Wing. Refreshments were served and meanwhile Dorothy Gale heard in detail the sad story of the transformation of her aunt.

“This is dreadful!” she cried, aghast. “Yes, it’s obvious!: Aunt’s come under the influence of the dread Witch of the East. But who would have expected any such thing? I was assured on best authority that the wicked woman was done away with wholly and utterly by the landing of the house on her.”

“Don’t forget, Dorothy,” put in the Tin Woodman: “in Oz the only really effective way of dealing—permanently—with witches is the water treatment. I suppose it was only a question of time until this only provisionally destroyed witch became again a force to be reckoned with.”

“What luck then!” exclaimed the girl, finding a ray of sunshine in the general gloom, “that I kept the key in my pockets all these years. Why, little children, if they’d got into the house, might have been hurt by the evil influence of the witch!”

“They might at that,” admitted her uncle. “But, Dot, my dear, what do you suggest now? We’d counted so on getting Ozma and them’s help here to reverse the enchantment... enchantments, plural, that is.” Uncle went on to brief his niece on all the other problems that had cropped up during his and Zip’s travels.

Zip! He was staring (in the politest fashion) at Princess Dorothy as if he could never get enough of the sight. So this was the famous maiden who had played so overwhelming a role in

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the history of Oz. Yet she was just a sweet little girl, perhaps a year or two younger (to look at) than himself. Just think!: if he'd stayed around for thirty seconds longer twelve years before, everything might have been different. By just so short a time had he missed meeting this tin man who now stood before him. Had Zip stayed awake to see the drugged Lion rescued he would have been introduced then to this radiant child. Oh, all the years between that had been lost!

Zip listened with the intensest interest when Dorothy replied to her uncle, saying: "It's simple, dear Uncle Henry: I'm going with you to catch the others up at once. They've only been gone half an hour. We may well overtake them on the road!" Then there was bustle! However, they did not after all want to go off half-cock. Therefore twenty minutes were taken to discuss pros and cons. The also pressing needs and desires of Wammuppirovocuck and of King Vergrodius and his lady love were brought to the fore. Dorothy and Nick Chopper had to confess that they hadn't realized until that moment that they were in the presence of a king.

But what had that king not been feeling! When the Red Wagon drew up at the palace steps Uncle Henry Gale and Dorothy had not been the only ones to be thrilled at a seeing-again. Think what must have been the emotions that stirred the heart of the frog king when he saw again the Tin Woodman for the first time since he had spent the night on his foot so many years before. And then to realize that the young girl who had appeared that morning in the forest and rescued the woodman was in fact none other than the much talked-of niece of good Mr. Gale, in whose company he, Vergrodius, had just spent a week! The sensations of the kinglet were such that he hadn't been able to speak until now—or anyway make himself heard.

When the Emperor of the Winkies had fetched a magnifying glass, introductions were made, and only then, in the silence that was called for, could the infinitesimal croak of the King of the Green Mountain be heard. He was saying, "It's about time! Emperor Nicholas, Your Magnificence, you won't remember me

but I know you! We spent the night together once a long time ago!.. But more of that later! For now...!

The poor little being was screaming himself quite hoarse and still it was only by the most intense concentration that any of his hearers could even approximately make out what he was saying. He broke off, then made one last desperate effort to achieve a cure of at least one of his grave drawbacks:

"Please, oh, please! couldn't somebody do something about my size?! I realize that my enchantment can't yet be cast off, but it might at least be possible for me to be made big enough that I could take a reasonable part in the conversation! Please—somebody—do something!!"

"Hmm," said Emperor Nick. "That's simple enough. Zip, young man, there's some increasing pills in the medicine cabinet upstairs. Would you care to fetch them? They're in a small blue box—next to the reducing ones..."

It was delightfully like old times for them as Wam, the Weird and Wonderful, 'sent' his light boy and in an instant the swift messenger had returned with the indicated box. "Sorry, Uncle," said Zip thoughtfully. "*You* might have sent me—but it was out of sight, and you and I haven't trained that far yet."

"I understand, my boy," said the farmer. He gave a small nostalgic smile to think of their little triumphs of teleporting now already fading into the past.

Princess Dorothy selected a pill and laid it on a polished orangewood table. Zip placed his cap near the pill and in a moment the minuscule frog was seen—by those with good eyesight—to climb down the front of the cap band, leap off the bill, and make his way to the pill, which was perhaps thirty four times as large as himself. The onlookers could only assume that he had begun to lick the capsule; the movement of a tongue was not seen.

And then there came, they thought, a change. Slowly the infinitesimal creature grew to the size of a pea, then more quickly to the dimensions of a golf ball. Now he was seen to be a lovely shade of emerald, with a not unpleasing sensitive-looking face

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reminiscent of Oscar Levant and James Baldwin (though those personages still belonged to the future).

Faster and vaster grew the frog, until the spectators began to grow uneasy. "How long—" said Dorothy, glancing at Nick C. in alarm.

"The pill knows," the Emperor hastened to assure—though how a pill could know anything remained unclear. "When the King is the 'right' size..."

With a final stretch and a creaking bass moan Vergrodius stopped expanding at about the size of a turkey. "Whew!"; there was a sigh of relief all round, not least from the frog king himself. There might be too much of a good thing, even of oneself.

"That's better," he belched with a deep croak and leapt heavily off the table. "Now I have a little weight to throw around."

And proceeded to. For the first next thing on *his* agenda was what to do about the golden statue of his adored one, Nymph Lorna. The others had by now relaxed from their initial air of bustle; there were just too many decisions they must come to before they might go dashing off in pursuit of the departed PARPO delegates.

Uncle Henry too was quite concerned about the matter of the 'statue'. He had observed that the figure, clad in pure soft gold, was already showing signs of flattening and other wear and tear from the bouncing and rolling it was prey to in the back of the Red Wagon. The toe on which one end of the statue rested was bent double, while the gold integument of the elbow had torn through and one could see within the charred drapery and boiled-looking skin of the tortured woman. They all agreed the figure ought not to be subjected to any more such treatment.

The thoughtful Emperor of the Winkies came to the rescue. "Here is an empty pediment," he pointed out and lifted his own elbow from a truncated Ionic column where sometimes an aspidistra stood. "I would be greatly honored if the statue of Lorna, including Lorna herself, might be allowed to beatify my conservatory—just temporarily—until measures can be taken to restore her to her former form."

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“But, oh!” burped King Vergrodius baritonely: now audible even to Uncle Henry, “to be parted from my beloved! How can I bear it?”

However, he let himself be persuaded when the others assured him that Lorna’s non-presence in the rescue party would not be allowed to delay her restoration by even an hour. Nick Chopper told the distraught frog that he, the Emperor of the Winkies, would keep the golden figure under his personal surveillance. And what a work of art! — well of accident really — the statue was: so expressive of terrified agony; it would be quite the centerpiece of the Winkie ruler’s sculpture collection. As a matter of fact, the adventurers felt it would be a weight removed from their spirits — not to mention from the floorboards of the Red Wagon — not to have to look any longer at so much agonized terror as they rolled along.

And so, with great care and consideration, Lorna the gold wood nymph was erected on the pedestal and Vergrodius took a tearful farewell of her.

C H A P T E R

T W E N T Y

Despite their great and grave concerns the travelers managed to have rather a nice time as they bowled along their way. Henry, Wam, and Vergrodus were exchanging reminiscences on the front seat, which was quite big enough for three, if one was only an outsize frog.

In the back of the wagon sat Dorothy Gale and Zippiochoggolak Wammuppirovocuckson (to give him is full name—if one must). They were getting acquainted at top speed. Little Dorothy could not get over the idea that this likeable lad was the swift Messenger who had brought the Good Witch of the North to her assistance just when she needed it most. And what was her terror and delight to learn that Zip had been asleep in the Deadly Poppy field at the same time as herself.

“But, oh!” she mourned, “to think of all the time we’ve wasted, when we might have been such friends,” and here she was echoing thoughts Zip himself had just been having. Contrary to received opinion, Princess Dorothy was not only and exclusively susceptible to friendship with young persons of her own sex.

“It’s not too late to start,” suggested Zip.

“Let’s,” said Dorothy, and they told each other the story of their lives.

"Uncle's your father's brother then?" enquired the Lad of Light.

"Yes," said the Princess—a bit shortly, Zip thought. "And Auntie Em's my mother's sister." This information she revealed with somewhat more of pleased vivacity.

The revelation had the usual effect. "Great orks!" cried Zip. "Sisters married brothers; what an amazing thing! How wonderful. But why hasn't everyone heard of this charming coincidence long since?"

"Oh," said Dorothy, again shortly, "it isn't all that charming. I'm afraid it was all rather spoiled a bit. We've never liked talking about it in the family. But now... well, I think, perhaps, you ought to know." She looked at Zippiochoggolak almost pleadingly.

"Don't tell me if you'd rather not," said the boy feelingly.

"No, it's all right," pursued Dorothy. "It's no good, in the long run, covering up the truth. You ought to know what kind of a family you—" but here she broke off suddenly and blushed.

Zip took the blush for the highest compliment and replied, "Nothing you could tell me would change my admiration for one who..." and here he too fell silent and flushed a gorgeous rose pink that neatly complimented the flower in his cap.

"Well," said Dorothy. "Mother was an angel; Aunt Em has told me. Her name was Marie; but she died young. There were three other sisters too. Their names were—"

"But your father?" interrupted Zip. His fellowship with his own father, interrupted though it might be for years, was so splendid that he was inspired to find out all he could about Dorothy's father.

But, "Oh, dear," sighed the princess. "Well, all right... I'm going to present this to you as something truly daring and you tell me what you think of it."

"Okay."

It doesn't at all fit in with the goody-goodness of Oz. It smacks of all the greed and cruelty of the great world—and

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makes me glad I escaped such a setting. I've been awfully lucky, you know."

Zip made a polite noise and waited expectantly.

Dorothy told the tale perfunctorily. One can't blame her. It wasn't very nice. "Uncle Henry and Aunt Em," she recounted bluntly, with little regard for the style, "kept me for my widowed father. I was little more than a baby then. My father soon married—to the richest woman in Topeka. Unfortunately she was not a pleasant person and could not stand to have me around. So Uncle Henry and Aunt Em continued to care for me. Even this was not enough for wife number two. She wanted no reminder whatever of Mother around.

"With her help my father became president of one of the richest and most powerful banks in Topeka—"

Zip might have guessed but he didn't actually have a clue about Topeka, so he asked. Dorothy filled him in on background and told about the hard times in Kansas for agriculture in general and for her Uncle Henry in particular. Then she went on:

"My father—*his* name was Lewis; I'm afraid it's of one of my favorites—fell more and more under stepmother's influence. It was he, my own father—Uncle Henry's brother!—who foreclosed the mortgage on Uncle's farm. So you can see that makes his name one not to be mentioned around Uncle Henry and Aunt Em, especially Uncle Henry."

We must hope that the long-suffering old farmer on the front seat was not overhearing Dorothy's quietly, almost secretly, related confession. "It's not a very nice heritage, is it?" said the little girl and wiped away a furtive tear.

"But, Princess Dorothy dear," exclaimed Zip, much under the impression, "it's nothing to do with *you*. Your behavior could never be influenced by anything your father did."

"No. I suppose not." Dorothy allowed herself to be comforted, and the two of them companionably ignored all the teaching of Freud.

Merrily—well, almost—they rolled along over the purple

fields in April.

Purple?

Yes, well, you see, when, at his palace, the Emperor of the Winkies happened to mention, en passant, that Lucinda, the Maid of Light, had, at the break-up of PARPO, been invited by the Good Witch of the North to go and stay with her for a bit at her cottage near the Amethyst City, and the Maid of Light, bored, it seemed, with the uneventful life at her own people's Castle of Light, had consented with alacrity, Lucinda's husband, the necromancer Wam, suddenly readjusted *his* sights as to what he preferred to do next.

"My old colleague Tattypoo!" he exclaimed. "Well, it figures. The two ladies saw something of each other in the days when the Good Witch and I worked so closely together. I'd love to see Tat again, myself. When I gave up the use of magic—but she continued—our ways divided. It's been ages since we last met. Do you suppose...?"

"What?" said Nick Chopper. He was taking the part of master of ceremonies at the conference in the conservatory.

"Well," went on Wam, "all we really need is the assistance of *one* competent magic-worker for the solution of our various problems. What if we spared Queen Ozma and the Wizard Oz and Sorceress Glinda the bother of dealing with our claims and went on to Witch Tattypoo's place, where maybe she would be willing to do one little additional bit of hexing and, while she's got her on the scene, make Zip's mum resigned to living with us again?"

All his friends agreed it was a pleasing and economical plan and fell in with it at once.

"Dear Nick," said Dorothy, "our little private visit we planned is quickly over. You do see that I must be with Uncle as he goes to save Aunt Em? But I'll come again soon, I promise ... maybe sooner than we think," but what she had in mind when she added that I really couldn't say.

Thus it was that they were bowling along the purple rather than yellow or green ones. The Amethyst City lay — actually, still

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lies—about at dead center of the land of the Gillikins and functioned as a sort of ‘capital’ of that land, inasmuch as the Good Witch of the North was regent of the country and her modest cottage stood about six miles out of town up a mountain-side to the south-east. The friends decided to stop at the Amethyst City for the night, so as to be fresh for the interview on the morrow.

In the evening Zip and Dorothy left the Amethyst Garden Hotel for a walk, just the two of them, through the violet streets of the town. This was “city” only in the old European sense and, in under(but just right) -populated Oz, it had about nineteen thousand inhabitants. The lilacs were in bloom (they always are in Gillikinland) and the sight and the scent were delightful. The paths were bordered with violets and pansies, crocus and tulips. The whole city was quite a wonderland of purple blossom. Most of its area seemed to be given over to large botanical gardens and it was in one of these that the couple strolled.

Their private histories related, the boy and girl had gone on to talk of the future. “I have a dream for Oz,” confessed Dorothy. “It’s only a small dream, since everything here is so nearly perfect already...”

“What is your dream, your grace?” said Zip archaically. He liked sometimes to talk formally and stagily. “I pray you, tell it me.”

“I’d like to see more tolerance in Oz,” stated the princess. “All these tiny crackpot countries one has visited in the past—and no doubt will in future: the people there always have only one idea: to make over any chance visitors as much as possible in the inhabitants’ own image. It seems so ludicrous, thinking back on it—or reading about it. But in fact such behavior is extremely true to human nature. Also out in the great world it is everybody’s conviction that no peoples can ever *really* be happy until they’re made over to conform with one’s own prejudices.

“That’s why members of religious groups, especially Christians, go around the world trying to convert everybody. Proponents of various political isms try to force other groups—or, preferably, whole nations—to adopt those isms. The Industrial West can’t be convinced the backward rural countries can be happy

until industrialized... The awful be-like-me! feeling extends even to emigration to Oz! People outside are horrified at the idea of anyone's coming here who isn't a white 'Anglo-Saxon' Christian. Just for fun I'd like to see a Jewish Negro—with Indian blood—turn up here one day."

Zip wasn't horrified. He said, "So would I."

"Of course," the Princess hastened to amend, "we would probably want to exclude deviants and unmarried mothers. I guess we wouldn't want just *everybody* to think they could come here—no matter how harmless they might be."

Zip was silent at that. Perhaps the princess, too, realized how deeply her talk would alienate some people if they heard it. It was far too grown-up, intellectual, and controversial to be acceptable, or even credible, in a Princess of Oz. Abruptly she changed the subject. "What's that?" she said. Zip had been rolling from hand to hand a particularly large and fine amethyst he had picked up under a huckleberry bush. "Oh, I meant it for you!" he exclaimed, and handed it to the pleased

Dorothy. "It's just a piece of gravel, but I thought it might look nice on you—if you had it polished and set."

Yes, Dorothy thought so too: set in a ring.



C H A P T E R T W E N T Y - O N E

"Now then," said the Good Witch of the North, "let's get on with it! Which of these spells do you want revoked first?"

Actually Tattypoo hated working magic. She didn't know why she bothered to do it, but then she was a full-fledged witch and she supposed she had to. Certainly she was very good at it. Always though, she did it as quickly and perfunctorily as possible and then got back to her real interests: spinning, weaving, and making preserves.

"Oh, please! please!" croaked the King of the Green Mountain in answer to the witch's question. "Lorna first! She's in agony, poor girl. The rest of us can wait." This says something, no doubt, about the sincerity of the king's devotion, for, as we know, he had been struggling and yearning to be released from his own enchantment for twenty-three years now.

"Lorna," said Tattypoo thoughtfully. "That'll be the tree sprite, second class, that you mentoned. Pity you couldn't have brought along more of these people who want disenchanting," she huffed. "It's always a good deal easier to disenchant somebody in situ."

"Oh, but she can be here in minutes!" protested Vergrodius. "Can't she, fellows?" He turned for reassurance to Wammuppirovocuck and Henry Gale.

"Quite so," agreed Wam. "We just have to send for her. You remember our method, Madam Tattypoo..."

This was not a question, for the old-time teamwork of the witch and the necromancer had been but moments earlier brought forcefully to the minds of them both. It was with considerable surprise that the good witch had gone to her door that morning and opened it to find that he who knocked was that young messenger of light whom she had sent off to carry most vital dispatches twelve years ago, and who had never been seen since.

"Nip!" she cried.

"Zip," said the boy diffidently.

"That's right, 'Zip'! Where on earth did you spring from? *and* your dad. Zam! It's been ages!" "Wam," said Wam. "Yes, far too long, ma'm. I'm delighted to see you again."

"*And* Dorothy! As I live and breathe. Why, gracious me, the last time I saw you was—yesterday at PARPO!"

Dorothy gave a little silver trill of laughter as she shook hands. The old lady was having her joke. During the conference the two had reminisced at length about their last previous meeting: the time the young newcomer to Oz was just starting off to look for Oz, the Great and Terrible, taking with her the blessing of the good northern witch who now was saying: "—and the old gentleman? don't believe we've met..."

Now Dorothy had supposed that her uncle was so famous a celebrity in his own right that everyone of importance in Oz must know him by sight. Or was this another of the old party's gags? She determined to play it cool and performed the introductions demurely.

"Pleased to meet you," said Uncle politely. "Mrs. Tattypoo, can I take this chance to thank you for all you did in setting my niece on the straight and narrow—"

"Oh, never mind that!" interrupted the Good Witch jovially. "Glad to do it. And this, I suppose," she went on, addressing King Vergridius, "is the celebrated Frogman of Oz? I've heard of *you*."

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“Frog man?” put in Dorothy. “Why, no, he’s a frog king, but just temporarily he’s not a man. We were hoping you—”

“What now?!” broke in Tattypoo again. The party had by now stepped inside the witch’s hut and Tattypoo, bringing up the rear, was considerably mystified to see the wizard Wam looking intently out a window into the back garden and Zip staring up the stairs.

Father and son started and then turned to the witch apologetically. “We expected to find our well-beloved wife—and mother—here,” explained Wammuppirovocuck. “They told us at Winkiezia that she had returned here with you, ma’m.”

“Who’s that?” demanded their hostess. “Oh, Lucinda. the Maid of Light! is that the one? Is *she* your mother?—or—sorry! that would be ‘wife’ in your case. Yes, of course she’s your wife; I remember now. Well, no, *she’s* not here—”

“Not here?!” cried young Zip all woebegone. “But Emperor Nick said for sure—”

“Oh, she WAS here. But she’s so popular! She had any number of invitations and she left earlier this morning to go on to the court of Kimbaloo—and on from there to—oh, I’ve got the list somewhere.”

This was a sad blow to Wam and son but there seemed no help for it. The two fellows each gave a big sigh and then went on to state their other purposes to the Witch of the North and explain to her how vital to them her help was.

“To cases then,” said Tattypoo briskly. “Where is this wood—or, rather, gold—nymph you want to disenchant?”

“Actually,” said Vergrodius, “hers is not so much enchantment as an embalming—or even a mummification. You see, we don’t know how to get the gold off her without hurting her—”

“Or the gold, I suppose?” said the matter-of-fact witch. “Well, even if not magically caused her case would seem to need to be magically treated. You’d want the gold off in one piece, wouldn’t you?, and still retaining its outlines of the shape of the woman inside?”

“I couldn’t care less!” shouted Vergrodius in desperation. “I

want my *beloved* out in one piece — *and* not injured by her dreadful experience!”

“No need to raise your voice,” said Tattypoo mildly. “That *was* your voice? or was it a rusty bucket-winch that spoke?”

Wam broke into the unseemly quarreling and declared, “There’s just one problem. We can send Zip in a jiffy to fetch the statue, but I’m afraid he couldn’t lift it on his own! I must ask for volunteers —”

“I’ll go!” cried Dorothy.

“I certainly will, of course,” said Uncle Henry “That’s fine,” said Wammuppirovocuck. “Three should do it... Well, if you’re ready..? Remember us to the Emperor!”

With a casual wave of the hand the necromancer caused his son and good friends to vanish -

—only to appear in the next instant in the conservatory of the yellow tin palace.

There, in a deck chair beside the statue, sat the Emperor of the Winkies. “That was quick,” he said with a smile. “I’ve taken all care of the poor nymph’s statue, you see. Only...”

“Yes?” said the three arrivals as one.

“It’s such a splendid work — of accident, that I’ve quite fallen in love with it! I hate to lose it from my collection.”

“We may be able to do something about that, Your Resplendence,” said Uncle Henry formally. “It almost seems as if the Good Witch intends, if possible, to preserve the covering layer of metal intact. I’m sure you might be given that. No one else would want it — except...”

“Lorna herself,” put in Zip with a laugh. “You two will have to fight it out.”

That prospect made the Tin Woodman look grave.

Some of the Emperor’s metal-workers were called and the statue was detached from its pedestal. The three instant travelers each took hold of a limb or trailing drapery of the heavy figure and with cheerful wave to Nick Chopper they were off.

Witch and necromancer broke off the reminiscences in which they had indulged during the quarter-hour interval. Tattypoo

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turned to the newly delivered golden figure, saying, "Oh, I see. Yes; rather complicated. Actually, now I could wish I'd thought to have you bring along some of those Winkie metal-workers. Still, that would make for awful lot of coming and going. Never mind. Our locals are quite competent. I'll give you a note to the A.C.M.U. and you can deliver it on your way back to your hotel. This is going to take a little time..."

"A.C.M.U.?" spoke King Vergrodius.

"Mmm, Amethyst City Metallurgists' Union," elucidated the witch. "We'll have it ready for shipment when you come in the morning."

"It?" said the king.

"Why, yes: the statue. Didn't Dorothy say that the yellow emperor wanted it for his collection?"

"Oh, you!!" The turkey-sized frog would have leapt on the Good Witch of the North if he had not been forcibly restrained by the others.

C H A P T E R T W E N T Y - T W O

The poor Witch of the North had ended not being much of a favorite with anybody, unless it was Wam, who was used to her satirical teasing manner from of old. On their way back to the hotel they tore her a good deal to pieces, and nobody particularly looked forward to seeing her again next morning. They agreed it was tiresome to have to be beholden to someone with such a knack for belittling. Even toward Wammuppirovocuck there was a faint feeling of resentment for his having induced them to do their magic business with this sorceress instead of with the bunch at the Emerald City, who could have been counted on to banish evil spells without a lot of flack.

There was nothing for it but to gird up their loins and ride the Red Wagon back to the brown-and-purple polka-dotted hut at nine the next morning. Who should come running to the door to receive them but the restored and thriving-looking tree sprite (second class) Lorna!?, wearing an old Mother-Hubbard of Tattypoo's.

Lorna stood not upon ceremony but fell in the dust before the bushel-basket-shaped frog and began to kiss his flippers. That must have been a moment of rare ecstasy for the long-suffering monarch. He had loved and endured for twenty-three years and now at last his long vigil was going to be rewarded.

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Yet it was not as he had hoped it would be: the lovely and repentant nymph coming to him as he sat in restored glory on his throne. His generosity in requiring *her* salvation before *his* restoration was the cause of that effect. But even so this was pretty good.

Most kindly he raised her up and begged her to dry her tears. Then as the others, after brief but warm congratulations, passed within the witch's cottage, Vergrodius led his lost and found love into the grape arbor at the other end of the garden. A strange couple they made: the wan, worn (though vital-enough-looking) woman and the great glistening green frog. An illustrator might have made good play of them.

What did they talk of?

The wood nymph, still swallowing back sobs, said, "I have only one wish: to spend the rest of my life making it up to you. May I be allowed to, Your Majesty?"

King Vergrodius said: "I have only one wish: to be worthy of your love."

That was the end of the frog king's eight minutes of bliss. The tree sprite replied, "My king, you must forgive me. I dedicate my life to you. But in shame and expiation. It is not love... I am so very sorry. Here she gasped and sobbed afresh.

That was a terrible moment for the Green Mountain king. What, oh, what was he, were they, to do now? Wear out their lives in unrequited yearnings and self-sacrifice? The nymph did not value the king's love—and he did not want anyone abasing herself without love—or with it, for that matter.

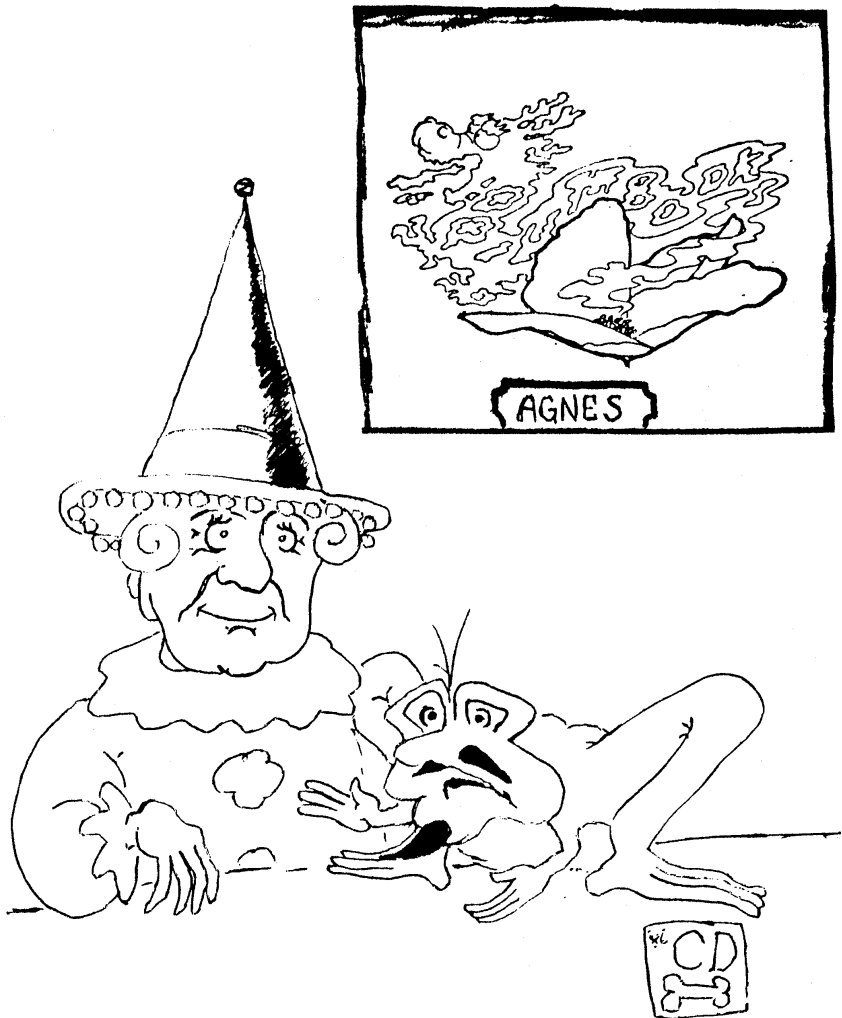
It was a sad couple that slowly made its way back to Tattypoo's house. Both of them were miserable and it would have been hard to say which was more so.

The other adventurers, meanwhile, did not pay much heed. *They* were all involved in a lively dispute as to the next item on the agenda. Wam and Zip were insisting that the restoration of Mrs. Emily Gale to her customary clothes and right mind claimed the very top priority, while Henry Gale and his niece, not to be outdone in gallantry, were adamantly refusing to budge an inch

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in the direction of the Dorothy's House National Monument before Wam's wife and Zip's mother was returned to the bosom of her family. To complicate matters, the Good Witch of the North was tiresomely demanding to go where the trouble was instead of once more having it brought to her.

"Why, where would we be now?" she inquired, "if I'd just sat around here on that Saturday morning long ago instead of going to the land of the Munchkins to see for myself? If I could go there once, I guess I can go there again. That's where Lucinda's supposed to be today: in the Sapphire City. (I *must* find that list.)"



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When Vergrodius and Lorna walked in, the couple tried to dissemble their distress and pretend to take an interest in the discussion. "I earnestly beseech your graces all," spoke up the wood nymph, to take my master, King Vergrodius', problem to first consideration. He has so nobly forsworn his opportunity — for *my* sake. I can do no less than plead for his."

This was the first opportunity the others had had to notice what a change had come over the nymph since her ordeal by fiery gold. They were impressed. Gone, it seemed, were the coarse language and vulgar outlook. They all felt a little spark of cheer: *something* was going right.

They had not long to meditate on that, however. The great green frog was hopping up and down in a transport of self-denial and croaking, "No!! I won't hear of it! It's out of the question. For my part everyone else may come first, for I have found already my heart's desire: my dear — if not own — Lorna."

Yet when they asked him whom he preferred to rescue next, he confused the issue by hemming and hawing, not wanting to seem to prefer the happiness of any of his new friends over that of the others. Finally he bethought him to plump (neutrally) for "The fat prince! He has suffered long and loudly —"

"No," declared the wizard Wam with emphasis. "The Prince of Wates waits! A little bit longer on his current diet" (which was no diet) "won't harm him at all."

How then to decide?

"We could flip a coin," suggested Uncle Henry, recalling old Kansas ways of settling fifty-fifty questions.

That, of course, was virtually impossible in Oz. No one had with him any of the only known coins in the kingdom, the famous green play pennies of the Emerald City. "What can we flip?" pondered their hostess, looking doubtfully about her at pot lids and a couple of leftover breakfast pancakes.

"Dorothy, my dear." spoke Wam. "That bit of amethyst you've taken to playing with: it would do nicely. It's flattish on two sides... It's rather a fine one, by the way. It has magical properties, did you know?"

Dorothy was thrilled—and more than ever pleased with her young friend’s gift. But she did not have long to be delighted before the witch said, “Give it here then. Now: heads we save Mrs. Henry first, tails we go after Mrs. Wam.” She pointed out to her clients which side of the gem would be which.

High flashed the grape-colored jewel through the lavender air and down it came to rest in the good witch’s dexterous hand which, after one glance, she covered with the other. “Heads!” she announced. “Now go we to determine who they shall be that straight shall post to Munchkinland.”

This paraphrase of a classical allusion confounded them all for a moment. Then Dorothy found her voice and said, “‘Post’? I’m sure none of us wants to wait to be mailed there!”

“No-no, of course not.” Tattypoo apologized hastily for her literary aberration. “To save further shuttling back and forth I propose that we all ride to the Gale homestead in the Red Wagon. It’s only an hour away.”

The idea took them all by surprise, yet after all they couldn’t see any disadvantage in it. It would indeed save their having to come back for the Sawhorse later.

“But stay!” said Uncle Henry. “We’re too many by now. Seven of us is going to be a squeeze. And don’t forget there’s no springs in that wagon to speak of...”

“We could turn it into a char-a-banc, I suppose,” said Wam, though a little dubiously.

“No, wait! I’ve got a splendid idea,” declared Tattypoo. “Even elegant—for it will satisfy any who may not be so glad at how the gem-flipping turned out. You, Wam, shall *send* me to the Sapphire City. I’m pretty sure that’s where Lucinda was due to turn up today. We’ll rendezvous with you later at the Gale house.”

Nor did anyone have anything to object to that proposal. Nay, more: it was popular, for immediately Zip was clamoring to be allowed to go along and be in at the long-longed-for encounter with his mother. Princess Dorothy then joined her pleas to his: she wanted to be included in another ‘sending’, having

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found her first one quite exhilarating.

So it was done. The load in the wagon was now lightened considerably and the four passengers set out at once. Wam's last act before he joined Henry Gale on the front seat was to wave his hand dispatchingly at the old witch and the two children in the doorway of the violet-and-gingerbread hut. In a moment all was silent and deserted at the home of Tattypoo. Who could have guessed it would be years before she saw that home again?

C H A P T E R T W E N T Y - T H R E E

Lucinda, the Lady of Light, had just sat down to her elevenses in the morning room of the Sapphire Palace. “Mother!” cried Zippiochoggolak and ran across the blue spruce parquetry to fling his head in her lap.

Lucinda gave a great cry and burst into tears, clutching the boy to her as if she meant never to let go.

Tattypoo and Dorothy turned away, not to intrude on the touching scene, and spoke to King Cheerio, who had stumbled to his feet, dropping his napkin and scattering blueberry bismarcks in every direction. The bluehounds under the table scabbled to their feet and devoured the muffins that landed on the floor.

The flustered and blushing king was staring at Tattypoo as if he’d seen her before—as he had, of course—but that is another story. The king certainly hadn’t looked to see anyone arrive now in this fashion. “How—? Who—? Why...?” he burbled.

“By magic. To fetch Lucinda. She’s wanted,” calmly replied the Witch of the North and gave the king her hand to shake or kiss or stuff in his pocket or whatever else the silly old duffer might choose to do with it. She indicated Dorothy; then the king had to start over on what no doubt passed for him as forms of welcome.

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The Lady of Light and her Lad were over the worst of their reuniting by now. They prepared to take a composed part in the conversation. "Of course," announced the radiant light-lady quietly, "I'll be only too glad to return with you and greet your father. I'm so sorry, Your Highness, to break off what has been a delightful little visit—"

"Oh," put in Tattypoo, "there's no call to be abrupt, Madam Lucinda. We're not expected for an hour or more. Do carry on with your meal."

Indeed, with all the traveling the children had done since breakfast at the hotel, they were not averse to an early brunch themselves. They all sat down round the table and had a nice little party. Now the newcomers had time to become more aware of the presence of a third participant at the interrupted refreshment. This was a well-mannered youth who was introduced as Prince Philador. In contrast to King Cheerioded, whose blustering and ineptness merely amused the sceptical Witch of the North, young Philador seemed to ingratiate himself inordinately with the old woman. They sat next to each other at table and were thick as anything, quite ignoring the others, who were on at great length about the children's many adventures of the last few days.

Time just flew. Suddenly Tattypoo looked at her watch and "Great heavens!" she cried. "They'll be sending for us any second now!" She jumped up. "Quickly, people," she commanded; "join hands now.. Not you, duffer! Oh! sorry, Your Highness," she apologized curtly to King Cheerioded who seemed to be going to join the circle to be transported away. Hastily, blushing azure, the king dropped his hands and stood abashed. Tattypoo, Lucinda, Zip, and Dorothy linked hands in a magic circle and waited...

And waited. Nothing happened.

There was time for further small talk. The Lady of Light thanked the King of the Ozure Isles for his charming hospitality. Tattypoo was heard to say to Prince Philador, "I'll look into that disappearance as soon as I'm home again, I promise. Of

course it's upsetting for you! You want to find your mother again—just as this young man today so happily has found his—” She had just turned to glance at Zip, when suddenly the magic ‘took’—and King Cheerio and his son were left gaping at a deserted table.

The rendezvous point for the travelers by magic was the bluesward in front of Dorothy's (and all the Gales') old house. Sure enough! there was the Sawhorse, not even winded from his run. His four passengers were just in the act of climbing down from the red wagon.

Abruptly the little old woman Tattypoo made a low bow to Dorothy at her side and said, “You are welcome, most noble sorceress, to the land of the Munchkins!”—and then giggled delightedly.

“Why, what—!” said the startled Dorothy. “I've *been* in the land of the Munchkins for two hours... Oh, I see!” Then she too laughed most heartily.

Lucinda and Zip stood looking on in puzzlement. until Dorothy explained: “This is the spot on which I landed in Oz for the first time all those years ago. And those are the words with which the Good Witch of the North welcomed me.”

Thoroughly delighted—and quite forgetting that the witch still had in her pocket—through an oversight, of course!—the magic amethyst she, Dorothy, prized so highly—the girl put her arm through that of Tattypoo and advanced to meet her uncle and friends.

Zip and his parents were caught in the magic circle of reunion. They slipped away into the forest by the little stream and were seen no more for some time.

Meanwhile the attention of Dorothy Gale was distracted from the figures of those whom she had seen but recently to the little old farmhouse that she had not seen in a dozen years. Actually, the house had never been a particular favorite of hers. It was far too bare and crude a little dwelling ever to have made great claims on anyone's affections. Perhaps that was why she had never had curiosity to revisit it in all the years she had lived in

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Oz. If the house had become something of a national shrine it was due to *others'* interest in it, not her own. Just the same, now that she was here she looked with great fascination at the grey weathered boards, the bleached shingle roof, the faded battered door—and at the fantastic brilliance of scarlet that was almost bursting out of every window!

“Uncle dear,” she called when still some paces away, “whatever is all that red?! It’s quite amazing. I’m not altogether sure I like it. It reminds me of something—threatening...”

“It might at that, my dear,” said Uncle Henry. “It’s some of those poppies they say you fell asleep in years ago.”

“Good gracious,” said the girl. “Is it quite safe? having them in the house that way.”

“Oh, your Aunt Em said there was nothing sinister about them. They’re just ordinary poppies. And she liked the red color.”

“Where IS Auntie Em?” asked the girl wonderingly, for the hair-raising tales her uncle had told had made her expect, at the worst, a burst of gunshot, or at the best a forthright figure at the door demanding to know their business.

“She *could* have stepped out, I reckon. She did go into the woods at times ... to collect things.” “What sort of things, Uncle?”

“Oh, flowers—well, weeds, actually. And toad-stools. And then she developed an interest in amphibiology—”

“Whatever’s that?”

“Well, she seemed to be fond of toads and frogs and newts and things.”

This was very puzzling and not wholly reassuring to the young girl. It was with considerable trepidation that she led the way to the cottage door, as the others followed.

The door was shut. Dorothy knocked. She waited. The others stood in a group and waited as patiently. There came no answer. Dorothy knocked again.

“It’s rained, I see,” said Farmer Henry nervously, just to make a noise. He indicated the full tub under the rain spout.

“Mrs. Gale has been caring for her plants,” offered Tattypoo in her turn and pointed to a watering can and various pails and

fruit jars set along under the eaves to catch drips.

Still nobody replied to the knocking. "This is silly," said Dorothy and opened the door and—

But that was as far as she got. A gust of sickening rich syrup scent swept out to meet her and forced her back, gagging. How well she remembered that terrible fragrance from a day twelve years before! "How awful!" she gasped when she could get her breath.

Witch Tattypoo had sized up the situation in a trice. "Quick, people!" she cried. "The plants! Break open the windows and get them out." She herself led the way into the red-hazy atmosphere of the interior of the house.

Well might a timider soul have drawn back. The poppies in the window pots seemed to have undergone a magical transformation. They had spread outward and upward until they gave the impression of filling every available cranny of space. The in-rushing people had to thresh their way through a veritable small jungle of red and green that darkened the one room with a lurid chiaroscuro.

At first they could not even see the room's one occupant. Then when a particularly thick hedge of prickly poppy stems had been knocked aside they saw sprawled on the bed the inert figure of a woman in black.

Dorothy at the door, frantic, took one look and screamed, "Auntie Em! Oh, she's dead!", forgetting for a moment what country she was in and mistaking the figure's green complexion for the color of advanced decomposition.

"Hush, hush, my dear!" cried Uncle Henry, turning from his firefighter-type labors and taking his niece in his arms. "It may not be as bad as that. Here, folks! that'll do. Help me get my wife outside—into the open air."

Tattypoo and Lorna the nymph hurried to obey. Without the scantest ceremony they dragged the limp form of the farm-wife off the bed and out the door and laid her on the grass five yards from the house. There the pinkish fumes that still belched from the broken windows could not reach her. Dorothy sat down

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beside the unconscious woman and began to fan her with her hat for all she was worth.

For a long time nothing happened—except that Wammuppirovocuck and his family, alarmed by the uproar, came hurrying out of the woods. The Witch of the North was beginning to wonder if the woman had indeed been destroyed, if not killed, by what must have been a week's concentrated and enclosed in-breathing of the deadly perfume. The others had done what they could toward ridding the little house of its frightful miasma and already no further sight or scent of the opium vapors were to be remarked.

King Vergrodius had stayed in the rear as the burst of rescue activity convulsed the house but now he too drew near and all the friends stood around in a circle to watch and wait for what beneficent effect fresh air might have. Dorothy was saying, "It took me a long time to wake up and I'd only been amongst the flowers a few minutes," when—actually rather remarkably early—one of Aunt Em's green eyelids gave a flutter.

That inspired them all with renewed hope. The poor woman was *not* dead—or even destroyed! Now it was just a case of waiting out her recovery patiently.

When the house had aired completely the women members of the expedition ventured in again to find if there was anything that might be served up as a late lunch. Nothing edible was found except a basket of drying mushrooms and, on the cupboard counter, a plate of half-consumed frogs' legs. These latter had, alas, not been cooked. Quickly the ladies returned outdoors. The meal, such as it was, ended in consisting of a few raw bismarcks from the bush behind the house.

It must have been at about seven o'clock that evening that, after an exaggerated period of letting nature take its course, the adventurers were rewarded by Mrs. Gale's giving a very deep sigh and returning to consciousness. By then the watchers, even the anxious Henry Gale and his niece, had grown bored with sitting around waiting while Em slept (no amount of shaking served to wake her) and had wandered off.

One or two remained, of course, always on duty beside the unconscious figure. Lorna and King Vergrodius were thus serving when the awakening took place. Tattypoo at that time was at the stove in the Gale house cooking up a ragout of tasty ingredients she had found in fields and woods nearby and even (shh!) a fish taken from the brook close at hand. Uncle Henry and Dorothy were seated companionably on a log against a wistaria tangle at the edge of the glade, reading some old letters they had found in the house. And Wammuppirovocuck's reunited family had gone for another walk in the woods.

"Gol darn!! what the freak's been goin' on?!" were the first words the relieved vigil-keepers heard from the black-clad Emily as she raised herself on her elbows and gazed about the lawn.

What joy! The other Gales dropped their letters and Tattypoo stuck her head out the door, prepared to hasten nigh. Her long sleep seemed to have refreshed the green-skinned Em enormously. Quickly she scrambled to her feet and glanced around just as her husband and niece hurried up. "Oh, for crap's sake!" she yelled enthusiastically. "You again!" (This was directed at Henry.) "Can't I get you out of my hair? And that tiresome girl! Where did *you* spring from? Come to aid and abet the old codger in keeping me down, I'll bet!"

Henry and Dorothy in hurt horror stopped in their tracks. They'd been more or less prepared for bad language but this was *too* painful. Emily was by no means finished spewing witchy—or even bitchy—venom. She spied witch Tattypoo half hesitating in the doorway of the house and called out to her jauntily, "Who gave *you* permission, you ugly old frump, to invade my kitchen?! Get your rear out of there! but pronto!"

Lastly her gaze fell on Lorna, the tree sprite, and King Vergrodius, who were retreating hastily. "Who might *you* be, my pretty?" screeched Em insinuatingly at the alarmed woman. "You look like a tart so I don't know how you ever got into this august company. And who's your familiar?": she launched a shaft at the away-hopping king.

This latter apparition set the witch woman's thoughts off on

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another tack: "Hot ziggetty! that reminds me: I feel like I haven't eaten in a week." (That's right. She hadn't.) "And right there's a meal—king-size—tryin' to get away!" With no further ado Emily Gale took three running bounds and a flying leap to launch herself on the back of the terrified outsize frog.

Instant and violent confusion ensued. Nymph Lorna threw herself upon Aunt Em to try to drag her away from her lover. At Em's fighting words the Witch of the North had run from the house door and she too hurled herself into the fray. Uncle Henry rushed in to attempt to separate the warring females. And Dorothy -

What did Dorothy do in the emergency? Why, just what she had done once before, instinctively, when she got angry enough. It was a tried and true old Kansas recipe for breaking up a cat-and-dog (or frog?) fight. She stepped to the wall of the house under the eaves and seized up a pail of water. Then she ran to the free-for-all in the middle of the bluesward and with perfect control (though without *really* considering what she was doing) dashed the gallon of liquid full over the quarreling quintet.

The results were impressive.

In the first place the fight stopped. Uncle Henry and Nymph Lorna got to their feet, shaking loose water drops from themselves and garments. As for King Vergrodius, he positively delighted in the refreshing splash after his work-out.

But the others...?!

Fearful changes were taking place in them. The two old women did not arise from the lawn. No, they lay twisting and turning in agony while uttering the most heart-rending moans and wails. Emily Gale was heard to enunciate the famous repique: "Oh-h, all my beautiful wickedness...!

Look out—here I go!" Then she appeared to faint. Witch Tattypoo's cries, meanwhile, were more inarticulate but not the less touching for that. Mixed up with her anguish seemed to be a considerable amount of surprise. Even at the last she did not lose consciousness but groaned and mewled and mumbled and whistled ... until her shape shrank in and in and disappeared

into the evening air as wisps of lavender smoke.

The circle of horrified spectators stood silent—except for gasps. The show was not over. As they stared at the black figure of the senseless Aunt Emily Gale and the water drained away from her into the grass, there came, they saw, a change. Was not Em’s skin less green, the nose less hooked? Yes, surely those claw-like hands were smoothing into a semblance of the capable lady’s hands her relatives remembered. Even the horrid rusty black gown: the dye was draining out of it to leave at last nothing but some friendly flounces of sprigged muslin among the trees on the grass in Munchkinland.

Dorothy Gale turned to look at her uncle with big eyes. “Of course!” she murmured; “Aunt Em isn’t a witch.”

“No,” said Uncle Henry. “But Tattypoo was.”

C H A P T E R T W E N T Y - F O U R

It was a very chastened group that sat down to supper of Tattypoo's (rather delicious) ragout in the little old house. The poppy plants in their broken pots had been banished to the edge of the brook and the air in the house was as fresh and wholesome as could be. All was as it once had been, even to Aunt Em dishing up the stew into the eight chipped plates (there were *just* enough) which the house afforded.

"I'll never forgive myself," said Aunt Em for the eleventh time.

"There's nothing to forgive yourself for," said the wizard Wam for the eighth time. (Sometimes the others took turns at protesting.) "As *yourself* you never did any but kindly well-intentioned acts."

"If only I'd never dug up those wretched poppies!"

"But that was not a wicked action—only unfortunate, as it turned out. But, please, never mind all that. The question is: what do we do now?"

"There's nothing we can do," said Henry Gale. "I never heard of even Ozma or Glinda bringing anybody back from destruction."

"Ooh-h!" moaned Em again and refused to eat any ragout. "Will I be tried for murder?"

"You, Aunt Em?!" said Dorothy, who had been brooding but eating. "I'm the one who committed the heinous act. You never lifted a finger." "Well, but for me it would never have happened."

"Em, my dear," said Henry with authority (the events of the last ten days had given him that—while removing it from his wife). "Put a sock in it, do; there's a good girl."

Meekly Em obeyed.

Yet something needs must be done. It was already dark and they didn't even know where they were going to spend the night. There was no room for eight in the Gale cottage.

"That's all right," said Wam. "I'll 'send' the rest of you back to the Amethyst Garden, and Zip and I will camp here. I don't suppose you folks..?" He looked at the Gales enquiringly.

"Land sakes, no!" cried Em with a shudder. Her husband and niece tended to agree that if they never had to see the old house again they'd be just as well pleased. This present meal was indeed the last supper.

That's how they left it. Next morning Wam recalled the others and they set out—some of them—in the red wagon.

Destination?

They still had their agenda of disenchantments to accomplish. Though the one who had been expected to do the disenchanting had gone away, the need hadn't. King Vergrodius' shape, the Prince of Wates' size, as well as the condition of some minds: all these should by rights be altered—though these last were a particularly tricky thing to try to change.

In discussion, after the others had left for the night, Wam and his son hit on a rather neat solution to one problem. Perhaps one should say rather: 'Zip and his father', for it was the former who said to his dad as he lay in the narrow bed that had once been Dorothy's:

"What's the biggest bother about the overgrown prince, Dad?"

"Oh, his pissing and moaning, I suppose," answered Wam, in rough men-together language. "His weight problem will sort itself out *by* itself in time, but I guess it's too bad he's got to

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suffer so long—and so loudly.”

“Right,” concurred Zip. “So if we could just shut up his complaints...?”

“What do you have in mind?” Wam knew of old that his son’s ideas were worth listening to.

“With your constructional skills it wouldn’t be any trouble at all to build a little green-frame up around the window nearest the Prince’s head, would it?”

“Er—no. I think I’ve even got the materials on hand back at Legerdemain Lane—if the Prince hasn’t threshed about and crushed them to shards and sawdust.”

“And let in some moisture?: a sprinkler system?” “That could be managed—though I can’t think what for.”

“We’ll need the wagon for hauling,” mused Zip. “But Uncle could take care of that. There’s also another thing he could manage. You know he and I have been working out at ‘sending’. In fact it was Uncle who got *me* to teleporting again—in just our small way...”

“I’ll have a word with the old gentleman tomorrow first thing,” promised Wammuppirovocuck. “With my instruction he can be ‘sending’ with the best of us in no time.”

“Great. So here’s what I’ve got in mind,” said Zip eagerly, raising up on one elbow. “We’ll get Uncle Henry to send me and you—and Mom too, of course, for company. And then I guess Aunt Em wouldn’t *much* want to be in the Red Wagon with its load—”

“What load?” Wam’s curiosity was sufficiently piqued. He too rose on one elbow and peered toward his son’s bed—though visibility was zero in the darkened house.

“Poppies,” announced Zippiochoggolak. “We’ll collect up some of those cracked pots from down by the brook, plant ‘em underneath the prince’s window—glassed in so he’ll get the fumes direct. In a year or two, when he’s shrunk away into the house far enough from the plants, he’ll wake up by himself—and walk out the door.”

C H A P T E R T W E N T Y - F I V E

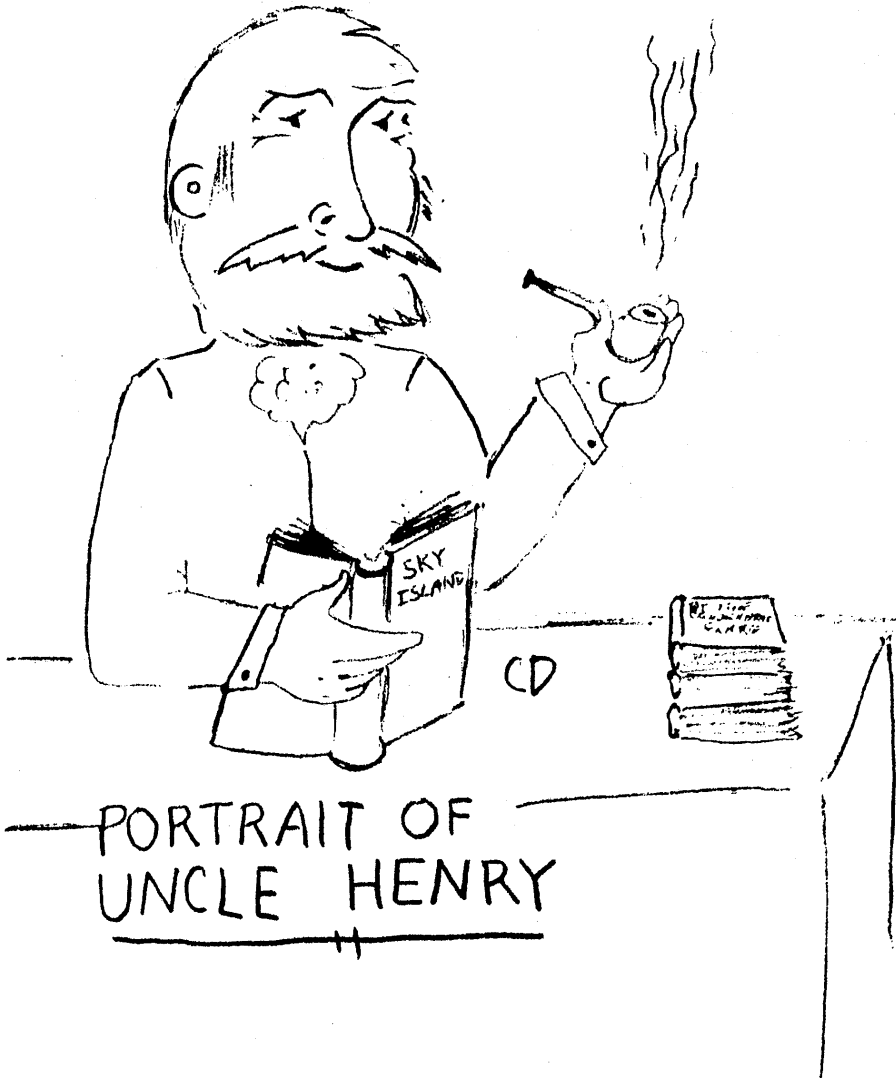
That's what they did. Dusting off their hands in Legerdemain Lane, Wam and Zip said to the others, "Now what?"

"Hur-rumphh." King Vergrodius cleared his throat modestly.

"Right you are, Your Highness," said Wam. "Now ideally your case is cured by recourse to the wishing emeralds themselves—which *caused* the enchantment. But does anybody know where *they* are?" Here Nymph Lorna burst into tears afresh. "Oh, woe is me," she mourned. "I compounded my ancient felony by making away with the ones who had caused my unhappiness. Mine is the traditional fate of those who go on a revenge kick: they find, too late, they have need of those they destroy for vengeance's sake. I ate the squirrels... who stole the jewels that lay in the tree where I dwelt. If only those squirrels still survived, we might find them and learn where they hid the necklaces."

Nothing was to be gained by crying over the milk that was spilt. They didn't have time anyway. It was a comforting sign of Mrs. Henry Gale's restoration to her former equanimity that it was she at this point who came to the rescue. "Wasn't there" — she looked to her husband for confirmation — "a where-is-scope among the things the Wizard put in the wagon for us, Henry? I seem to remember..."

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"Clever wife!" crowed the old farmer and kissed his life's companion in delight. How splendid to see she was thinking rationally again—and to great purpose.

Naturally the party had not left the Dorothy's House National Monument without bringing away the tools they had striven over the possession of—and never used. Now one of them would come into its own. Henry went to the wagon, rum-

maged in a holdall in the back, and returned to the group under the walnut tree with an odd object like a telescope on a short tripod with a slot in either side.

"The way I understand it," he said, "you write out a detailed description of what you want to locate on a narrow strip of paper or card and feed it in through this slot, and out the other side the machine 'reads' the slip and acts accordingly. The 'scope turns in the direction in which the hunted object is to be found and also shows what the area looks like where it is. You just keep following the where-is-scope 'til where you are matches up with what you're looking at—and there you'll find your object."

"Most ingenious," said Wammuppirovocuck with professional appreciation. "An invention of the good wizard Oz?"

"I guess so," confirmed Henry. "But the Wizard's so modest. He never said what-all of these magic implements he perfected himself."

Now Zip wormed his way into the blue/purple-striped house again and found some paper and a pencil. (How rarely recondite objects like those are used in Oz...) Between them Wam and Henry composed the text and soon the where-is-scope was pointing—due south!

"How queer," said King Vergrodius. "It *was* in the forest at Green Mountain that you suspect the squirrels of having hidden or lost the jewels, was it not, my dear?" He turned to lorn Lorna for confirmation.

"I never had reason," said the tree sprite, still a bit weepily, "to think anything else."

"And that's at the edge of the Emerald Country: more west from here than south," said the frog king, *he* knew the route, if anyone did!

"The machine never lies," stated Henry. "Leastways, the Wizard told me he'd never known it to make a mistake."

"Off we go into the south then," declared Wam. "...But wait! Eight of us, plus a wagonload of magic tools, is still a bit much for the wagon. What to do?"

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Aunt Em, getting her courage back and sometimes even starting to feel 'right' again, was the first to speak. "I don't know about you, Henry, but I wonder if I'm needed on this expedition?"

Henry, who was getting his second or third wind, looked disappointed. The necromancer Wam soon made it all right, however.

"That's fine," he said. "I've got an idea. We'll work the divide-and-succeed trick again. This time we'll be careful not to do anything impulsive to upset our plans." This was the only reproach Wammuppirovocuck ever delivered to Miss Dorothy for having annihilated his old colleague, the Witch of the North.

"Now what," he went on, "if Mr. Gale—the newly qualified space-sender—" Wam looked for a moment at Uncle Henry, whose training in teleporting, begun so impromptu and so (it already seemed!) long ago with young Zip, had just been brought to a prosperous conclusion. "—what if he and I collaborate in a little mutual sending? Here's what I have in mind:—" and the necromancer outlined a scheme which seemed to bid fair to settle all problems outstanding with the elegance to which this troupe always aspired—and which always eluded them.

"So it's King Vergrodius and I on the jewel chase," concluded Wam.

"And me!" yelled Zip in sudden alarm lest he miss out on an adventure.

"And me!" cried Dorothy, fearful lest she miss out on Zip.

"That *would* lighten the load for teleporting just now," agreed Wam thoughtfully. "It also divides the party neatly. So be it. Now, if you ladies are ready?... and Mr. Gale..."

Lucinda and Lorna, Aunt Em and Uncle Henry, joined hands, and in an instant they were no more there but safely in the Throne Room in the Palace Magic in the Emerald City of Oz. Thus quietly ended the travels of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Gale in Oz. At least—I think...

C H A P T E R T W E N T Y - S I X

“I wish Uncle Henry was with us,” said Zip at the reins as the Red Wagon dashed merrily along. Did Wam the necromancer, busy navigating with the help of the where-is-scope, experience a little pang at this remark?

“Oh, so do I!” said Princess Dorothy warmly. “And you know what? I’ll bet he does too. It was awfully loyal of him to go home with Auntie Em to keep her company since she had that awful scare... I’m kinda glad I didn’t have to go back with them.”

Zip was surprised. Or, when he thought about it, was he really? Anyway he said, “Oh. Why?” Dorothy colored up. “So I didn’t have to be there when they explained to Ozma and the others about poor Mrs. Tattypoo. When I think—! The very person who started me off on the right foot in Oz!.. and now she’s not there anymore^s...”

“Hrmm!” broke in Wammuppirovocuck to change the subject. “Have a look at this, will you, Dorothy?” He had been glancing into the scope viewfinder at regular intervals—not that it told him much. The view revealed was completely black! After his first dismay Wam had quickly twigged that this probably meant no more than that the emeralds were concealed somewhere in the dark: perhaps where the squirrels, squirrel-

§ But not to worry. See *The Good Witch of Oz*. Editor’s note.

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fashion, had originally buried them. Such a state of affairs was, however, by no means disabling for their search. The where-is-scope would soon show them where to dig.

But was it going to be necessary? Suddenly Wam had seen the dark view-finder flooded with light. But before he could grasp what sort of setting the necklaces reposed in, or Dorothy, her attention attracted, could get a glimpse of the scene, the total blackness settled in again. One thing seemed clear: the jewels were no longer (if they had ever been) underground.

The next odd occurrence took place about an hour later. The Sawhorse had sped on as fast as was compatible with keeping in line with the where-is-scope's direction guidance. They had just crossed, by a little rustic bridge, a narrow reach of the Munchkin River in the southern part of the country, when Wam said whimsically, "Does the sun go down in the south?"

"Not usually, sir" answered his son as whimsically.

"Why do you ask that?" croaked the solemn King Vergrodius.

"It's either that or we are now somehow going west. See the sunset straight ahead?"

A few moments' cogitation and Wammuppirovocuck could announce with conviction: "The necklaces are moving!"

That seemed to all of them a very strange thing but yet it seemed to be quite true (unless the where-is-scope had gone crazy), for presently the indicated line of pursuit shifted again toward he southwest.

"What a nuisance," said Wam. "This throws our plans out." He explained. "I never thought we'd have to *chase* the things. At the Sawhorse's speed I figured we'd be wherever the necklaces were by nightfall, do a quick wish, and be ready to join the others back at E.C. Mr. Gale and I have agreed he'll 'fetch' us from the northwest corner of Garnet Square in the Ruby City at ten o'clock tonight. We'll never make it."

"Oh, dear," said Dorothy, "and then they'll worry."

"Exactly," said Wam. "So what do we do now?"

"Well, for one thing, surely: send a message to Ozma at the palace. Let's stop a bird."

This course was agreed upon without discussion. They kept an eye out for feathered friends. The first they caught sight of was a rosebreasted grosbeak perched on a rowan branch pecking at the berries. This was the first they'd realized they had now crossed into the Quadling Country.

"What's your name, dear?" asked Dorothy.

"Dora," said the grosbeak.

"Well, Dora, will you be a pet and relay by way of your friends to Princess Ozma in the Emerald City that our party will be held up? Say that 'we'll come on by Red Wagon as soon as we can make it—and Uncle Henry isn't to bother.' Have you got that?"

"I think so," and the bird repeated the message. Then she flew off on a first stage of the bird messenger service, having assured the travelers that the news should arrive by midnight at the latest.

With easier minds the four travelers rode on, but after all night overtook them. They begged lodging at a gamekeeper's cottage in a redwood forest and were on the way again at day-break.

It was about ten o'clock of a red-misty morning when Zip at the reins caught a first glimpse of two things ahead: a great rocky hill rising out of the haze and, nearer at hand, a fast-traveling buggy moving in their own line of march toward the hill.

At first the friends couldn't make out what was pulling the buggy but as they slowly (even at the Sawhorse's pace!) gained on the equipage they saw that the locomotive power was supplied by a pink cheetah, the swiftest of all quadrupeds. The sight was surprising even in Oz and our travelers all stared as the vehicles drew abreast.

The driver of the buggy was now seen to be a dark-skinned wizened little old fellow in rumpled clothes. He, too looked to the side curiously as the Red Wagon drew past, and all of them raised their hats politely in salutation. The Sawhorse had got just one length ahead when suddenly Wammuppirovocuck let out a squawk. The where-is-scope was now signaling a direction straight behind them!

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“Stop!” Wam cried to his son—and incidentally to the Sawhorse. “The emeralds are in that buggy!” Both vehicles had begun the ascent of the rocky hill before they finally got stopped side by side and Wam leaned out to accost the startled driver of the other carriage. “Pardon me, good sir! Do you happen to be carrying any emeralds?”

“Num,” said the man. “What kind emeralds did you have in mind?”

“Nothing fancy. Just a necklace—or maybe two—of emerald chips—in a rather nice gold mounting. “

“As it happens,” said the fellow, clearly somewhat mystified, “I do just happen to have with me something that might suit. Did you want to buy—pardon me I should use the expression—”

But Wam broke him off, saying, “Well, as a matter of fact, we just wanted to *borrow* them—briefly!”

“‘Borrow’?” queried the man. “This I don’t understand. What good you should have ‘borrowing’ emeralds?—and ‘briefly’?”

“Let me explain,” said Wam genially. He had gained a most useful bit of information and now was on his guard to proceed cautiously and give nothing away. He climbed down from the wagon and held out his hand. “Pray allow us to introduce ourselves. These are my friends—” and here the wizard named his fellow travelers. “And I am an... engineer, name of Wammuppirovocuck.”

“Pleased to meet you,” said the buggy driver. “I am an itinerant merchant—some people might say ‘peddler’. My name: Levimeyerabloch.”

“A striking name,” commented Wan. “And phonetically very similar in structure to names in our family. Is it possible—”

“We should be relations?” posited Levimeyerabloch. “Could be. My father was Ritzeeplummereczek and *his* father was Rappamaxinetock—who had a brother Baumelaumerovik—”

“Say, my father’s third cousin was named Baumizygreenevick!” declared Wam. “There’s undoubtedly

some connection back there somewhere. Well, Lev.." Having established a basis of cordiality Wam went on to explain all about their quest—almost. Meanwhile the others had alighted from the red wagon, pleased at the chance to stretch their legs—and rub other parts of their bodies—after several hours of unbroken jouncing over the roads. King Vergrodius hovered near where negotiations were going on between the (possibly) distant kinsmen of the tribe of —k. At any moment his long long enchantment might be going to be brought to an end. Dorothy and Zip, hand in hand, strolled forward up the road, looking curiously at the landscape of jagged rocks. The Sawhorse too and the pink cheetah, so nearly matched in their capacity for speed, took this opportunity to get acquainted. "It's queer," said Dorothy, looking a little puzzled and even a bit uneasy, "this place reminds me of something..."

"It's a typically Baumian landscape, isn't it?" said Zip who was well-read in the history of the fatherland; "a great hill of broken rocks dumped down unmotivatedly in the middle of an otherwise featureless plain."

"Yes." said Dorothy musingly. "I wonder if this isn't—"

But the intriguing topic had to be abandoned when they heard Wam calling. "Dorothy! Would you mind stepping here for a moment? Let us see how these look on you."

There in the necromancer's hands rested at last the delicate filigrees of emeralds and gold that so many had so long searched and sighed for!

The little girl was delighted to comply. She took up the sparkling feather-weight chains one by one and laid them about her neck, while Zip fastened the catches at the back and Wam elucidated one little mystery: "Mr. Levimeyerabloch had been keeping them in a closed bureau drawer at home until yesterday, when he took them out and put them in a jewel case to bring on this trip. He's on his way to call on our good friend Glinda who sent him a hurry-up order for some new jewelry!"

"Oh, what fun!" said Dorothy, pleased, as she waited for Zip to do the second catch. "But, Mr. Lev," she addressed the

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peddler, "can we ask where you got them? You see—I suppose Mr. Wam has explained?—we knew about these necklaces, but we thought ... they were somewhere else entirely," she ended a bit lamely, not sure how much Wam had seen fit to reveal.

"Interesting you should ask that," said Lev, rubbing his hands as he inspected the effect the jewels made on the little girl's breast. "I haven't had them all that long. I traded them—for an axe—from a woodcutter's boy in the forest of Vervalde, oh, maybe two months ago."

"And where did *he* get them?" persisted Dorothy.

"Well, he tried to make me believe he *found* them!—right at the bottom of a pile of old leaves in a remote corner of the forest. I didn't enquire too closely," said Lev and gave a conspiratorial wink.

Now Dorothy had an idea that this scene of the trying on of the necklaces was being stage-managed by the capable Wammuppirovocuck for a purpose and she looked at him for guidance as she found excuses to keep them around her neck. "I'd love to see how I look in them!" she said. "Have any of us got a mirror?"

"Mirrors is it?" said Lev. "Now I just disposed last week of a handsome set of three polished-silver mirrors—that reflect the past, the present, and the future. They went to a magician on the Winkie border who goes in for mirrors in a big way. Remind me I should tell you sometime about his scheme for casting the biggest mirror in the world^s ... But at the moment, no: a mirror I haven't got."

Wammuppirovocuck waited politely for Lev's spiel to be finished, then said quietly, "Step over to the Red Wagon, why don't you, Dorothy? There may well be a looking glass in one of the hold-alls with the wizard Oz's equipment... Oh, and perhaps Ki-er, Mr. Vergrodius would like to help you," he said pointedly, looking down at the frog and giving a wink so aimed as not to be observed by Lev the peddler.

Dorothy took the hint of the thoroughly impractical sugges-

§ See *The Magic Mirror of Oz*. Editor's note

tion and went across to the back of the Red Wagon where, under the guise of rummaging in the three sacks of magic tools, she muttered under her breath, "I do now hereby formally wish that the enchantment of the frog, King Vergrodius of the Green Mountain, be utterly and irrevocably reversed and undone."

Splendid. Dorothy after so many years at the court of the fairy Ozma was conversant with the protocol of spells. Her thorough incantation worked like a charm—which indeed it was. The squat figure of the giant green frog was gone and by Dorothy's side at the tailgate of the wagon now stood a similarly squat form of a man: ugly of feature but not deformed, somewhat shorter than Dorothy herself, with a face made even more uncomely by lines of suffering and deprivation—and yet... there was an air of majesty and something of sensitive humanity about the face and figure that touched the heart.

Incidentally the figure was also unclothed. Contrary to common belief clothes do not follow along in a transformation. But Princess Dorothy did not panic; instead, she calmly reached back into sack number two and pulled out a cracker-jacket she had noticed there and handed it to the king. It came down to his knees but that was all right. Solemnly and without speech he bowed deeply to his benefactress.

Suddenly! the little tableau was interrupted in the rudest possible way. A wild and hairy human (well, almost) head shot out of nowhere and knocked the little king sprawling, then instantly flew back to where it came from—which the startled glances of all our friends ascertained to be the hinder side of the nearest big rock.

"Oh, horrors!" screamed Dorothy. "It's those terrible Hammer-Heads! I knew there was something disagreeably familiar about this place! Take cover, everybody!"

They didn't need to be warned twice. In five seconds Wam, Zip, Lev the peddler, the shaken King Vergrodius, and Dorothy were crowded under the Red Wagon, peering out anxiously. There was enough to be anxious about. For now from behind

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every rock they saw a wild and threatening head peering back at them.

“What are they?” stammered young Zip in a scared voice.

“Oh, they’re dreadful creatures!” gasped Dorothy. “I ran into them once a long time ago. They haven’t got any arms, as you can see, but they can shoot out their horrid long necks to any length—and pound people with those awful heads. I don’t know why but they’re called ‘Hammer-Heads’. They’re really more like ‘pile-driver-heads’. Oh, they’re terrible!”

Meanwhile the heads kept cannoning out and as often as not colliding with something, though nothing much to their taste. A few smacks into the unyielding sides of the red wagon taught their owners not to repeat that ploy often. “Steady, Sawks! steady!” called Wammuppirovocuck to the Sawhorse. “The wagon’s our only protection! Try to keep cool!” He need not have worried. The phlegmatic (and brave) Sawhorse did not panic.

It was worse for the poor pink cheetah in the shafts of Lev’s buggy. A lucky strike by a shooting head knocked him senseless—and incidentally the head also. It dropped to the ground and lay with its neck stretched twenty feet along the ground like some great greyish-pink serpent.

“Oh, pyooh!” cried Dorothy in disgust, not liking to imagine what else the thing might resemble, only on a larger scale. “Isn’t it obscene! Nasty things. I wish they’d never been born!”

Instantly the heads vanished.

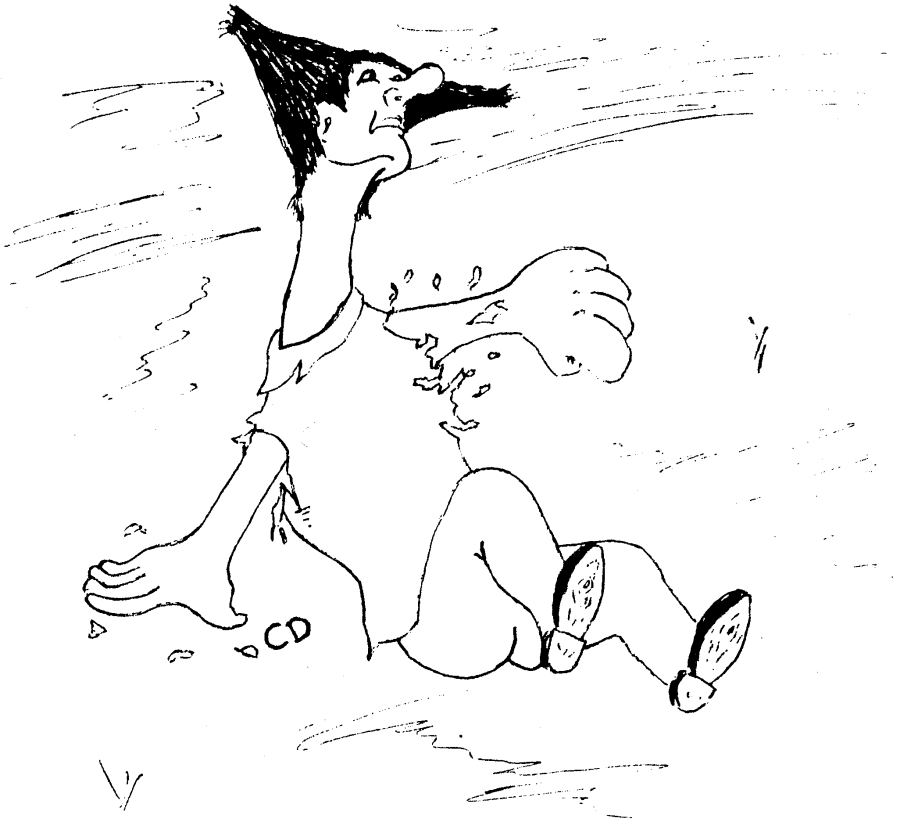
Once again Dorothy had been impulsive! It was only an instant though before she realized what she had done. Not wishing to have any further—and mass!—annihilations on her conscience, she hastily amended: “No! I mean: I wish they’d never been born like they are! I wish they were—uh, um—more like normal people!.. And I also wish their horrid hill was a valley!”

No sooner wished than accomplished, though with some little upset to everyone involved. With a great graceful swooping settling motion the very earth around them sank away and

all the big jagged boulders went bounding down the slopes of the emergent valley to collect in a ridge at the bottom. A number of Hammer-Heads got crushed in the process, but then there were more than enough of those to go round.

The buggy with its unconscious cheetah in the shafts would have followed the example of the rolling rocks but that the resourceful Sawhorse disobeyed instructions and pulled his vehicle into its path to block the buggy's motion.

And the Hammer-Heads that survived? They still had their big ugly flat-topped heads but these were now attached to their short stout bodies by thick necks of normal length. The trend to normality was enhanced by the sprouting of arms, at first constrained inside the creatures' clothes until one, then another, then many, began to poke their fists out through the seams, and these fists were seen to be particularly big and muscular.



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Becoming “more like normal people” did not reduce in the slightest the Hammer-Heads’ belligerence. After a momentary pause of astonishment at the change that had come over them all, the tribe now resumed the attack. Where formerly heads had served to attack their enemies with, the creatures soon discovered that fists would do as well.

In a mass they advanced on the fearful travelers, who had scrambled to position themselves once more under the wagon and buggy. The Hammer-Heads got in a few good blows—but so did our heroes.

As a perfectly natural reaction, now that there was nothing for it, all four of the men clambered out from under the wagon and began to lay about them. Even the Sawhorse got into the act by kicking out stoutly at any of the attackers who came within range of his rear hoofs.

The hero of the occasion proved, however, to be—King Vergrodius! He showed an amazing knack for grabbing any fist that came near him and cracking its knuckles, nay, crushing them, so that its owner retired howling and the fist was pulp for the rest of that day. Occasionally even a head or two would come within range and then he would crack these together resoundingly, so resoundingly indeed that in some cases the heads split right open and the contents, a sort of feathery pink chaff (“like the Scarecrow’s brans!” thought Dorothy wildly, under the wagon), spilled on the morning breeze and blew gently away. Curiously, this did not seem to mean that the Hammer-Heads thus afflicted remained any less alive or, indeed, any less intelligent than they had been before.

“Hang in there, Your Highness!” shouted Wammuppirovocuck from the fray. “You’re doing great. I never knew boxing was your sport!”

“No more did I!” the king yelled back. “I must take it up.”

“Hey!” cried Zip in his turn. “Now I know what a ‘crackerjacket’ is good for!” and in delight he belted another Hammer-Head full in the face.

With King Vergrodius’ splendid assist our friends actually

won the encounter. When the last Hammer-Head had slunk away down the valley to begin a new, vallecular, and conceivably even less combative life, Wam turned aside and gave his hand to lead Princess Dorothy out from under the wagon.

“Now then, my dear,” said he, “will you favor us with one last wish?”

“You mean—?” said the princess.

“Mm-hmh,” said Wam.

C H A P T E R T W E N T Y - S E V E N

“How nice to have you all here safe at last,” said Princess Ozma from her seat on a bench in Peridot Park.

Dorothy’s wish had delivered her and all her friends, *with* vehicles, to an open glade among the trees. The intelligent young princess had begun to learn to think ahead and weigh the possible effects of her impulses. Happening to reflect that a Sawhorse and a Red Wagon, as well as a buggy and an unconscious cheetah, might be perplexed to find themselves in the throne room of Ozma’s palace, she had worked her spell to place them in the nearest open location convenient to the royal residence. From there it was only the work of a moment for Wam to ‘send’ his son into the palace and the presence of the queen.

“Mission accomplished, Your Grace,” called Wammuppirovocuck as the exhausted travelers saw Ozma’s little party approaching through the park. Then Princess Dorothy took the lead to present to their ruler and to the genially smiling Wizard Oz of Oz that other wizard, Wam, his son Zippiochoggolak, and their (possible) cousin Levimeyerabloch.

The little queen was most charming and most condescending. “Well,” she said, and this royal word served to draw from their embraces of rapturous reunion Princess Dorothy and her aunt and uncle, Zip and his mother, and — well, it wasn’t exactly

embraces Nymph Lorna and the newly restored young King Vergrodius were exchanging but salutations of perhaps even more intense emotion, though of less outward show. “—all our cares are over then?” continued the Girl Ruler. “And you’ll all live happily ever after, I trust?”

At that they (nearly all) looked grave. Young Zippiochoggolak broke from his mother’s clasp and moved impulsively toward the seated Queen. “Oh, Princess Ozma, our cares are NOT all over!” he declared. “My mum would still be depressed living in Dad’s workshop—and bored living at home in the amber castle—”

“Oh, darling, you shouldn’t!” cried Lucinda, the former Maid—now Lady—of Light. “Princess Ozma doesn’t want to hear about our family troubles! Anyway, I’m not bored or unhappy at all when we are all together and going on visits—” Here she broke off in confusion.

“I should never wish to intrude—of course,” stated the Queen, “but if I could help in any way...”

“That’s just it, isn’t it, Ozma?” put in the Wizard of Oz. “Our charms and spells always have to do with purely physical conditions and objects, including, of course, living bodies. But they have no effect upon minds.”

“No, Oz,” said Ozma, “you’re right. It’s rare magic that can affect how people feel about things.”

“Then there’s King Vergrodius,” Zip went on urgently. “He deserves to be happy now—and Miss Lorna too—but, I don’t know, they just don’t seem to match up right. If only the King were tall and handsome... maybe...”

Here the young monarch of the Green Mountain put in a necessary word. “Pardon me, my dear young friend—very dear indeed, for all you have done for me—but I must after all object. If I am to be loved it must be for me as I am, not for an outward show that might be assumed. Even to win my dear Lorna I would not be false to myself.”

During this last speech Princess Ozma had been staring—yes, I’m afraid she did—at Zip’s cap, which he had at first held

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deferentially behind him but latterly, in the stress of his feeling, had brought forward to clutch in both hands. The queen smiled.

“What is that I see in your cap, Zip?” she asked, seemingly inconsequently.

It was the Lad of Light’s turn to stare, first at the Queen, then at the cap. He yanked out the blood-red rose—which glowed as freshly as the moment it was plucked. “This flower,” he stammered. “It’s a souvenir ... of our travels...”

“That is the Rose of Romance,” stated Ozma quietly. “It never dies. It is one of the most potent charms known. He who swallows a single petal—or any part of the plant—sees all the world in rose color: everything as he would most wish it to be. It’s only illusion, of course, but it’s what the world is built on.”

A large silence fell upon the group in the park as they thought of what she had said.

Vergrodius was the first to speak. “I used to chew on the stem of that flower—when we both lived in Zip’s cap-band.”

Then, “Please, please!” cried the faded pretty nymph-that-was Lorna, “let me have one petal off the plant!”

Silently Zip held the blossom out to her. When she had done what she meant to do, Lorna went to the king of the Green Mountain and knelt again before him. “My lovely lord,” she said. He opened his arms and she went into them, never to leave again.

“I think, my dearest, if I may,” said the Lady of Light to her son, “I’ll have one leaf from that rose.”

Zip handed over the flower again. Then more than ever before a brilliance shone in the face of the Lady of Light and a smile in which there was no trace either of boredom or despair. She put an arm around Zip and together they moved to the side of the necromancer Wammuppirovocuck. Now they could go home.

Next Emily Gale thought it would not be amiss if she—and her husband too—were each to consume a petal of the rose. As usual Em was right.

C H A P T E R T W E N T Y - E I G H T

Aunt Em had just come out of the house after spreading over the burnt place on the floor the white rag rug which she had gone so far to retrieve and whose retrieval had been so filled with destiny. It had come back to her at last among the treasures in the red wagon.

She looked up and saw Dorothy running toward her. "My darling child!" she cried, "where in the world are you going?" for she saw that Dorothy had on a dust coat, goggles, and a wideawake tied on with a chiffon scarf.

"Around the Land of Oz," said Dorothy, radiantly. "And here is Toto; he's going too. Please say you'll go with us, Aunt Em! There's so many things to do—and all fun!"

"Why, Dorothy, I don't know," said her aunt. "We've just got home again. The house needs a thorough doing-out. And I've learned my lesson: not to go off on any more wild-goose chases." "Oh, darling, I promise we won't chase any geese! But wouldn't it be nice to be there when King Vergrodius resumes his throne? And we'll be useful! because he says he doesn't intend to intrude if his successor is doing a good job. He wants us to help decide if he (or she) is! Then he'd like our advice in case he and Lorna plan to do something else. He says it doesn't matter what—as long as they're together.

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"We thought it would be fun too if we all went along when Levimeyerabloch makes his belated appearance at the court of Glinda the Good. Our Wizard gave the poor cheetah an injection and he's back on his feet again and frisky as before. Did you know Lev calls him the 'Charming Cheetah'?! Apparently he's a most winning animal, when you get to know him—"

"His owner's probably a charming cheater himself," sniffed Aunt Em, who as a Kansas farm wife had her own suspicions of itinerant peddlers.

Dorothy laughed gaily at the humorous sally but then she said seriously, "Actually we cheated *him*, poor man. You see, Wam wasn't taking any chances that Lev might not want to part with the emeralds. We actually used them without permission. Still, the Wizard agreed the ends justified the means. I *suppose* he's right... Anyway; of course we've told Lev what valuable talismans he possesses. He says it'll be a long time before he parts company with them now!

"And then of course," the girl went on, "as long as there's no room for them in Wam's house, the necromancer and his family are going to the amber Castle of Light for a bit. I'd love to see it! and Zip has begged me to come. So you see, I, at least have got to go. And Uncle—"

"Henry? What about him?!"

"Well, Auntie Em, Uncle Henry would like to go too. But not without you..."

Emily Gale reached inside the door and pulled a hat and coat from the pegs there. "Where are the others?" she asked.

"There!" And Dorothy pointed off across the lawn to where a regular little crowd of people stood on the palace drive beside the Red Wagon and an old black buggy.

"Let's go," said Aunt Em.